

Brighton & Hove's Wildlife Forum

Minutes of May 24th 2016 meeting, held 5-7pm at the Booth Museum of Natural History

Key actions and summary points

After the very successful BHWF 'Social Get-Together' in March another could follow this September	- Item 2
Concern expressed over damage to biodiversity by NR, particularly between Addison & Highdown Roads	- Item 2
BHCC is not including LWSs agreed at 2013 Local Stakeholder meetings on City Plan Part 1 map	- Item 4
Social Media – use of Facebook/ Twitter or both to extend methods of communication	- Item 6
Sheepcote Valley concerned by more Japanese Knotweed discovered on new bund wall/ BMX entrance	- Item 5
Save Toads Hole Valley working group has submitted full written response to recent BHCC consultation	- Item 6
Reply to various BHWF concerns from BHCC Planning Dept obtained by Caroline Lucas MP	- Item 11

Present: *Martin Robinson* (MR) Chairman and *Dolly Bell* (DoB), Benfield WCG; *John Patmore* (JP) Eco21st; *Maureen Holt* (MH) - notes, *Colin Leeves* (CL) Keep the Ridge Green; *Mike Parrott* (MP) Friends of Bevendean Down; *Stuart Derwent* (SD) Friends of Withdean Park; *Nicola Yuill* (NY) Stanmer Preservation Society; *Dave Bell* (DB) Hangleton Park; *Hazel McKay* (HM) Save THV Community Group; *Tracie Parker* (TP) DPG; *Anne Hyatt* (AH) RSPB/Woodland Trust; *Corinne Attwood* (CA) CPRE Sussex; *Chris Lowe* (CLo), Friends of Queens Park; *Roberta Nanci* (RN) Btn.Peace Environment Centre; *Vicky Waters* (VW) Photographer
Apologies: *Phil Belden* BUWG & SDNP; *Kia Trainor* CPRE Sussex; *Christine Fitzgerald* (CF) Friends of Waterhall; *Lynn Bird* (LB) Friends of Sheepcote Valley; *Keith Upton* F.o Withdean Park; *Marcus Oldfield* (MO) TWEACK; *Graham Champion*- Bevendean; *Pru Gridley* wildlife enthusiast; *Kate Bradbury* (journalist/author); *Heather Booth* (RSPB)

1. Chairman's welcome to all group representatives and introductions.

Applications for Membership -JP reported on 6 new application requests which had been confirmed.

2. Minutes of last meeting (2- 2 -16) were approved. **Matters arising** included:

a) BHWF Social Event - Over 30 members had attended the Spring Get-together at West Blatchington Windmill in March; food was plentiful and an excellent talk on foxes was given by Dr Dawn Scott. Provided enough volunteers are happy to do the planning this should become an annual or even bi-annual event.

b) JP -NBN Action Plan has been published. 1 copy held in BHWF Library.

Should we use iRecord as the first point for sending wildlife records? NBN is no longer supporting LRCs as they consider Natural England (+ DEFRA) now use NBN as their primary data source.

c) HM raised the subject of Network Rail generally clearing vegetation beside the tracks and asked if BHCC could intervene? Millie Ferguson updates us regularly on damage to the railway cutting between Addison and Highdown Roads. She has reported their worst fears were recently justified when they failed to persuade NR to save threatened vegetation and trees on this steep slope. Contractors have carried out tree felling and clearing using Roundup weedkiller. 'Follow' the [@HoveCutting](#) group on Twitter' and ReTweet.

3. BHCC Report - Dave Larkin, Conservation Manager was not present at this meeting so none forthcoming. Bookings still open for Parks and Open Spaces Summer Conference on 14th June –an opportunity to speak with Paul Campbell.

4. Details about Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) held by BHCC –

a) MO has uploaded most of the LWS and LGS descriptions. Go to the 'Index' page to see links to each site folder.

*ACTION: Can people **improve** on the descriptions for sites near them? For example, Meadow Vale was described as 'Some Pony paddocks' when in fact it holds the richest red-star thistle (LBAP and Scarce Plant) in the British Isles.

b) JP reported BHCC is **not including** the LWSs agreed at the 2013 Local Stakeholder meetings on the City Plan Part 1 map (see 'Brighton & Hove Council – Development Proposals' on Discussion Board) The full list, OS ref and Decision can be seen at 'Local Wildlife Sites in Brighton and Hove' on the Discussion Board. On requesting the list held with BHCC a much shorter list of sites was supplied, with 55 LWSs absent! This is an unacceptable administrative error.

c) An enquiry sent via Dr Caroline Lucas MP confirmed that 2005 SNCI data is being used in the City Plan Part 1. Refers to *Sussex Biodiversity Resource Centre* as being the lead body in advising on LWS and LGSs. SBRC have stated BHCC are taking the lead! This needs to be taken in hand and properly dealt with.

The full e-mail content is attached – see 11.

5. LWS monitoring and selection -LWS 2016 monitoring programme is on the Discussion Board (search for 'Local Site Monitoring - Habitats'). Sussex Wildlife Trust is reviewing LWSs this year. It will be useful to provide data for these sites to ensure Brighton and Hove LWS and LGSs are not overlooked. BHWF holds site descriptions and

boundary maps for all sites agreed at the 2013 meetings. Four previously agreed LWSs, Meadow Vale, London Road Station, Brighton Greenway and the Wall behind Madeira Drive were on the 2013 list and should still be included.

6. BHWF on Social Media- the two main choices Facebook and Twitter, both have advantages. JP is happy to use Twitter with 400 followers, but needs images and copy to Tweet on behalf of BHWF. RN and AH will look into setting up and management of a BHWF Facebook page. RN considered it was essential for us to have a profile on Social media.

7. Local Groups updates – concerns & successes

Benfield Wildlife & Conservation Group – (DoB) everyone is welcome to come to our two events this summer: The Guided Flower Walk is on the 12th June, meeting on Benfield Bridge over the bypass at 2pm, and the Guided Glow Worm Walk is on the 2nd July, meet outside Hangleton Manor Pub at 10.30 pm- wear warm clothes, walking footwear and bring a working torch for this event. Twayblade Orchids are currently flowering on the hillside and the Information Board at the bridge has been renewed, thanks to Jane Hawkins and Alan Baker. Site on <http://benfieldlnr.tumblr.com/>

Friends of Hangleton Park – (DB) has sadly had to step down from this group due to health problems and cannot find another group member to come along and take over.

Friends of Bevendean Down - (MP) have started summer path clearing to maintain all the existing routes. Emma has taken the position of ranger and has informed us that the farmer requires his sheep to have access to water installed for the conservation flock by the council, at the rate payer's expense, and who also pay the water bill! The worst of it from our point of view is that it passes over the best part of the site, where an important crop of horseshoe vetch grows – and this is a favourite food for sheep to eat! We have registered our point of view with him, he pays the rent so we will wait and see. Like many other groups we struggle on with diminishing numbers, all very depressing.

Friends of Queens Park (CLO) - council funding for their Conservation Management Plan has been turned down again in spite of a public consultation and Master Plan having been completed a year ago. Grey Wagtail and breeding Greylag geese are a first for the pond this spring. The large pond has been treated with barley straw extract to control 'blanketweed'. There is little evidence of duckweed after extensive manual removal last year.

Swifts at Brighton General Hospital - first meeting has taken place with the authorities' new liaison person Jon Wallace. Our proposal for installing nest boxes, in buildings unlikely to be developed, was approved in principle. This would enable Swifts to become habituated in advance of possible future loss of other buildings on the site -which contain active nests. The group has now extended with the addition of new RSPB volunteer and Swift champion, Rebecca Ashwood. Plans are in hand to expand the scope of observations and recording of active nests in the Hanover and Queens Park areas. Permission has been granted, but not funding, for external nest boxes to be fitted to the main 'Arundel' (listed) building during external decoration on 2016 - 2017 budget.

Friends of Brighton Greenway - (JP) meetings have been held, and the species rich meadow has germinated broadleaf plants. They are meeting Tony Whitbread (Sussex Wildlife Trust) to ensure LWS status is correctly shown for 'Brighton Greenway'. A range of nature focussed events (bat, bird and tree walks) are planned for the coming year. BHCC ranger Neil Doyle and CityParks ranger volunteers have erected a new woven hazel fence around the wildlife pond at the North end of the Park. A moth night is being planned for July.

Friends of Preston Park –Tara Dawson has moved: Preston Park rep. needed.

Friends of Sheepcote Valley – (LB) clearing paths has been a priority for some time, as even with sheep grazing it is difficult to stop underground shoots of brambles continually forming new plants and shrub land. Brambles certainly win in the war to keep downland open. Sheep are now on Whitehawk Hill & Tenantry Down so dog walkers can freely roam the valley. Ranger Paul reported that the sturdy gate at the start of the sheep grazing area by Brighton Golf Club has been smashed up by a joy rider in a 4x4 vehicle and part of the sheep fence also badly damaged.

Despite many cancelled workdays, steps have recently been replaced on a steep slope eroded by the continual action of motor bikers. Neil Doyle and a team of volunteers have been felling diseased Elms in the Top Copse in the northern part adjacent to the Race Track. Unfortunately the bund wall introduced at the BMX road entrance is **inundated** with dreaded Japanese Knotweed – making a very unwelcome addition to the lot already present which Paul is fighting to eradicate! South of Warren Rd car park a beautiful seat has been erected in memory of a man killed at the Shoreham Air Show, designed so that people can watch aeroplanes fly over by day or gaze up at the stars in the night sky.

Friends of Withdean Park – (SD) The first work morning following the resolution of the City Ranger issue has just taken place with new Ranger, Garry Meyer in attendance, but numbers were very low and efforts need be made to increase these. Keith Upton is now chair of our group. Garry is also the Ranger appointed for the new Withdean Park Dog Walking Community Group formed as FoWP no longer see the retention of the lilac enclosure fencing as necessary to meet its aims. FoWP still seeks agreement after several years of discussion with Council officers, on the use of the Section 106 monies held by the Council from money obtained from Hallmark Nursing Home development. This is ring-fenced to support the lilacs.

Friends of Waterhall – (CF) The valley is looking beautiful at the moment with all the trees and shrubs in flower. The marginals for the pond planted last summer by the *Friday Lady Volunteers* seem to be doing well, helped by the protection provided by the environmental brush screen which reduces dog "Pawfall" in the water.

Sadly there was an incident of sheep worrying during Easter when dogs and young lads were seen harassing a small number of sheep cornered in the meadow. The police took no action although an eye witness was prepared to identify them. The flock, taken off during school holidays, have now returned and will remain for the foreseeable future. In addition more sheep are to be introduced to other grazing areas.

This is proving to be a successful dormouse site - checks undertaken in April found three in torpor, but in May a total of seven active males and females were recorded. In addition five more nests are in the process of being built. But no one told the blue tits the boxes with holes in the back are not for them as 20 plus nests were found with hatched young!

Deans Preservation Group (TP) – reported developers went to appeal -which was dismissed, but the inspector did not give recognition to all the listed species. An entomologist was now collating records in anticipation of other planning application for Meadow Vale wildlife site in Ovingdean. CPRE had been most helpful by writing an excellent report.

Keep the Ridge Green – (MH): Coney Wood primroses and bluebells provided an excellent show recently and at last work on fencing round the pond is imminent. Dormouse box checks have found one female but May is the time when birds use these boxes, so many nests of sitting blue and great tits plus one robin discovered. Two boxes contained field mice and one had yellow necks in. Unfortunately, a minimum of three different cats are seen on Rosemary's cameras most nights. At this time of year it would be an advantage if owners kept them in at night!

Ranger Peter Craske has left BHCC and been replaced by Garry Meyer, who has immediately been installing the overdue water supply for sheep, mending neglected gates and putting down matting paid for by lottery funding, at all entrances. Garry is also currently consulting over various information boards which have **long** needed to be repaired, signage for these located at Stanmer. New hardwood backing will enable two map signs, along Windmill Drive and the base of Coney Wood 100 steps, to be re-instated. The Welcome Board to the Green is also to be restored and new wooden tops on which to affix current notices provided. Green Gym is booked for June to assist with site maintenance work. A plaque is to be placed on the seat located near the cafe in commemoration of Joan Howard.

Save Toads Hole Valley – (HM) recently BHCC engaged in a stakeholder consultation about the proposed planning brief for the Valley. Whilst it had been anticipated that the council would produce draft supplementary planning guidance, the consultation only addressed the question as to how much detail such guidance should contain. A document was published on line, which posed questions under a range of headings about the level of detail any guidance ought to contain. What would feature in 106 agreements would be useful.

Two meetings were held for stakeholders at the Blatchington Mill Barn, but the purpose of these exercises was unclear. Participants were divided into groups of likeminded people. First the groups were asked to go outside and assess the environmental qualities of specific small areas close to the barn. Later the groups were invited to comment on a couple of the questions posed in the consultation document. The findings of each group were *not* shared with the other groups and there was no plenary session, so one was left wondering why one had bothered going. Subsequently, an email was sent to the officers seeking some elucidation about the format of the exercise, but no reply has been received.

The working group for Save Toads Hole Valley submitted a full written response to the consultation and that document was circulated to 200/300 local people registered with the campaign group.

Stanmer Preservation Society - (NY) Shakedown Festival –now re-branded Boundary: the council have offered regular meetings with SPS, the Stanmer residents and other interested parties to manage the negative effects of this **unwelcome** festival. We have mothballed our petition given that the council had already given permission before consultation. We are also on the list for specific consultation on the Parks for People Stage 2 bid (due August), though no meetings have happened recently, and management of the bid will be changing given the regretted departure of Jan Jonker from BHCC.

We are very pleased to retain our ranger, Will Furze, albeit with refocused duties. Waste from traveller incursions was cleared quite promptly from a field and nearby woodland near to Lower Lodges by a contractor. Welcome news that some Section 106 money from Varley Halls development is to be used in Stanmer –possibly on work on the easy access trail or on the top pond. We are also looking forward to seeing the resurgent *Rubus Cockburnianus* after pruning done

by Plumpton. We continue to be concerned about damage to woodland by sheer number of cyclists and incursions off the main pathways, e.g. damaging this year's bluebells, and are concerned about mitigation given the stated aim of further increasing visitor numbers.

8. Planning –a) City Plan Part 1 was adopted in March, see 'Brighton & Hove Council – Development Proposals' approved: see Discussion Board (search for 'Brighton & Hove Council – Development Proposals') to note how four LGSs and some LWSs are missing. URL: <http://s4.zetaboards.com/bhwildlifeforum/topic/10120590/1/>

b) Stuart Derwent supported 'Patcham and Hollingbury Conservation Association' in endeavours to protect the local public water supplies threatened by pollution from the combined Permanent and Transit Travellers' Site now nearing completion at Horsdean. It will need rigorous management to ensure that pollutants are controlled, which has not been a feature of the Transit Site over the years. It is hard to see how the larger site will have any significant impact on the number of our parks and open spaces occupied by travellers. In addition, it is thought the 12 Public Space Protection Orders originally proposed by the City Council will not all be so designated, yet alone increased in number as widely considered appropriate.

c) RN reported on Preston Barracks Regeneration Scheme – aiming to create a 'hub' with ideas for art and poetry to engage younger people in the community.

d) MR – reported on disturbing content in the Queens speech which basically stated -

Requirements that force developers to carry out archaeological and wildlife surveys before starting housing projects are to be swept away in a new Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

The legislation will ensure that "pre-commencement planning conditions are only imposed by local planning authorities where they are absolutely necessary" to help the Government build one million new homes

9. Any other business. a) CL –i) Roundabout at the bottom of Mill Road/A23/A27 junction - nettles have taken over after Highways dept. clearance. Rabbits, presumably from this site, including black ones have been seen on the adjacent cricket field. ii) The chalk 'mound' in Hove Park needs managing to adequately live up to the species board next to it!

b) JP - A botanical survey of Brighton & Hove Churchyards is going ahead this spring and summer.

Can you please add any Churchyards near you to the map? The links to the

map and survey forms can be found on the Discussion Board [Search: [Churchyard Survey](#)]

In terms of land supporting wildlife across this city there is great potential for Churchyards to provide habitats for birds, reptiles, some insects and lichens.

If you can provide location details by next Sunday (12 June) that will be helpful.

c) JP -21st March 'Biosphere Reserve' meeting notes have been circulated.

Plus: Can people help with preparing an 'Action Table' based on LBAP content? Publish on-line, involve Biodiversity Reserve members once consultation version is uploaded.

The 2014 Adopted LBAP is 100 pages of mainly descriptive text. Clarity on joint project areas is needed.

d) JP -BHCC Council voted to ban glyphosate (Roundup) weedkiller by April 2017. (see Ref:

twitter.com/btnhovewildlife/status/716930020564926464).

10 Dates for next meetings are hoped to be 5-7pm on Tuesdays: **16th August and 15th November.**

Thanks go to Lee for kindly providing the Booth Museum as a venue for this meeting.

11. Email from the Principal Planning Officer at BHCC to Caroline Lucas MP: (28 April 2016)

Thank you for your email, included below for ease of reference, which has been passed to me to provide you with a response to the issues raised by BHWF.

I respectfully advise the following:

1) Confirmation is sought as to whether the City Plan includes a 'Constraints Map' which accurately shows LWS (inc LGS) locations using current data following the 2013 LWS review? : The City Plan Part One includes a 'Policies Map' (also known as a 'Proposals Map') which shows allocations and identified constraints relevant to planning. It continues to reflect the Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI's) adopted via the Local Plan 2005 because the City Plan had got too far in the development plan making statutory process to include the 2013 LWS review data (or LGS). To date the intention has been to reflect the 2013 LWS review within the City Plan Part Two subject to appropriate expert support. An early stage of public consultation on the issues for inclusion in the City Plan Part Two is planned for this summer.

The City Plan Part One's Policies Map (adopted 24 March 2016), which shows the SNCIs, can be viewed by clicking here. ????

2) Mr Patmore's request / Suggested Action: The other striking omission in the LBAP is a lack of an 'Action Plan'. It would be useful for implementing the LBAP objectives to see a Table clarifying the Actions proposed over the year; and a checklist for confirming progress.

These matters are led by the City Parks Team and I have forwarded this enquiry to the City Parks Manager. They have stated that while there is currently no resource to produce a further Action Plan these resourcing issues will be considered as part of the Open Spaces Strategy which is currently being produced. In the meantime work to maintain and improve habitats is continuing within the resources available.

3) Mr Patmore's request / Suggested Action: Clarify who in BHCC Planning Policy Team will take primary responsibility for ensuring an accurate dataset is incorporated on to City Plan maps. In this case the LWS and LGS locations, names and boundaries are clearly shown. We can then establish communication with this officer; and BHWF can provide detailed specialist information about the LWSs to the Planning Policy Team.

Information on ecology and biodiversity is provided by the Sussex Biodiversity Resource Centre (SBRC). The collating, and potentially mapping, of the 2013 LWS review can be undertaken by the SBRC and this would need to be undertaken in discussion with the City Parks Team. This work can inform the City Plan Part Two and its future public consultations. I am the lead planning policy officer on open space matters however ecology expertise lies with the County Ecologist who is consulted on detailed ecology matters when applicable to planning proposals.

To date no local geological sites have been formally identified in the development plan except for two Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) that adjoin (ie Black Rock, Brighton and Coastal Section, Friar's Bay to Black Rock Marina).

Rebecca Fry, Principal Planning Officer