

General Meeting of the BHWF – 20 July 2021

KG - Kim Greaves - Chair

SD - Sylvia Davidson – Vice Chair

MR - Martin Robinson – Benfield Valley

JP - John Patmore - Secretary

JN - James Newmarch – B&H Greenspaces forum, Brighton Greenway

KPJ - Kayla Potter-Jones – Benfield valley project

CL/ML - Colin & Maureen Leeves – Keep the Ridge Green

RB - Richard Bickers – local ecologist, Whitehawk hill & Waterhall

SC - Sue Craske – Friends of Withdean park & Surrenden field

NY - Nicola Yuill – Preston Barracks – Greener Coombe Road area group

LBT - Lindy Brook Tweed – Stanmer Preservation Society, Wildflower Conservation Society

SDo - Sarah Dobson – Programme manager - The Living Coast

MO - Marcus Oldfield – Westdene Green Community/TWEAK

1. New Groups/people

There are new groups/individuals wishing to join:

Woodingdean wilderness group – tree plantation and around cemetery – summer meadow creation

Jenny Lansdell – managing a verge outside her house

Martha Enriquez – BBC, just moved to city

Everyone agreed to the new members joining – no objections

2. Minutes Okayed

3. Butterfly Conservation Big Butterfly count

Groups/members to encourage people to do it

4. Biodiversity council officer

Brighton & Hove City Council has advertised the position of biodiversity officer and applications are in. The interviews are at the end of July. However, involvement from outside groups or individuals is not allowed, as this only applies to executive positions.

5. Black Rock Development

The area was a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) but the council agreed its translocation to increase the footprint of the development areas.

There are a number of concerns and BHWF members (including KG, JN), SDo and the Sussex Wildlife Trust have attended meetings with the council to advise on biodiversity and the project. At the time of this meeting, meetings were ongoing.

ACTION – to continue involvement with the black rock development

6. The Keep

The Keep are keen to look at the material, but it needs to be delivered to The Keep

ACTION – need to get material to The Keep somehow

7. E-newsletter/FB/Website

The development of an E-newsletter perhaps for members only?

The website update has yet to happen, as there were issues with hosting.

RB – a newsletter for a wider group. With a sign-up for a newsletter.

E-newsletter could contain updates from groups, links to charities, Update on city plan part 2, Estate plan and put out to a wider audience.

The E-newsletter could be on the website and on other social media (Twitter, FB)

David Botibol – will be asked to improve FB and website and appeal to a wider audience.

JP - However, is there a copy of the website that was developed – does Ricky have a copy?

ACTION – to investigate what has happened to the website and look once again at developing the new website and E-newsletter

8. Verges

SDo (The Living Coast) – there is a big drive to do this work and a project brief has been put together. The councillors have requested a formal report to go to committee in September. There is funding from Natural England for work with community groups to take it forward. It is the mid-growth period so the survey really needs to be done now. The money has to be spent by next March. The feedback from the council is that they need to know what is beneficial for biodiversity.

The University of Sussex and the BHWF has raised an interest in verges and we need to know of good verges for trial sites. We can use these verges to create an approach for the rest of the city. This will be grounded in science. The council needs something robust to go back to them. It's hoped that the new biodiversity officer can take a lead in this approach.

SDo – anybody interested in being part of an initial meeting contact Kim

ACTION – survey to be sent out to groups to identify the verges

9. Annual meet-up

Decision for an annual meet-up at Waterhall – perhaps involving a walk around Waterhall, a bioblitz and food and drink.

10. Planning

RB – Whitehawk

In city plan part 2 one site is in Whitehawk, despite putting together extensive representative against it being included. City plan part 2 goes to planning inspectorate at the end of October. This is the last chance for the Benfield site and Whitehawk valley to be taken off the plan.

KPJ - Benfield

The proposals by the lessees of golf course have been turned down and watered down. If anything does now happen it will be south of the link road. Benfield valley was put on the plan. The lessees have been in breach of contract a couple of times. They have ripped out an ancient hedgerow apparently for storage facilities. We have been sent round in circles when we tried to find out what had happened and to complain. Footgolf car park is full of debris dumped there; it shouldn't have been dumped there. The lessees have been wanting to build on the site years. Benfield valley is leased by Boon brothers, who are sub-letting to footgolf (which is a breach of contract). Sainsburys owns lower half.

Toadshall valley

Natural regeneration has taken place. When the developers did the ecological survey they found more dormice than anywhere else in city. Looks like planning application is imminent.

KG – what can we do as forum? The message needs to get through to planning inspectorate as it is now out of hands of council.

CL – attended meeting with developers and council – told us to send questions after the meeting, but we have had no answers.

Points to note

The surveys were done over 5 years ago and will now be out-of-date, so the council needs to ask for new surveys. The BHWF need to flag up that new surveys need to be done.

Once planning application has been filed then we need to make our presence felt.

ACTION – put together letter highlighting issue with ecological issues – contact planning and ecologist – biodiversity etc.

Planning - general

How does BHWF get to be a formal representative in any planning matters, like the Regency Society?

Letter to council?

AOB

Next meeting Sept 21st

Local Groups

Whitehawk is back doing work parties, clearing scrub in areas,

Brighton conservation volunteers is back on

Keep the Ridge Green – the wildflower meadow is looking restored and the paths have recovered,

Waterhall – a steering committee put together and surveys done. RB and Graeme Lyons have carried out baseline surveys. Now waiting to see if we get funding through the changing chalk and funding for higher level stewardship is going in.

Report from Wild Flower Conservation Society for BHWF

The project is moving forwards under the guidance of John Gapper, Sally (ranger BHCC) and Linda (chair wfcs) despite challenges from the pandemic and the weather.

There's been a lot of interest from the general public and we're getting lots of orders from local groups. We meet every Tuesday morning to make up orders, weed the plants and the site and to do some propagation. At the moment John is on the case with watering every day when needed. We're now moving towards seed gathering time to grow more plants for our future supplies.

This coming Saturday 24th July we have a plant sale 11 – 3 pm at the poly tunnel to make space for new stock. Everyone welcome.

Lindy Brook Tweed (on behalf WFCS)

Report for BHWF from SPS 20th July '21

Below ** is a reply from Rob Dumbrell when I requested an update on support for wild life in Stanmer Park. I intend to keep an eye on the situation because the swift, house martin and swallow nest boxes should have been put up in April when SPS first started requesting the grid taken down from the dairy next to the Long Barn and it became apparent that was not going to happen.

SPS has been requesting a survey of the bat population in the Long Barn also for a couple of years. We've been told work on the structure is imminent so it must be done before that's started.

We need assurance that work in the woods will be carried out with horses and not huge damaging machinery.

**Just checking back with the email Jesssica sent you, we intend to install some nest boxes while we are carrying out these basic repairs in the next few months. The only caveat on that is that we need to ensure that any boxes we put up in this stage don't interfere with future works. We have put up quite a number already for other species around the new car parks, a bat box in the walled garden and have some owl boxes to put up later in the year.

We anticipate putting in some native planting in the church pond a bit later on this year, I saw dragonflies laying eggs yesterday, we are investigating whether we can divert some of the roof captured water from the long barn into the pond to further help with keeping it topped up with rain water.

The woodland works are creating and improving the diversity of age and tree species in the woods. We are in the midst of a veteran tree survey and identification project so we can better manage those for habitat, safety and enjoyment.

We are providing some match funding to the now successful Froglife project improving dew ponds in the downs and in Stanmer, the dedicated project officer starts in the autumn, we are hoping to include the village pond in this.

The wildflower banks leading up to the new car parks are beginning to sprout now, these were sown with collected seed from Stanmer and will have some supplementary planting from Stanmer stock.

In summary I think we are moving in the right direction and look forward to working with volunteers, other groups and individuals to do better and bigger things for nature as time goes by.

Hope that helps

Lindy Brook Tweed (on behalf of SPS)