

Meeting of Friends of Landport Bottom
Tuesday 17th March 2026 – 7.30 pm.

Meeting held via Zoom.

Present: Stephen Watson; Councillor Edwina Livesey; Lesley Healy; Chantel Smitheman; Jenny Keen; Vicki Trenhaile; David Salter briefly attended but was unable to participate due to technical issues.

Apologies: Jennie Smith; Sarah Flynn; Councillor Matt Bird; Brian Courage; Rob Elvery

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

2. Action points from previous meeting:

i. Closing the footpath to the Chalk Pit:

Brian Courage – LTC Ranger, had sent the following comments to the meeting:
I tried several times to put notices out on the chalk pit end of the closed woodland path, but each time the notices got removed or thrown in the scrub very quickly, so I gave up trying. I can try one more time if it would be helpful.

We are working on some comms regarding the importance to nature of leaving ash trees suffering ADB standing despite the risks they present in their dying state. The latest advice from the Tree council is to monitor the Ash while minimising the risks from it to try and identify any trees that are showing signs of recovery. Clearing the infected trees to a safe enough distance to reopen the path would have a huge impact on biodiversity and the visual appearance of that landscape so it is something that we would like to avoid if at all possible.

Edwina said the new information notice boards that had been installed on Landport Bottom could potentially be used to post a notice about the path closure. The notice would be enclosed within the board and could not be removed.

Stephen commented that the previous information board at the Chalk Pit had been removed and thrown into the Chalk Pit.

Lesley suggested that ideally the notices needed to be above the normal reach of people so that they could not be casually ripped off.

Edwina agreed that something more permanent and robust was required to alert people. She also felt that by continuing to talk to people, at for example open events, it could help to make them aware. She said that there was a health and safety issue regarding people accessing the path.

Vicki agreed that there was a H&S issue but said the path is so loved by people. The FOLB group was founded because of the history around the path.

Stephen and Lesley suggested that the notices should advise anyone accessing the path that they did so at their own risk.

Edwina said that the LDC has a legal consultant and the question regarding the viability of giving such advice to the public could be asked. Also, any ideas for preventing access to the path. It was discussed as to whether the path is a right of

way and it was felt that through custom and practice it was not just a path but indeed a right of way. **Action: Edwina Livesey**

ii. New Interpretation Boards on Landport Bottom:

Brian Courage – LTC Ranger, had sent the following comments to the meeting:
The 4 new sign boards have been installed. We are working on a few updates to the previous interpretation signs that were there which will hopefully be installed soon. They are positioned to give easy access to information for all visitors to the site and while I accept they are a bit of a shiny looking addition, I'm sure they will weather in soon and blend into the background a bit more than they currently do.

Edwina said that the design of the boards allows for things to be added e.g. notification of events; particular details of flora/fauna; etc.
Stephen said that the new boards were similar to those we'd had previously, but he felt they were quite high for children to read. Edwina suggested that the legs of the boards could be used to post things at a lower level.

iii. Pony manure:

Brian Courage – LTC Ranger, had sent the following comments to the meeting:
The pony owner was non-committal about responding to the request for information about the suitability of pony poo for using on food products grown in the garden or allotment. I'm sure it would be fine for the roses and if well-rotted, ok for the veg too. However, LTC can't provide any guarantees, so it is very much a case of buyer beware and using a bit of common sense.

Edwina said that anyone can take the manure at their own risk.
Lesley said manure is safe if the ponies have not been wormed but that these have. The subject of dog poo was also mentioned. It is seen as a problem on LB because it enriches the soil and affects the biodiversity of the land.

iv. Guided tours:

Edwina said that the recent Discovery Weekend held on 7-8th March, had been very successful. Guided walks were part of this. (See further information in section 7 Celebrations).

v. Motor bikes and quad bikes on Landport Bottom:

Edwina said she had spoken with the town's mayor and the police regarding the problem. However, she will follow this up again in order to obtain posters that can be displayed on the Information Notice Boards. The posters should advise the public that LB is a sensitive site and not suitable for motor bikes or quad bikes. Vicki and Jenny had both witnessed motor bikes speeding along the motor road, and Chantel had previously seen quad bikes on LB. **Action: Edwina Livesey**

vi. 2025 Management Plan:

Brian Courage – LTC Ranger, had sent the following comments to the meeting:
The management plan is now complete and was available to view at the open weekend. I'll ask for it to be included in full on the LTC web site asap.

Edwina confirmed that the Management Plan was not yet online. She didn't know what the problem was. There will be a full council meeting shortly and if agreed then the document could be put online. She added that they had wanted to get all the survey data back before publishing it.

Lesley requested an electronic copy of the Management Plan that she could put on the Nevill Residents Association website.

Edwina will send the drafted document to Lesley. She confirmed that the actions are not yet detailed in the plan, and that she will watermark the document as a Draft.

Stephen also requested a copy of the plan for the FOLB. **Action: Edwina Livesey**

Note: after the meeting, Brian Courage sent a link to the Management Plan which is now on the web at:

<https://www.lewes-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/116/2026/03/Landport-Bottom-Management-Plan-2025-35.pdf>

vi. Security lights at the Race Course:

Lesley said that the particular light in question didn't seem to be such a problem of late. Perhaps a neighbour had raised the issue? Locating the address of the light would be helpful.

Stephen felt that the bright light was not only upsetting to people but also wildlife.

Edwina said there had been issues with security lights on the Nevill Estate too.

Lesley said that such bright lights weren't needed and they were usually tripped by animals.

Edwina commented that the National Park was moving its office to County Hall and that perhaps someone could come and talk to the community about the lights.

3. Ponies and Grazing:

Brian Courage – LTC Ranger, had sent the following comments to the meeting:

The ponies have done a great job of grazing the Southern end of the pond field. They should be moved briefly to another small patch which didn't get grazed or cut last year near the Firle Crescent gate and then to a larger section between the bridleway and the motor road in the Tumuli field towards the end of this month / early April.

Stephen said the grass had been closely cropped by the ponies.

Chantel said the ponies had not been a big issue to her riders.

Edwina suggested organising a 'Meet a Pony Day', something she said had been done in Ashdown Forest.

4. Issues and concerns: No issues raised.

5. Wildlife updates / volunteer surveys:

Brian Courage – LTC Ranger, had sent the following comments to the meeting:

Nature Sense are in the middle of a 3-month trial, monitoring sounds and images in the middle of the Pond field. It will be interesting to see if they capture any images which differ greatly to Jennie Smith's amazing badger footage. I'll hopefully share results at the end of their trial. If it goes well, we have the option to continue with purchasing a package of monitoring and surveys across the site which could provide valuable evidence to help guide future management considerations.

A solar powered camera has been located in the Small Field and is operating to record wildlife. Edwina will find out more about the camera and provide the information that they have. She confirmed that the University of Sussex are operating the trial mentioned by Brian. This is intended to give base data and not to replace people.

Jenny reported that the reptile surveys on LB were continuing and that Matt Gardiner from Plumpton College had been very active in carrying out the work and notifying findings. She said that Kim Greaves, SDNP would be giving a reptile workshop and carrying out surveys on LB on Saturday 21st March.

Note: Jenny and Stephen attended the event. The workshop was very interesting and informative, and the actual survey revealed the presence of lizards and slow worms on LB.

Edwina said that apparently Plumpton College has an area of grass that they want to seed with wildflowers and use as a show case. Stephen asked for a link to this. Edwina will look into it and send information to Stephen. **Action: Edwina Livesey**

6. Celebrations:

Edwina said that regarding the Discovery Weekend, Brian Courage was keen to have another in the future, perhaps annually. The event had been good and St. Mary's Church Hall was an ideal starting point. It also provided good facilities. The time for another event was discussed and it was agreed that May, when the weather should be better, would be a better time of year to hold it.

Stephen asked if the Chalk Life funding had run out and Edwina confirmed that it had but that there would be new funding by April or May.

7. Protection: No issues raised.

8. Any other business:

Brian Courage – LTC Ranger, had sent the following comments to the meeting:

2 new benches have been installed at the site in the last month. Hopefully these will help improve access for all by providing a welcome place to rest.

Those at the meeting wished to thank Brian for sending all his comments regarding the actions and progress discussed during the evening.

Rob Elvery emailed: *I'd wanted to prompt reminder for grass cutting path at back of gardens on east side of pond field. Not now but needs cutting around May. The last two summers it was overgrown impassable.*

9. Date of next meeting:

Tuesday 14th July, 2026 at 7.30 pm.