

Meeting of Friends of Landport Bottom

Tuesday 14th July 2026 – 7.30 pm.

Meeting held via Zoom

Present: Stephen Watson; Rob Elvery; Sarah Flynn; Lesley Healey; Vicki Trenhaile; Valerie Raynor; Jenny Keen

Apologies: Councillor Matt Bird; Councillor Edwina Livesey; Jennie Smith; Brian Courage

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

2. Action Points from previous meeting:

i. Closing the footpath to the Chalk Pit:

Edwina, who was not present, had an action point at the last meeting regarding the possibility of putting up signs to warn walkers that they used the footpath at their own risk.

However, LDC Ranger Brian Courage has said this is not possible.

He had sent a report to the meeting in which he highlights this as follows:

I have a meeting arranged with the Woodland trust to look at options on managing the Ash dieback along the woodland path which might lead to works that could allow it to be reopened in the future. The Town Council can definitely not allow access along the path 'at your own risk' since this would not be an acceptable defence should an incident occur. We sought professional advice which was given to close the path and therefore it shall remain that way until it can be declared safe for everyone to use.

Rob said that there were other paths in the area but that this was the only one which has been closed. He felt it was important that we kept the item on our future agendas. He noted that the path is now completely overgrown due to lack of use.

Sarah said that for insurance purposes the trees needed to be checked every couple of years to ensure no more were dead or falling down.

Vicki felt it was a cost issue, as whilst cutting down the dead trees would allow for them to regenerate, this would cost money. She highlighted the example of trees previously felled along Offham Road. These had subsequently regenerated.

Stephen wondered whether trees cut down due to ash die-back, would return with the disease.

Sarah said that the large ash trees on the allotments were beginning to show signs of die-back. A dead tree will not regenerate but other species will take over from the ash.

Lesley noted that sycamore trees were now taking over from the ash. Previously cases of ash die-back were being reported but she was not sure what the current position on reporting this was.

Rod commented that the path was so overgrown that it would take a huge effort by volunteers to monitor and report on the die-back.

Sarah said that the Lewes District Council must have insurance and that perhaps the insurers would be the people to advise regarding this.

ii. Motor bikes on Landport Bottom:

Edwina was pursuing whether posters could be displayed on the LB Information Advisory Boards detailing that LB is a sensitive site and not suitable for motor bikes or quad bikes. As she was not present this action point is still outstanding.

Rob said there was still a problem and he had seen various motor bikes being ridden on LB. On one occasion he had approached 4 bikes / riders. When challenged they said that Plumpton College was OK with it! Rod had pointed out that the matter was nothing to do with Plumpton College.

Stephen said that it would be good to take photos of the riders.

Outstanding action: Edwina Livesey

Note: an item on the Nevill Community What's App group 30.7.26 advises that posters are being displayed on LB regarding the motor and quad bikes.

3. Pony grazing update:

Ranger Brian Courage had highlighted this topic in his report:

The ponies are due to move tomorrow to a new enclosure, adjoining the current one but slightly to the south, so nearer to the bridleway. This will retain access to the current water trough, but I will cut a new temporary path through the long grass to give the shortest possible diversion necessary.

4. Overgrown footpath:

Rob said that this is the 3rd or 4th year in a row that the path that runs parallel with the Pond Field / at the back of the houses, had not been maintained. Lewes District Council had previously kept the grass cut but since it became the responsibility of the Lewes Town Council this has not happened.

Brian Courage had mentioned the footpath in his report as follows:

I'm aware that the path between the pond field and back of houses on Firle Crescent / East Way is overgrown. Regrettably it fell in a gap between changing contractors (District council used to employ the contractor but no longer offer the service so we have taken it back in house with a Town Council contractor going forwards.) It wouldn't be beneficial for the massive amount of bugs and butterflies that are enjoying the margins to cut it now so it will have to wait until September. I can offer assurance that now LTC are in charge of the contractor, next year will be better.

Lesley said we should ask for the footpath to be cut in the spring, then late summer/autumn.

Valerie said there were a lot of new shrubs growing at the back of the gardens and asked if these could be included in the maintenance. It was agreed that it was ok for residents to continue maintaining the growth to avoid trees from forming.

Stephen said that we should proactively ask Brian Courage / LDC for the path to be cut, and suggest a recommended schedule, i.e. the first:

May/early June; the second: September/October.

Sarah commented that if people could walk along the path in the summer, it would also help to maintain it. **Action: Stephen Watson**

5. Issues and concerns:

Stephen said that Brian's report referred to the Information Board being moved due to avoid erosion of the path in the Tumuli Field.

Brian Courage highlighted in his report:

I met with a representative from Historic England who offered his opinion on how the site is managed, generally as a battlefield site but more specifically relating to the tumuli. He was generally impressed with the management of the site but did suggest a few improvements which could be made. This included adding an interpretation board to explain the significance of the tumuli which is something that I'm looking in to. He did suggest that if erosion caused by the path at the back of the tumuli (on the motor road side) gets any worse it might be beneficial to fence off the monument and prevent continued heavy footfall.

I'm going to discuss areas for cut and collecting grass across the site with our contractor tomorrow which will be carried out later next month in line with the management plan.

Rod said he did not think the path was being eroded, because the board is situated close to the fence.

6. Wildlife updates / Jill's Pond:

Stephen said that apparatus had been installed in the Pond Field by a company called Naturesense.

Brian had included a reference to this in his report:

I'm still waiting for a report back from Naturesense regarding their observations in the pond field. Until I have their data a decision is still pending on if we will go ahead to contract their services.

Flora: Stephen said it had been a relatively poor year for the orchids. They were smaller, although there seemed to have been a wider spread going northwards. These were mainly Pyramidal orchids and some Fragrant orchids.

Rod said there was an abundance of Agrimony, especially in the Small and Pond fields. Also, Wild Carrot, Ladies Bedstraw, Rest Harrow, Birds Foot Trefoil, Knapweed, Eyebright, and a couple of Rampion, had all been seen.

Birds: There has been an increase this year in the sighting of Corn Buntings.

Reptiles: Jenny said that the reptile surveys were in the very capable hands of Matt Gardiner, a mature student from Plumpton College. Slow worms continued to be the most common find, but there had also been a lot of lizards. This is a species that likes to bask in the sun so the recent weather has been ideal for them. There are volunteer sessions once a month on a Saturday morning, when people have the opportunity to carry out organised maintenance of LB. This includes cutting back the grass etc. around the reptile refugia.

Jill's Pond:

Lesley asked about the fence posts in the pond. About three years ago the pond was cleaned and maintained, also re-lined. Fence posts had been replaced and the old ones made into a seat. However, since then the posts have been thrown back into the pond, Rob thought by children.

Rod said that the posts had sharp points which could damage the pond lining. Leaks may already have been caused.

The posts need permanently removing from the site and disposing of. A suitable vehicle plus access to the field would be required to do this. It was felt that the task could be achieved by members of the FOLB group.

Lesley was concerned that vehicle access across the field could cause damage to the flora. Rod said that there was clear access for a vehicle so there would not be a problem.

Jenny suggested that the posts could be burnt on bonfire night. Valerie said that Mike Fisk of Nevill Bonfire Society could be approached about storing the posts until then.

Sarah has a friend who may be able to assist with transporting the posts. She will follow this up. **Action: Sarah Flynn**

Stephen will contact Brian Courage and the LDC to ask if they will grant access to the field and the pond. **Action: Stephen Watson**

Site Management Plan:

Rob said that he had been unable to access the online 2025-2035 Site Management Plan.

Stephen said that the plan should be available to the public and he will follow this up with the council. **Action: Stephen Watson**

7. Celebrations:

Nothing raised.

8. Protection:

Sarah mentioned the possibility of fires on LB due to the current weather. Stephen acknowledged the risk from discarded glass bottles and barbecues. He will contact the council regarding publicity about fire risk.

Action: Stephen Watson

9. Date of next meeting:

Tuesday 10th November, 2026 at 7.30 pm.