

## Brighton & Hove's Wildlife Forum

Minutes of July 17<sup>th</sup> April 2018 meeting, held 4.50-6-50pm at the Booth Museum of Natural History

### Key actions and summary points

- THV- Ecologist Jodie Southgate (EPR) emailed further revised information on plans for LWS/SNCI site ecology  
- contact Highways England regarding possibility of a tunnel through to wider downs? - Items 3
- LWS monitoring making progress but still work to do so please continue looking at sites near you - Item 2
- B & H's House Sparrows project successfully continues its activities and has attracted funding to do so - Item 5
- Hot weather enabled a successful moth hunt with 100s being seen at Benfield; dozens of White Letter Hairstreak Butterflies visible at Withdean Woods and 100s of skippers present for the butterfly walk on Green Ridge - Item 6
- Take the opportunity to comment on City Plan 2 now out for consultation until 13<sup>th</sup> September deadline, where LWS locations are missing from draft plan - Item 7

**Present:** *Martin Robinson* (MR) Chairman, & *Dave Bell* (DB), Benfield WCG; *John Patmore* (JP) Brighton Greenway; *Maureen Holt* (MH) – notes, and *Colin Leeves* (CL) Keep the Ridge Green; *Anne Hyatt* (AH) St. Ann's Well Gardens; *Marcus Oldfield* (MO) TWEACK and 'Westdene Green' group; *John Cooper*(JC) Sussex Geodiversity Partnership

**Apologies:** *Jess Price* (JP) Sussex Wildlife Trust; *Lindy Brooke Tweed* (LBT) Stanmer Preservation Society; *Dolly Bell* (DoB) Benfield WCG; *Stuart Derwent* (SD); *Corinne Attwood* CPRE Brighton; *Phil Belden*- SWT; *Hazel McKay* (HM) Save Toads Hole Valley, *Mike Parrott* (MP) F.of Bevendean. *Christine Fitzgerald* (CF) F.of Waterhall

**1. Chairman's welcome** to group representatives and introductions,

**2. Minutes of last meeting** (17- 04–18) were approved. **Matters arising** included:

(i) JP reported LW Site monitoring visits are being progressed, but still plenty left to examine. Please contact BHWF if you are interested in carrying out a monitoring visit on a LWS near you.

(ii) DB was curious to discover what was happening north of the by pass where a tarmac access from Devils Dyke road onto the farmers field has been constructed.

(iii) A Committee meeting was held on 17th July before the wider Forum Meeting. Sadly for us, AH will be moving to Scotland at some point so it is important to locate another member to take over her roles –especially of group treasurer.

**3. Toads Hole Valley** – Jodie Southgate (JS), ecologist employed by 'Ecological Planning and Research Ltd', Winchester has since the last BHWF meeting been working on THV proposals behind the scenes and has succeeded in getting the proposed main footpath/cycleway through the SNCI reduced in width from 4m to 3m (the absolute minimum apparently for safety reasons) and also reduced the number of paths overall, particularly in the top woodland. Ideas for path surfacing to be reptile friendly include having several wide 'crossing points' along the length of the path; materials could be boardwalk, grass-crete, or self-binding aggregates. She has captured this in the outline SNCI Management Plan to make sure it is carried through. MR and others have questioned the wisdom of putting any such wide path through a local wildlife site?

JS will meet with Friends of Three Cornered Copse group to discuss habitat management as a relatively small population of dormice are also present there. She considers plans to add in a 'green island' which will sit in between the two lanes of traffic on King George VI Ave opposite the top of Three Cornered Copse. It will be planted up with dense shrubs (Hawthorn, Blackthorn) and should help dormice move between THV and TCC as apparently it has been suggested dormice must already have managed to cross this busy road so the move would make it easier for them- and indeed other wildlife too! JS has also agreed to assess existing mature and semi mature trees/shrubs on whole site in order to retain 'green corridor' connectivity, especially on the 15m buffer zone to north. As vegetation is prolific, it should be a matter of what can be retained rather than clearing unnecessarily and having to replant?

Advanced talks have taken place with David Larkin and colleagues about BHCC/CityParks taking on management of the SNCI slope -once habitat restoration works have been completed. Funds will be secured at the outline planning stage via a legal section 106 agreement. David is keen to resurrect the THV volunteer group once CityParks take over

but should a group of concerned local people also interested in planning and the conservation of the statutory open access LWS/SNCI site –such as STHV –also be able to input at this stage? This would help make sure everyone's pooled ideas are correct (in addition, CPRE & SWT need their opinion heard too)

For the outline planning application the applicant has agreed to commit to green roofs on the community centre building and the school to help protect site biodiversity, this is in addition to many proposed homes on the main site development being provided with green roofs. About 50 bird boxes are suggested to be placed across the whole site but HM would like to pin down *the actual number* yet to be confirmed at the outline planning stage. No mention yet of entomology?

There are currently no further plans to liaise with 'Highways England' over the possibility of a tunnel connection to the wider Downs and they are responsible for this decision. Also it will be necessary to find a source of funding such as Rampion etc. Maria Seale is the officer concerned over outline planning permission and the next stage is imminent so little time is left to obtain agreement over new items with a high price tag! Everything really important needs to be specified **now** before the outline planning stage otherwise it will be too late to introduce ecological matters which are accorded low priority.

It is lucky for wildlife issues that JS continues to work with/share information between BHWF and representatives of SWT and CPRE.

**4. BHCC report** – David Larkin did not attend this time.

**5. Brighton and Hove's House Sparrows Project (AH)** – It is pleasing to be able to report this project continues to receive sufficient funding to initiate further studies and investigations. One idea which has yielded positive results has been contacting houses by sending letters where scaffolding shows building work is in progress and here people have generally been amenable to suggestions for nest box inclusion.

Brighton University have been analysing results from the winter survey and have produced a fascinating infographic and a full paper will follow. If you'd like us to send you a copy of the infographic please let us know. Click on this link to see it: [Winter Survey Summary](#).

Cats are reported responsible for 30% of house sparrow deaths. The Mammal Society estimated that the UK's cats caught 55 million birds a year (that's approximately seven per cat). This is the number known to have been caught – we don't know how many more cats caught but didn't bring home, or how many escaped but subsequently died. We have been working with the Brighton and District branch of Cats Protection League on the problem of cats vs. sparrows. A controversial topic with strong feelings on both sides, so we have decided to produce a joint leaflet (still a draft) to provide a balanced view and suggesting practical tips for cat owners and sparrow lovers. After approval from the Cats Protection design team we will be able to publish and print.

For the Spring Survey, we had 47x1km squares across Brighton and Hove to cover, and we now have the results in for 45 of them. Thanks so much to everyone. We are now working on the results and later this year we should have plenty to tell you about the status of house sparrows in our city.

There are just 2 more summer events planned. Hope to see some of you there.

12-Aug-18 - at St Ann's Well Gardens Rural Day

23 Sep-18 - at Westdene Village Fair

**Events** –Website [www.BHsparrows.uk](http://www.BHsparrows.uk)

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/bhsparrows>

Twitter [https://twitter.com/BH\\_Sparrows](https://twitter.com/BH_Sparrows)

Email [bhsparrows@gmail.com](mailto:bhsparrows@gmail.com)

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

**Benfield Wildlife & Conservation Group (DoB)** –What hot weather we are experiencing! It's been years since we were able to have a moth trap on the reserve but this time it was a fantastic success due to Steven Teal competently acting as our guide and teacher. We used two of the three traps he brought, a Robinsons MV trap 125W and the Skinner synergetic green light 15W. With the generator quietly humming in the background, the moths descended on us in their hundreds –153 species of moth were identified which included several of the grass moth crambidae family, three nationally scarce and two new to Stevens list.

Our Guided Flower and Butterfly walk was well attended with around 70 species of flowers, grasses and shrubs noted. 24 orchids from four species could all be seen flowering at once-despite some being past their best. The Glow Worm walk was also great success with 48 glow worms seen up to midnight.

Website: <http://benfieldlnr.tumblr.com/>

**Hangleton and Knoll (H & K) Hedgehogs** (DB)–Becky Walton has made this group a great success by providing educational material and sleeping/nest boxes at events- which has enabled many more people to discover hedgehogs in their gardens, besides raising funds. A fencing contractor has been contacted with a view to placing hedgehog access points in garden fences. Hedgehogs at Honeycroft Hogs is the rescue side of the organisation with several babies presently in care, mostly due to disturbance when clearing gardens – where a favourite nesting material appears to be plastic carrier bags.

**Friends of Bevendean Down** – (MP) have been working with the Sussex Butterfly Society, doing butterfly transects this summer; many thanks to them for their support.

**Friends of Brighton Greenway** - (JP) a workday was held on 15<sup>th</sup> July. Thistles (*Cirsium*) are now under control this summer. One occupied tent noted. Marcus will be sending in his recent invertebrate survey records. [www.BrightonGreenway.uk](http://www.BrightonGreenway.uk) or on the Twitter page.

**Friends of St. Ann's Well Gardens** – (AH) Dawn Chorus Walk in May was a great success with 27 species being seen or heard but the May Festival was less so due to heavy rain. The council are finalising arrangements for the pond renovation to take place in September.

**Friends of Withdean Park** - (SD) Our contractor has carried out a second week's work on the lilacs, with the third taking place this week, this continues to use the much delayed Section 106 monies from the Maycroft Manor Care Home development on the corner of Carden Avenue. We will be applying for more funds from all sources including further Section 106 monies as Council funds become even scarcer. The only task carried out by B&HCC in recent years is cutting the grass.

Whilst the Friends do not have the ability to hold further "Lilac Larks" at present, the "Withdean Tree Time" event on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> May was welcomed by visitors; this was a fun event for all ages to celebrate Withdean Park. Friends have also launched their first "Photographic Competition". Entries are welcomed from everybody with the closing date of 31<sup>st</sup> August and details can be found on [www.withdeanpark.org.uk](http://www.withdeanpark.org.uk) and on notices in the park. Work mornings were held in April, May and June with mixed attendance, the next is on 29<sup>th</sup> July, everyone is welcome.

**Friends of Waterhall** - (CF) have little to report on this time apart from saying that the Green Gym are working there regularly and helping to keep the whole site in order.

**Keep the Ridge Green** - (MH) The well attended annual butterfly walk led by Jamie Burston of Sussex Butterfly Conservation, took place in hot sunshine on July 8<sup>th</sup>. Jamie continues to advise us over management for butterflies and Annabeth ably assisted by recording numbers-15 species seen including 100s of skippers and the silver washed fritillary. Jess Price from Sussex Wildlife Trust was contacted for information regarding care of the KTRG dewpond which although presently dry looks in very good condition with surrounding meadow sweet and purple loosestrife providing more colour than ever now dogs are kept out by the fence.

Ken Norman has contacted Alan Griffiths regarding control of the difficult Polygonum creeper known as mile a minute plant (related to Japanese Knotweed). Ranger Will Furze is aware of the problem and promised it would be addressed soon –hopefully while it is flowering –as flowers are necessary to locate its whereabouts! Some benches need attention and the aluminium information notices on lecterns erected six years ago show signs of age and may need replacement. The grass mowing contractor has cut back brambles etc for a metre towards the garden side and now needs to release the same width of grass path for the meadow areas.

Green Gym have assisted on two occasions by clearing undergrowth around the footpaths leading to and within Coney Wood and as always the work was completed to a high standard. CL reported that Patcham Mill had now been withdrawn from sale by the lady owner who has found people to rent it instead.

**Stanmer Preservation Society** (LBT) – A bat survey is being planned for the area around the village/ park/ church and Stanmer House. SPS have contacted Prof. Fiona Matthews (dept biology & environment). This is important re impending work on buildings and removal of trees where bat roosts might be.

Work has been done on drainage by the church pond to alleviate flooding in that area and through the village. There are plans afoot to reduce the run off from the farmland and the lanes which turn into rivers during times of heavy rain.

Hopefully this will improve the water quality in the ponds (church and village) and encourage a healthy environment for pond life.

BHCC have found an area in the northern part of the park for John Gapper to continue his wild flower project. Work is being carried out at the moment to rabbit fence it and provide a poly tunnel. The weeds in the village have been removed by hand rather than the use of glyphosate as was requested by SPS and many residents, thanks to Will Furze for his help in this. Two tulip trees (*liriodendron*) have flowered magnificently earlier this year. Efforts by SPS are being renewed to make sure they aren't on the list among the ones to be removed.

The Boundary Festival is being held again in the nature reserve of Stanmer Park on 29<sup>th</sup> September

**Sussex Geodiversity Partnership (JC)** – was still flourishing and organising activities in Sussex and had held another popular meeting last month to broaden knowledge generally and find geological sites, finding fossils etc.

See their website <http://geodiversitysussex.org.uk>

**TWEACK - Withdean and Westdene LNR (MO)** – was allied to the newly formed and much larger community group '*Friends of Westdene Green*', so was still in the process of being dissolved as a separate entity and changing its constitution. Only MO and Mike Letton were true members of the original group now but management of the Withdean Stadium Woods and other woods in the area was still to continue with workdays being led by Neil Doyle, working with those people interested in nature and doing whatever maintenance they could. Dozens of White Letter Hairstreak butterflies had been seen in Withdean Woods this hot summer. Laminated information of bird species have been produced.

**7. Planning (JP)** – B & H City Plan Part 2 is being published. Consultation over draft deadline ends 13th September.

This is the last opportunity to ensure LWS and LGS are shown accurately on the constraints map.

Check the BHCC 'Consultation Portal'. See

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/planning/planning-policy/city-plan-part-two> Copy on our web site,

Facebook and Twitter pages. It is lengthy, but relevant parts are manageable.

**8. Any other business.** (i) JP - Dan Watkins has taken on the position of LWS officer for SWT based at Woods Mill. BHCC will seek formal advice on LWG/LGS details from SWT. Does BHWF wish to add the sites selected at the 2013 Working Groups?

(ii). JP- Sussex University are at present moving the excavation soils to the southern side of the University, to create a living laboratory for studying the rare flora and fauna we have, so unique to Sussex. Details are to be found on the 'Stanmer Consultation' section of the BHWF Discussion Board. The campus tends not to be very wildlife friendly with mature trees surrounded by a green mown grass desert.

iii) A Tree Group has been formed by CPRE Brighton Branch to both look into planting street trees around this city and extend the interest take care of existing ones and even consider those on open spaces too.

**9. Date of next general meetings-** October 16<sup>th</sup> & January 15<sup>th</sup> 2019, meetings to start at 4.50pm and finish at 6.50pm.

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