

Meeting of Friends of Landport Bottom
Tuesday 11th November 2025 – 7.30 pm.

Meeting held via Zoom.

Present: Stephen Watson; Rob Elvery; Councillor Edwina Livesey; Lesley Healy; Chantal Smitheman; Jenny Keen.

Apologies: Jennie Smith; Sarah Flynn; Councillor Matt Bird.

1. Minutes from the last meeting: The Minutes were agreed.

2. Action points from previous meeting:

i. Closing the footpath to the Chalk Pit:

It had been discussed at the last meeting that people coming the other way along the path to the Chalk Pit were climbing over the gate. There didn't appear to be any signage indicating the path's closure from that direction. Stephen said that a pile of logs had now been put along the path but that there was currently no notice indicating the path's closure. Edwina will take the matter back to Ranger, Brian Courage. She could not confirm how long the path will be closed for, but agreed that a notice about the temporary closure needs to be installed. **Action: Edwina Livesey**

ii. Pony grazing on Landport Bottom:

Various concerns regarding the welfare of the ponies have been expressed by local people. This appears to be ongoing with various views shared via a local What's App group.

Edwina said that new posters had been put up regarding the presence of the ponies. She also confirmed that new Interpretation Boards were currently being made. Brian Courage will decide upon the location of these. They will include a map of LB also areas where news can be displayed. Edwina can send a copy of the design to the FOLB. **Action: Edwina Livesey.**

Edwina said that the ponies were removed from LB during Bonfire but that they had now returned. Stephen commented that the ponies were currently grazing in an area where orchids grow, and he wondered whether the ponies would be moved to a new area before the orchids started to bloom.

He also asked about composting the ponies' manure bearing in mind they may have been treated for worms. Edwina said that she had spoken to Brian

Courage who felt that if the manure was left to rot down, then it should be fine. Rob said the advice for composting manure was to leave for 6 months before using it. Edwina will follow this up. **Action: Edwina Livesey.**

Edwina said that she had spoken with Brian Courage who told her that the grass on the bridleways had been cut. Rob said he had not seen any grass cutting taking place in the pond field despite notices warning it would take place. Edwina said tractor cutting had been delayed and would resume the following week. She would confirm with Brian Courage. **Action Edwina Livesey**

iii. Pond Field path:

Rob had previously raised the fact that the eastern path in the pond field was impassable. This had finally been cut at the end of September. Edwina said that the matter had been raised with Brian Courage after the last meeting.

iv. Rainfall data:

Rob has been collecting rainfall data for many years and Matt Bird had previously expressed interest in discussing the data with him. Edwina said the data was very useful indeed and could be included in the Management Plan. Rob commented on the low level of rain that had fallen this year up until the end of October – only 599mm compared with Rob's average of 1.1m. Apart from September, the last 12 months were all below average rainfall. Stephen had noted how resilient the plants on LB had been during the hot weather. Rob said that the geology of the chalk allowed the water to permeate up to the roots of plants from below. He said that the wildflower Agrimony, was especially abundant this year.

v. Guided tours of Landport Bottom:

Edwina said that no dates had been confirmed regarding the proposed tours of LB to introduce the public to the ponies. However, the tours would be taking place in the Spring. She said that she would like the FOLB to be involved and will notify the dates in due course. **Action: Edwina Livesey**

vi. Motor bikes and quad bikes on Landport Bottom:

Edwina said she would speak with the communications officer at LTC regarding making a poster. **Action: Edwina Livsey**

3. The ponies – will they be back next year?

Rob and Stephen agreed

that the ponies on LB had done a good job grazing. Stephen said that various incidents had been highlighted by members of the public, and Edwina confirmed that all of these had been recorded in an incident log.

Chantal – Hamsey Riding School, said she was concerned about the horse riders' access along the electric fence boundaries as it disrupted where they normally ride. She said there was a pinch point at the Dew Pond where it was necessary to ride around the pond, with the possibility of meeting dog walkers. Edwina said that all these things needed to be considered, and added that the riding school was an important part of LB. She said that one of the reasons for keeping the ponies by the pond was because residents had been concerned about a lack of shade. She said that one thing LDC wanted to do was plant more shade in the field.

Edwina believes that the ponies will return to LB next year. As a result of the experimental phase it had been concluded that we can live with them and accommodate their needs. How many ponies are actually required to graze the area, also whether they should be allowed to roam freely or be restricted, were things to consider.

4. Management Plan 2025

Edwina confirmed that the Management Plan is now online. She said it is a living document where things could be added e.g. Rob's rainfall data. Lesley said that the Management Plan is due out this year and that it needed to reflect very specific, timed actions e.g. ground nesting birds; fencing for the ponies, etc. It could not be something which kept being updated. Edwina agreed that these things had to be included. Rob said he had looked at the Management Plan online but could see no dates included. Edwina said there was an updated plan but it seemed that this wasn't currently online. She will ensure this is done but added that it wouldn't reflect the actions and dates.

Action: Edwina Livesey

5. Issues and concerns:

The Racecourse / security light:

Edwina asked if there had been any news about plans for the future of the Racecourse. The last suggestion mentioned had been to install a Park and Ride Scheme.

Rob commented that there had been various proposals and schemes over the years but that none had been successful or come to fruition.

Stephen raised the problem of a very bright, permanent security light located near the entrance to the Racecourse. There had been complaints about it on the local What's App group. Edwina said that this was a planning issue and permission should be sought. Lesley passed the contact details of a complainant to Edwina to follow up. **Action: Edwina Livesey.**

Bridleway gates:

Chantal highlighted a problem with access along the bridleway which runs the south side of the racecourse and in front of the stables. She confirmed that not all the access gates are conformant for bridleway use. She said that one of the riders had written to the Rights of Way Officer who sent a reply saying the landowner had been contacted and asked that the gates be changed to incorporate the right kind of latch for riders. Edwina confirmed that this was an issue for the Rights of Way Officer. Edwina said that if the problem continued, she should be informed and would pass the matter on.

5. Wildlife updates on Landport Bottom:

Reptiles:

Jenny said that the reptile surveys on LB were ongoing. Matt Gardiner, a student from Plumpton College had continued to co-ordinate the results of his ongoing reptile surveys. She was due to meet with Jennie Smith and Matt to walk the various sites. She confirmed that Brian Courage was happy for the refugia to stay in place over the winter.

On Saturday 15th November a party of volunteers will be clearing and surveying Jill's Pond, under the guidance of Kim Greaves, SDNPA and Jennie Smith.

On Sunday 16th November volunteers could take part in a Fungi Foray on LB, with Adam Manning Jones.

6. Events / Celebrations:

Edwina is hoping to organise an event in March to celebrate LB, but she does not currently have a date.

7. Protection:

Drones flying over Landport Bottom:

At the last meeting Sarah Flynn had raised a concern about the presence of drones flying over LB. However, no-one had seen any recently in the immediate area.

8. Date of next meeting:

Tuesday 10th March 2026 at 7.30 pm.