

MEETING OF BRIGHTON & HOVE'S WILDLIFE FORUM

Tuesday 21st January 2020. 4.50 – 6.50 pm at Booth Museum.

MINUTES

Key actions and summary points

Item 1, New Chair and Vice Chair required as both have been in these positions for last ten years
Item 4, How should BHWF best be involved in campaigns? Must ensure focus remains only wildlife
Item 6, THV LWS arranged walk attended by five + local groups – surprised by vast habit potential
Item 6, TWEACK successfully revived through Friends of Westdene Green – Grant for tree planting
Item 8, Golf course plans revealed at the end of January for both Waterhall and Hollingbury

Present:- Martin Robinson (MR), John Patmore (JP), Maureen Holt (MH), Colin Leeves (CL), Richard Partridge (RP), Michael Wilsdon (MR), Corinne Atwood (CA), Sue Craske (SC), Lindy Brook-Tweed (LB), James Newmarch (JN), Marcus Oldfield (MO), Mike Letton (ML), Kim Greaves (KG), Caleb Fry (KF), Kate Wolstenholme (KW)

Apologies: Chris Lowe, Hazel McKay, Dave and Dolly Bell

1. Welcome, introduction of group reps. Proposed new members - three new members were agreed.
2. Minutes of the meeting on 15th October 2019 and matters arising

Annual Report 2019: No contributions were received from Local Groups. Published version using information available is on BHWF website (under the 'Library' link)

Nature2020 programme launch on 31st January. Undercliffe Walk, Brighton.

3. **Officers for BHWF:** Chairman, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Membership officer.

Chairman No offers – Martin may stand during interim

Vice Chair No offers

Treasurer Richard Partridge

Membership officer No offers

4. **The Forum taking on a campaigning role?** Recent events, such as BHCC plans to change use at Hollingbury Golf course and Waterhall Golf Course, has prompted the formation of campaigning groups (*The Brighton Downs Alliance*).

There is a strong case for taking on wildlife representation. But who will take it on? It was agreed that more does need to be done.

This could be achieved through joining up with other campaigning groups? Other groups often take on landscape and access issues too.

But BHWF need to ensure focus remains only wildlife oriented.

5. **House Sparrows Project**

Richard Partridge is continuing to progress the BH House Sparrows project.

6. Local Groups – updates - concerns & successes

Benfield Wildlife and Conservation Group - Several days of scrub clearing have been lost due to the wet weather. All the preparation for the electric fence has been completed so far, and the sheep have been moved on to the second paddock. Much of the grass is quite short and the value low, so very suitable for our precious orchids. Some of the older Elder trees, which are top heavy with Ivy, were blown over in the high winds. Despite several requests to the local stables and horse riders, and requests to the rights of way officer, the footpath at the top of the hill is still being used by horses on this dangerous narrow footpath.

HK Hedgehogs Winter is well under way and most of our local hedgehogs are hibernating; some have been seen foraging for food when night-time temperatures have risen above 5 degrees. 3 – 9th May 2020 is Hedgehog Awareness Week and HK Hedgehogs will be celebrating this at local events.

Brighton Greenway (JMP) - Workdays held on 1st December last year, 12th January 2020; mainly litter-picking and clearing leaves on NE steps. Vegetation cut back near bridge, fallen branches cut up and cleared. Details can be seen on www.brightongreenway.uk

Keep the Ridge Green - (MH) BHCCs Communities Fund Grant has financed the purchase of cowslips, primroses and daffodils which have now been planted (and well watered!). Green Gym kindly assisted the group and otherwise they were planted on the last workday.

Seasonal refreshments at the Mill House were provided by Rosemary Dowd at a very enjoyable Christmas get together for committee members and a few selected people interested in helping in Green Ridge area. It was pleasing to see four younger new KTRG members obtained at the recent Withdean and Westdene Fair. They will be assisting with monitoring dormice locally. Neil Doyle was looking into a replacement for the seat in memory of Ron Blaber which has been vandalised, as was the information board adjoining it. Both were close to the passage leading to the Green from Green Ridge and in a pretty poor state. However Neil has now been replaced as the KTRG Ranger by Lindsay Cattanach.

Stanmer Preservation Society (LBT) contact sps.sussex@gmail.com. Substantial tree work done recently above walled garden in Great Woods, particularly to address health and safety issues or trees affected by ash die back. Heavy horses used to move logs. Plumpton garden centre work is well under way but SPS concerned over the bat population where old buildings have roofs renovated by removing tiles and rafters. Starting to create large car parking area where the classrooms were, near walled garden. Dog walkers with many dogs still use the woodlands as do mountain bikers. *If you have concerns regarding the above please contact stanmerproject@brighton-hove.gov.uk*

Mammal mapper project slow getting off the ground. Please help by using www.mammal.org.uk/volunteering/mammal-mapper

Coldean Field, once part of Stanmer Estate is to have six storey flats built on it. The University plans to expand to make room for 1,000 student accommodation units.

The Wild Flower Conservation Society will use polytunnels to grow downland plants. The land, above the Rangers offices in the park has been provided by BHCC, with funding from SNCP.

The first AGM for WFCS is on Friday 31st January at 10 am at the Stanmer Cafe, do please come along. Contact: wildflower.brighton@gmail.com

THV Local Wildlife Site – (MH) on 22nd Oct. CPRE Brighton organised a very successful site visit to acquaint people with the area and investigate the steep downhill slope from a difficult muddy narrow path. Pedestrian access was gained into the Valley from halfway along Downland Drive opposite Burwash Road.

Approx. 25+ people attended, also coming from nearby Three Cornered Copse, Goldstone Valley Residents Association, Hove Park Neighbourhood Forum, Save Toads Hole Valley and Brighton and Hove Wildlife Forum.

Parking in Downland Drive was easy and an attractive row of mature trees opposite the council houses led along to the overgrown dewpond. Good views from Downland Drive itself looked out over the LWS towards the A.27 and the regenerating forest which will be the development site. The visit encouraged lively debate and admiration of the merits of this wonderful wildlife potential; people were impressed with its vastness and considered destroying it a great shame! Nature lovers bemoaned the potential loss of species and countless habitats. Rabbits were seen and many wildlife trails noted. Many lamented a lack of building on brownfield sites in Brighton and Hove.

Friends of Withdean Park - (MS) over the past few months FOWP have embarked on the second stage of the lilac garden restoration, and virtually all the newer lilac beds are now cleared and chipped. The original planting design is now far more visible, and the lilacs are not encumbered by invasive weeds. A number of the older lilac beds have also been cleared and radically pruned, cutting out invasive ash and elder. The challenge will now be to maintain the site. We are very grateful to the Green Gym for their recent help. Inspired by the recent Green Spaces Forum meeting, we are now considering creating a new wooded area in the lower part of the park, and have met with Bryn Thomas of Brighton Permaculture Trust for advice. The aim will be to fundraise and start planting next winter, funding and council permitting. We are also hoping to be able to mend the pond - which has a leak - and have contacted a local expert for advice. It was nice to be contacted by a member of the local RSPB group recently, one outcome of which was to discover that the group had previously funded some tree planting in the park, the area having been named Avocet Copse.

Friends of Westdene Green (TWEACK) (ML) have successfully revived The Barn as a Community Centre. Now, TWEACK is giving attention to the run-down copse surrounding it. We have secured funding from FoWDG [GBP1000], Jamie Lloyd, Green Councillor [250] and I'm committing most of the balance of accrued subs. [350] to reviving the Corporation planting from the 1960's. We await a decision from Pocket Parks, [Ministry of Housing and Communities]. Then, Parks augmented the elder trees surrounding the old sheep pen with understorey of dogwood and berberis, and put cotoneaster around the Pavilion, and viburnum along the roadside. Since BHCC stopped tending it, the plantation has run into chaos. We now have permission from them to replace and expand the trees and understorey, which will give more cover and food for wildlife and colour and form for amenity. I hope that, with volunteer help and resources, we can establish a new sylvan centre but must start this immediately! See Appendix.

6. **New BHWF web-site.** - Discussed at last meeting, and example website prepared by Ricci Masero was considered suitable for uploading.

* Action: Request BHWF Treasurer pays for UK2 space

7. **BHCC Report.** No BHCC officer attended.

8. **Planning.** (i) **Toads Hole Valley** (MH)—slightly revised evolving plans were out for consultation until Dec 29th and a BHWF member managed to send in a reply which included opposition to taking a section of Three Cornered Copse and plans to alter King George VI Ave from a major road to a backwater over time as different sections of the development are completed. Councillor Vanessa Brown and members of both the Goldstone Valley Residents Association and Three Cornered Copse also put in objections. The Copse group plans to fight for their land as it is where 100s of whips and daffodil bulbs have been put in and mature trees would also need to be felled.

(ii) **Golf Courses.** A meeting is proposed on 28 January organised by BDA from 7 to 9 p.m. Friends Meeting House, Ship Street, Brighton. All welcome. See BDA website:
www.facebook.com/BrightonDownsAlliance

Councillors later agreed that Waterhall Golf Course in the Waterhall valley will be restored to chalk grassland through a rewilding plan. Although chalk flora will take a long time to regenerate.

Hollinbury will remain as a golf course.

9. **Any other business.** Dates for 2020 meetings: 14 April / 21 July / 27 October 2020

Appendix: Friends of Westdene Green The Barn Copse plan - Stage 1