

**Brighton & Hove's Wildlife Forum**  
Minutes: 12<sup>th</sup> February 2013 meeting at the Booth Museum

**Key actions and summary points for the CSP**

Huw Morgan (SWT) Marcus Oldfield & Simon Powell (WCFP) were welcomed to their first meeting.	- item 1
LBAP: No comments/opportunity for discussion over Draft LBAP from council was very concerning.	- Item 3
Post- interest in the photographic exhibition raises BHWF profile.	- Item 5
Friends of Craven Wood became recognised as a newly appointed Local Community Wildlife Group.	- Item 6
Problem of 'pit bull' dogs destroying bark thereby killing trees in Hangleton Park – role for dog wardens.	- Item 6
Community Infrastructure Levy – BHCC needs to engage with local community wildlife groups.	- Item 6
On a number of sites – condition of grassland sites and bramble invasion – improved management needed.	- Item 6

**Present:** Martin Robinson (MR) - chairman, & Dolly Bell (DoB) Benfield Wildlife & Conservation Group; Dave Bell (DB) Friends of Hangleton Park; Maureen Holt (MH) - notes, & Colin Leeves (CL) Keep the Ridge Green; John Patmore (JP) Eco-Logically; Phil Belden (PB) Brighton Urban Wildlife Group and South Downs National Park; Jane Hawkins (JH) Friends of Sheepcote Valley; Roger Carter (RC) Butterfly Conservation & Friends Craven Wood; Mike Parrott (MP) Friends of Bevendean Down; Marcus Oldfield (MO) TWEAK, Withdean & Westdene Woods; Nicola Yuill (NY) Stanmer Preservation Society; Huw Morgan (HM) Sussex Wildlife Trust; Simon Powell (SP) Whitehawk Community Food Project / BH Allotment Federation; John Cooper (JC) Booth Museum - host.

**Apologies:** Christine Fitzgerald (CF), Friends of Waterhall; Dave Alderton (DA) Wild Park; Gill Taylor (GT) Hollingbury & Burstead Woods; Stuart Derwent (SD) Friends of Withdean Park; Martin Wilson (MW) TWEACK; Michael Creedy (MC) Former CVSF member.

**1. Chairman's welcome** / introduction of group representatives including the three who came for the first time.

**2. Minutes of last meeting** (23-10-12) were approved with no matters arising.

**3. Local BAP engagement and consultation** (JP) The council states: "Consultation promoted via a press release, council's web site, social media and e-mails to approximately 250 individuals and organisations. 13 responses received, some lengthy and detailed. The comments have been considered and a post-consultation draft of the LBAP is now complete and scheduled for consideration at Brighton & Hove Council's Environment and Sustainability Committee on 6th February". JP has received no feedback at all following the comments provided and is not aware of BHWF having been invited to discuss their input. Long lists of plants had been ignored; so it appears to be a 'consultation' in name only! No-one else at the meeting had been responded to either.

PB wished to discover why there had been such a poor response from the council to this important consultation, and considered the subject should appear on the CSP agenda, in an attempt to take the matter forward.

Council Documents following 'consultation' sit at: <http://www.citywildlife.org.uk/forum/download/file.php?id=50>

From a swift look it seems the revised LBAP is not significantly different to the DRAFT one previously provided. EBS 'Delivery Plan' is not covered. Geology and Geodiversity totally absent! Plants list has not been amended as recommended, and Botanical Society committee member is very concerned about being associated with the LBAP after their comments were ignored. Even comments on house sparrow, the most urban biodiversity bird, were not incorporated. This does not bode well for the formal public consultation. Recent Argus articles and information on the council web-site indicate this spring will see the main public consultation on the LBAP.

**4. The new BHWF web-site** - (JP) After consideration, [www.bhwf.org.uk](http://www.bhwf.org.uk) was thought preferable and chosen. JH was impressed and regarded the site as simple, clean-looking, attractive and it loads quickly.

**5. Post-interest following photographic exhibition @ Booth Museum** (MR) Approx. 40 members of the public had supplied their email addresses regarding possible involvement with BHWF. When questioned, this meeting considered few of these people would wish to come to BHWF meetings but would appreciate being contacted with information concerning their nearest wildlife sites by being given a link to relevant websites for possible events with which they could identify. MR agreed to deal with the matter.

Ranger Chantelle Hoppé had requested permission to take the slide show 'on the road' to help support the Biosphere project; 20 'roadshow' events around Brighton and beyond had been planned for January - March. This helps wildlife awareness and raises the BHWF profile by being fully credited to the Forum with individual photographers named, as per the Booth Show. Photographs had been used on their literature after gaining photographers' permission.

**6. Local Groups updates – concerns & successes**

**a) Benfield Wildlife & Conservation Group (DoB)** Regular scrub clearance has taken place since October with only two days lost to snow and rain. All bird boxes put up last spring were occupied, making the effort worthwhile. The group has been invited to exhibit their display board at the local Hangleton Community Centre on the 27<sup>th</sup> February between 1-3pm during a "Safety Event". Benfield are to hold their AGM at the Oasis Church Hall, Hangleton Way, Hove @ 7.30, Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> May, with a talk on "Sussex Windmills" by Peter Hill to follow, all are welcome to come! The group is offering to host the BHWF 'annual get together event' while also celebrating 21 years as a Local Nature Reserve; date and venue to be arranged. As other groups will be aware, lookering the sheep can be very hard work. Due to grazing being extended to the boundary fence, with its massive growth of brambles, the large ram bulldozed his way through the fence to 'our girls' surprise and when returned he promptly climbed over the fence! A cyclist and horse-rider both left the bridleway gate open and at one time 15 sheep escaped up the valley, kindly brought back by the West Hove groundkeeper Duncan and golfers (the invaluable cattle grid preventing access onto the A27 road!). Dates are being arranged for the checking of Glow-worms, Butterflies, Flowers and moths. For more information about the reserve, visit the website. <http://benfieldnr.tumblr.com/>

**b) Friends of Hangleton Park (DB)** In December a well-attended wreath making event was held between heavy showers. FHP meet for a work day once a month; on the last one they re-laid wood chippings on the pathway in the Wild Area and litter-picked. Their main workload was intended for 20<sup>th</sup> February but unfortunately this has been cancelled. On-going problems are dog mess not being cleared up and the long-standing problem of strong 'pit bull' type dogs trained to rip bark off mature trees, which is killing the trees! The council have been updated about this for over a year, including photos, but nothing is ever done either by the council to protect these trees, or to give the group an indication on what protective measures they can take. Perhaps the dog wardens could help. Their BHCC Ranger has now been changed and Min Hills is to help with FHP this year.

**c) Friends of Bevendean Down (DB)** Just before Christmas, started to clear the area at the back of Knepp Close, as it is a sheltered south-facing spot which is good for butterflies and Christmas parties. Ash seedlings had grown to a height of 8 feet since the last clearing 2 years before. The day of the lunchtime bonfire was sunny and warm despite days before and after being wet. Local families and other invited guests sat around the fire where jacket potatoes, bacon and beans were cooked and mugs of tea were consumed in what has now become a regular event.

**d) Friends of Craven Wood (RC)** have now achieved recognition as a Local Community Wildlife Group, with Paul Gorringer as their Ranger, hence the name change from Craven Vale. Geoff Stevens was present at their inaugural meeting and considered the meeting to be well chaired and organised. The committee will be elected at their AGM. They have removed some sycamore and planted up the area with hazel.

**e)** usual monthly work days have continued to attract good numbers of volunteers and an extra session was held in order to complete the planting of the hedge along the boundary between Pioneer House and Burstead Woods; the trees and shrubs were obtained via the council and a Section 106 agreement from the developers of Pioneer House following protracted negotiations led by our ranger Dominic, after the developers cut down many of the mature trees along a disputed boundary line. It is hoped that the new plantings will eventually help to disguise an ugly fence erected by the developers, although the fence has been vandalised twice in under a year! Sadly, this was to be the last work session with our ranger Dominic Franklin who has moved to another department; his talents and help will be greatly missed! In January FHBW had a joint work session with the local Friends of the Earth group to restore the south-facing bee bank and make it attractive again to solitary and mining bees. The turnout of volunteers was impressive and they were filmed by ITV's Meridian news team and Brighton's Internet tv company, Latest TV. Their new ranger Emma Keane joined them on the February work session when some early flowering plants to attract the bees were planted and some Snowberry removed that was taking over the small glade by the bowls club entrance. Their AGM will be on the 18<sup>th</sup> May, all are welcome, afterwards a talk on trees and homemade cakes / teas might tempt you – details to be posted on FHBW website soon. [www.fhbw.org.uk](http://www.fhbw.org.uk)

**f) Friends of Sheepcote Valley (JH & LB)** In October 2012 the walk around the back of a fenced-in field was partially cleared as brambles had made the path impassable - luckily Paul Gorringer was there so the problem of having a leader present didn't arise but this proved hard going even with brushcutters & strimmers. Despite the advantages of grazing, the current regime is clearly not sufficient to tackle brambles adequately. November 2012 saw FSV litter-picking in the top copse by the racecourse as Paul had cleared the paths through the copse during the previous week and the benefit can now be seen with the snowdrops growing profusely. December 2012 - FSV members were invited by Ann & Stan Barker to use their home as a venue for making green Christmas Decorations - greenery being supplied by Paul. The January workday was cancelled due to bad weather so FSV volunteers are looking forward to Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> February to get out into Sheepcote Valley to get cracking again! FSV have recently discovered the body of a beautiful fox which had been sadly shot with a rifle – this dangerous event at a highly popular site has been reported to the police.

**Whitehawk Community Food Project and Brighton Allotment Federation (SP)** A qualified ecologist, Simon has been working on the Community Food Project, part of Whitehawk Hill, but was pretty appalled by a lack of interest in

the worth and care for biodiversity. He was especially concerned with the wildlife value of the allotments and considered special attention needed to be paid to the requirements of invertebrates.

**g) Friends of Withdean Park (SD)** The October, November and January work mornings concentrated on edging and weeding of Lilac beds together with removing ivy, brambles and sycamore saplings plus some work on the ponds. There is much work to be done and the chance of ever restoring the National Lilac Collection status remains remote. Litter-picking still remains an on-going task but it has been encouraging on these work mornings to be joined by local teenagers working towards their Duke of Edinburgh award, and FWP have two days set aside in March to work with the Green Gym. Their new council ranger, Neil Doyle, is very supportive at work mornings. There has been contact with the council over the allocation of Section 106 monies relating to the Hallmark Care Homes development now underway on the corner of London Road and Carden Avenue. In the Planning Permission a sum of £32,500 was allocated for payment by the developer as an Artistic Component with an informative adding: "The applicant should note that the Members of the Planning Committee agreed that they would like to see a proportion of the S106 public art contribution spent on the upkeep of the Lilac Collection." Confusion reigns: a view from some local councillors being that the monies should be for the developer to provide art within the grounds of their development; not exactly public, so FWP are pressing for a significant proportion to be allocated to improve the Lilac Beds! (PB highlighted the new Community Infrastructure Levy being set up and that BHCC needs to engage with local communities, such as local community wildlife groups to target this new "development tax" resource).

**h) Friends of Waterhall (CF)** The result of BHCC's present shake up and reallocation of their ranger service policy has meant this group will now have Peter Craske as their ranger.

**i) Keep the Ridge Green (MH)** Spending the lottery grant has occupied most available time and currently a social event is being planned for 7<sup>th</sup> July to coincide with the butterfly walk – site tours will also take place for those who wish to join us? Luckily the wildflowers purchased from Stanmer nurseries were planted before Christmas as currently the Green has become a swamp! KTRG looks forward to the wild daffodils flowering along Windmill Drive bunds together with honeysuckle and wild rose along fencing later on. Work is well underway in Coney Woods to improve conditions for wildlife and access. Many trees considered dangerous have been felled and two glades opened up to allow light to penetrate the woodland floor. Both the 100 steps from Patcham Place and the 50 steps from Mill Road are being renovated plus three on the path steps down from Green Ridge. Along the North side of the main path a deadwood hedge has been created to limit disturbance to wildlife. Currently £1000 worth of native trees are being planted to vary the predominance of Ash, Sycamore and Hawthorn, but sadly bikers still cause a nuisance by destroying some of the contractor's work. More wildlife boxes are to be put up in March and the Green Gym have been booked for two sessions in spring. Unfortunately after four years, Ranger Emma has moved to the FHBW group and KTRG welcomes Peter Craske, new to the service. The revised Mill Road layout prevents overtaking and satisfactorily reduces speed. A review with speed checks should take place in August when hopefully the speed limit can be dropped to 50 or even 40mph. A pedestrian refuge island installed in the centre of the road adjacent to the windmill gate will depend on the introduction of a new speed limit. CL raised the issue of the 'bikers jump area' in the corner of the cricket field at Patcham Place and was concerned that continual illegal digging was undermining tree roots. Many months ago there was council concern and a rumour it would close, since then - nothing?

**j) Preston Park (JP Preston Park Resident)** Wildlife photo exhibition: 'South Downs to Coastal Downs: our changing landscape'. Talk to Rangers and officers about the project, natural history and wildlife of our area @ Preston Park Bowls Pavilion, 10am - 3pm on 21st February 2013.

**k) Stanmer Preservation Society (NY)** have been very busy because the council is actively discussing a 'Vision for Stanmer' with BHCC consultants working on plans for all aspects of the park including planting and leisure activities. The Group has worked to achieve three major items of progress:

1. A petition to stop the Shakedown festival being held in the park was presented to the council by a committee member. The council agreed that Shakedown would not take place in Stanmer after 2013. This firm agreement was minuted, but in the absence of finding an alternative venue, Shakedown will be in the park this year for 2 days, but it will be required to meet many more requirements than previously - involving noise, grass care, the number of lorries in the park etc. This is a great achievement, only made possible by the huge public outcry. Thanks to the many members of BHWF and groups who gathered signatures.
2. Committee members have been asked to meet council officers and a local councillor monthly to update on plans for the park. The council wishes to prepare a lottery funding bid to fund much of the work needed in the park.
3. Their chair is part of a sub-group of the Conservation Advisory Group, which will focus on threats to Stanmer Park with a focus on its importance as green space.

SPS continues to encourage use of the Nature Trail - leaflets and booklets have been very popular and they have several organisations wanting to organise trail walks for their particular groups.

SPS continues to have a licence for Stanmer Church (now decommissioned) and to open it every Sunday afternoon and want to encourage its use for wildlife displays and talks. They are also looking into obtaining space in the old dairy, in part to allow room for information material and displays concerning wildlife in the park.

**l) TWEACK - Withdean and Westdene LNR (MO)** A Christmas wreath-making event held in conjunction with Westdene School, Christmas Fayre on 8<sup>th</sup> December was the main event of their year and again proved extremely popular – they made 40 wreaths. It is always hoped the event will attract new and active members! Neil Doyle as their BHCC Ranger has been involved in the setting up of a new nature trail in the woods for which the group have applied for a Sustainability Grant; on their recent woodland management day they created a few more steps and waxwings have recently been spotted in the wood. Mention was made of the derelict expensive houses at the top of the wood.

**m) National Park (PB)** SD Way Ahead Nature Improvement Area has the Brighton Downs as one of the 5 focal areas, with extra Government and match-funding complementing the Biosphere and Natural England, Higher Level Scheme. The formal consultation on the huge offshore wind-farm off the Brighton coast is expected soon (<https://www.eon-uk.com/generation/3710.aspx>), great for renewable energy, but the devil is in the detail (sustainable construction, impact on wildlife, visual seascape, damage to marine and South Downs environments etc). The marine chalk shelf from Brighton marina to Beachy Head is being recommended for Marine Conservation Zone status – please respond to consultation (<http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2012/12/13/marine-conservation-zones-1212/>). The Wildlife Trusts have a template letter to make life easy, but please highlight Beachy Head West <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/haveyoursay>. The SDNP Management Plan will go out for formal public consultation in June for 3 months. SDNPA involved in trying to get best results for Stanmer Park (see 6k above).

**n) Sussex Wildlife Trust involvement with BHCC (HM)** Under the latest partnership idea for which funding has been secured through Natural England, SWT are to co-operate with BHCC ranger service to create a practical role where Huw will be based at Stanmer Park; this position is due to commence in April. He sees himself as being involved with this Forum in his new capacity as a 'People and Wildlife Officer'. Previously he worked with schools in deprived areas of this city for a three year term but this project funding has just come to an end.

**7. CSP (RC)** The next Monday evening meeting will be on 7<sup>th</sup> March. Previous topics discussed have included energy targets where managed woodland around the city might be coppiced to provide wood in the setting up of a sustainable fuel project – although it was doubtful there were sufficient woods around here to make this economically viable. Infrastructure concerning the proposed Rampion wind farm off the Brighton coast was an on-going topic.

## **8. Planning applications**

**Toads Hole Valley (THV)** It will be useful to obtain a formal '*Screening Opinion*' over the need for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) from BHCC under their sustainability strategy and 'biodiversity duty'. JP considered recommendations exist which should enable the area to reconnect for wildlife. The developer has a responsibility to ensure the correct Landscape, Ecology and 'Amenity' aspects are examined using best practice techniques for this large 100 acre site adjacent to the SDNP boundary. In relation to this subject, SD sent a very simple CPRE request to BHCC about 'who can ask' for an EIA 'Screening Option', but although this had been acknowledged, the council, strangely, claimed not to have received this first request. They have also failed to respond to a copy sent in!

The proposal by Thornton Properties (owned by local businessman, Mike Holland) for the creation of a 58 bedroom care home on elevated grounds of **Court Farm House** near the junction of Dyke Road and A27, has been withdrawn.

**9. Proposed Conference on Community Involvement in Parks and Green Spaces (MR)** Hove Town Hall, Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April, lunch provided). Details of this event, planned by Garry Meyer, have been sent round to representatives of Wildlife Groups and Volunteers, who were asked to think of people they would like to organise the afternoon session. Suggested input regarding speakers required by 22<sup>nd</sup> February. Long-standing Friends Group members felt this had all been done before, but the problem of communications between Local Groups and BHCC still remains. JP felt it would be foolish not to have an input and that we needed to get our agenda recognised. PB raised the suggestion that a council representative at some for part of the BHWF meetings might in future provide a useful link.

## **10. Any other business**

(JP) Eco21st submitted comments on the Draft 'Biosphere Reserve Management Strategy', see

<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B4TKpBEyRpTeVHBkVld3d21ia0k/edit>

There appears to simply be duplication of the Draft LBAP content, such as '*Urban Commons*', without reference to the LBAP itself. All very messy!

Consultation on the Sustainability Action Plan is underway:

<http://consult.brighton-hove.gov.uk/portal/bhcc/sustainability/sustainabilityactionplan>

PB mentioned the Biosphere Launch Day which took place on 28<sup>th</sup> January and reminded members there was a printed leaflet showing this area together with a response form for people to have their say; it's on the website too:

<http://biospherehere.org.uk/get-involved/biosphere-consultation/> - consultation closes 22<sup>nd</sup> April. The aim was to submit in September with the formal response due from UNESCO in July 2014.

JC pointed out geology should always be linked together with and considered alongside natural history in any nature consultations.

**11. Date of next 2013 meeting:** Tuesday 23 April 2013

Thanks go to John Cooper for kindly opening the Booth Museum as a venue for the BHWF meeting, and being our hospitable host.