Brighton & Hove's Wildlife Forum
Minutes: 5th July 2011 meeting, at the Booth Museum

Key actions and summary points for the CSP

- BHCC needs to ensure it sources local native species. Hybrid bluebells being supplied by council Countryside Service team will outcompete local native species. (see item 3)

- Ensure that all sites are well researched for the Royal Sussex County Hospital "Consolidation Site", as Sheepcote will be vigorously opposed due to its high wildlife interest (see items 3 & 8)

3a. Noted that Draft Local BAP is available on council web-site. Difficult to access & follow comments made by contributors to the Draft doc. (see item 4)

3b. Concern about adequate inclusion of BHWF views in progressing the Draft LBAP objectives, particularly as we will be undertaking the actual site monitoring & management work in the future. Community Engagement needs to be central to developing the LBAP from the beginning. (see item 4)

3c. Provide appropriate summary documents to accompany the full LBAP and SOLE documents to achieve effective consultation (see item 4)

3d. Promote the concepts within the BHWF "Conservation Agenda for 2011" What is the programme for the Biosphere Reserve application? (see item 4)

1. Present:- Chairman - Martin Robinson (MR) Benfield W.L. Ann Baker (AB) FoSheepcote Valley. Sue Stubbings (SB) FoSheepcote Valley. Maureen Holt (MR) Keep the Ridge Green. Colin Leeves (CL) Keep the Ridge Green. Stuart Derwent (SD) FoWithdean Pk & CPRE. Pru Gridley (PG) Stanmer Preservation Society Phil Belden (PB) BUWG. Gerald Legg (GL) Booth Museum. John Patmore (JP) *Eco-Logically* & FoPreston Pk. Roger Carter (RC) Butterfly Conservation.
Apologies:- Chris Fitzgerald FoWaterhall. David Alderton. Martin Wilson TWEAK. Dave Bell Benfield WLG. Peter Whitcomb Sussex Ornithological Society.

2. Minutes & matters arising (5.4.2011) – approved, there were no matters arising.

3. Local Group Reports. See Appendix 1 for full reports from each group. PB advised groups whose areas are close to the Pride Venues to contact BHCC before the event, rather than after re any financial contributions to their respective sites. Two groups reported that the Bluebells planted early were not the native Hyacinthoides non-scrita as they had led to believe, but the hybrid *Hycacinthoides x massartiana* which outcompletes *H.non-scripta.*

4. Local BAP, engagement & consultation. JP hoped everyone had looked at BAP on the www:citywildlife.org.uk/forum link. Following a lengthy discussion these key points were agreed - discussion forum should set a 10yr agenda. Very important that local groups/people are involved – requires intelligent thinking how it is looked at, a 70 page doc may well suit experts, but is too long for the general public – where a shorter plain English version is required – most important to communicate with readers at a level they understand – use of hyperlinks – objectives - Actions plans must be acted upon. It is believed that the BHCC consultation period will be 12 /16 weeks. Those present firmly said No to TWITTER. **JP** to circulate again details of how find & use BHWG forum once it has been tided up.

5. The South Downs National Park Authority – Statement of Community Involvement.
MR to complete & submit the Consultant Questionnaire on behalf of BHWF.

6. Site Management Plans. Those present reported no change since our last meeting – see FoWaterhall report in Appendix. 1 for their change.

7. CSP. SD attended the CSP meeting on 6 June for BHWF and JP was also in attendance. SD expressed concern about whether resources – staff and finance – are available to meet the ambitious targets. Pete West said that leadership was the key. The subject of achieving effective consultation on various documents like the LBAP and the SOLE (State of the Local Environment Report) was discussed. SD stressed the need for having summary versions available as documents of 70 or 80 sides of A4 are not going to be read by anyone but the experts. BHWF agreed with this but also stressed that it is important that the full documents remain comprehensive, with the summary document

identifying sections in the main document for added detail. The full document must not be 'dumbed down'. Matthew Thomas reported to the CSP that the LBAP document was ready for consultation, but no firm dates were given. It was felt that the required 12 week period for consultation may need to be extended to 16 weeks in view of summer holidays. The BHWF "Conservation Agenda for 2011" approved by the Green Councillors was brought to the attention of CSP members. There were mixed views about concern expressed on the wildlife damage being done by bikers in Coney Wood, but Pete West has brought some welcomed common sense into the situation since the meeting.

8. Planning Applications. ***a)*** BH2011/01219 Stable Block Stanmer House Stanmer Park has been called in by the South Downs National Pk. All future corres to Lewis Oliver - Major Applications and Enforcement Officer, South Downs National Park Authority, Rosemary's Parlour, North Street, Midhurst, GU29 9SB tel: 01730 811759 email: Lewis.Oliver@southdowns.gov.uk
b) Not yet submitted but expected possible "Consolidation Site " for Royal Sussex County Hospital rebuild; this may be used as an off-site store for building materials/modules and is in a potentially "sensitive" area of Sheepcote Valley with entry off Wilson Avenue Brighton – All to monitor future planning applications – press & BHCC web site.
It was pointed out that there are a number of other potential sites, with less/no wildlife sensitivity/interest such as Southern Water's temporary waste-water "building sites", which would shortly become redundant.

9. Reference Library Whilst not all the groups agreed that there is a need for this and some may not need to use it. RC proposed there was a sufficient consensus of opinion for JP to proceed with creating the library if a grant application is successful. PB hoped that the groups would use it.

10. Key Items for next Meeting on 18th October 2011 BHWF input to LBAP content.

11. A.O.B. 17th July 2011 Butterfly walk Sheepcote Valley. UNESCO bid for Biodiversity when will we know more? BHCC City in Bloom Competition included a section for Wildlife Gardens.

Appendix 1 – BHWG Minutes 5.7.2011. Group Reports.

Benfield Wildlife & Conservation Group
The talk following our AGM on 18th May was entitled "Hedgerows" by Peter Challis.Although our Flower Identification walk on 19thJune started on a wet note, it finished dry and sunny with about 70 chalk grassland plants identified.
The glow-worm count on 2nd July was enjoyed by 25 people on a warm, wind still evening. About 70 glowing females were seen, and so far this is a similar count to last year.
On 27 June, 3 traveller's caravans were parked outside the lower gate to the reserve, but we were relieved that they were moved the next day.

Keep the Ridge Green
KTRG's problem with bikers building ramps by chopping down trees in Coney Woods has been halted thanks to the intervention of Pete West, Hugo Blomfield and Emma Keane our ranger. Ramps have now been set aside and the earth they moved replaced. However bikers continue to cross the main path at speed on self made tracks, at considerable danger to anyone walking there. This is not a bridleway and, therefore, legitimate pedestrians should not be put at risk, particularly by extreme sport bikers such as those presently using the woods. Their actions are also destroying the surface of the footpath, improved by KTRG in the late 1990s using a Council Grant to enable pedestrians to walk safely down the wood. More importantly bikers are damaging the woodland's wildlife.
The Green Ridge Butterfly walk on 3rd July was well attended with Roger Carter ably assisting members with identification. He and John Patmore also collected a rare roesels bush cricket Metrioptera roeselii. Essex skippers, their caterpillars reliant on timothy grass, were amongst other skippers near the cafe; plenty of marbled whites around with knapweed more prevalent than in recent times. Later on a clump of field scabious was discovered in addition to ladies bedstraw and more wild carrot. Last years agreement to reduce the size of mown paths has in the last two weeks been implemented on the south facing Mill Road hedge side. This is where wild flowers (& butterflies) would thrive if it was not closely cut. Sheep finished grazing the meadow in March to allow flowers and the wide variety of important grasses to grow. Presently the site looks pretty impressive with multi species hedgerows in full leaf and many members making sure litter is picked up regularly. But the 200 whips planted to renew the ancient/SDNP boundary hedge have suffered badly from drought and at least a third will need replanting in the autumn, luckily the six larger trees around the site put in to celebrate the National Park and KTRGs 20th anniversary have fared better. Jeremy Burgess as our local SDNP rep has agreed to be shown around by local members later in July. Two of our members have agreed to go on Leadership/first aid courses to enable them to work unsupervised but we are still looking into grants. Parties of local school children have been on a nature walk through the wood but unfortunately the bluebells they planted last year turned out not to be English'.

Preston Park
10th May a three foot-long reptile Texas Rat Snake was found basking on the grass near the men's bowls pavilion. Passed on to RSPB.
27 August (12:00-17:00) Friends of Preston Park, in conjunction with CityParks, will be staging a summer festival in the park. Aims to celebrate local talents, promote local businesses and community organisations and to provide a fun day.

Friends of Sheepcote Valley Activity Report July 2011

The group has been quite busy over the recent weeks :-
Creating a bench in memory of a Member's Husband
Installing a plaque "Harry's Hedge" commemorating a member who died recently, and was very involved with hedge laying alongside Wilson Avenue
Conducting a Flower Survey - this an annual survey of the same strip of land, to monitor the development of species - now, hopefully benefiting from sheep grazing.
Removing Sycamore saplings
Fund raising / publicising - Springwatch (a wet one!), Queens Park Picnic Fair (a hot one!), and Whitehawk Fair (quite warm!) - produced some useful funds
Renovating out storage container (ongoing!)
Most recently we are :-
Planning another refurbishment of our Dew Pond (third attempt), and
Beginning negotiations for possible "Consolidation Site " for Royal Sussex County Hospital rebuild; this may be used as an off-site store for building materials/modules and is in a potentially "sensitive" area.
Of growing concern is invasion by brambles, which are taking over in some areas, and obstructing pathways. It is hoped that assistance from some other groups (Green Gym etc.) may help with such clearance.

Stanmer Preservation Society.

Kestrels (Seen by those attending the BHW Forums evening social on 14th June) have vacated the Church Nest site, possibly now in the woods on the LHS of the bridle path leading up from the village to the Upper Lodges. Difficult to know if this is the same pair or another family. Has Kestrels have been nesting at Stanmer for several years now. I think some of those who attended the evening social returned to Stanmer and got some lovely pictures of the family.

Planning Application No: BH2011/01219 Applicant: Site/Property: Stable Block Stanmer House Stanmer Park Brighton Description: Full Planning - Conversion of existing stable block building to form 7 no two bedroom houses and 1 no two bedroom flat, with external alterations including additional dormers and replacement doors and windows. (Development is in the South Downs National Park). Has been 'called in' by the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) for determination. BHCC will have no further formal role in the determination of this application. The SDNPA has decided to 'call in' this application for the following reason: 'The related application is for seven dwellings within a listed building and within the conservation area and may therefore have a significant effect on the purposes for which the South Downs National Park has been established.' The case officer dealing with this application at the SDNPA is: Lewis Oliver - Major Applications and Enforcement Officer, South Downs National Park Authority, Rosemary's Parlour, North Street, Midhurst, GU29 9SB tel: 01730 811759 email: Lewis.Oliver@southdowns.gov.uk All further communication regarding this application should be made directly to the SDNPA.

Application to have the Footpath leading across the lower formal garden to the leisure gardens put on the definitive map continues. No news yet on BHCC decision. 274 people have completed a public evidence form stating their usage of the path. However all this comes too late for the fragile Glow worm colony whose habitat has been destroyed by the erecting of the surrounding fence. www.stanmer.org.uk

Friends of Waterhall.

The Waterhall report is one of on-going problems. Our ranger is again absent due to illness so we have a temporary ranger assigned to us who unfortunately has little countryside knowledge. Work days are difficult to arrange as we never know who will be available to attend. Invariably they do not know our site and we do not know their skill levels. Recently there have been problems with the sheep getting entangled in the netting Members of the public have been phoning expressing concern when they have seen the animals trapped and there has been no response from any of the emergency phone numbers provided. Regarding the grazing there has been a serious difference of opinion with a countryside manager as to how the longer grass should be managed as some of the area is a valuable butterfly habitat. The on-going issue of traveller encampments within the City resulted in a group of 37 caravans, more than that number of towing vehicles and cars plus numerous quad bikes occupying the whole length of the playing field. The positioning of the encampment caravans has made it impossible for the general public to access any part without being heckled by the adults or harassed by their children. Waterhall Management Plan is still in draft form but has been available for public consultation since mid June to coincide with our AGM. However due to the council not having the documents printed and available for display in the local libraries and on site, we have delayed everything until mid September. A group of young people from Hurstpierpoint College gave us a day helping to clear bramble. I thought that was partly why we had the sheep !!

Friends of Withdean Park

The small Wildflower Meadow was sown on 1 May and is already in flower. Encouraging and likely to lead to more being established. On our June Work Morning we dug up some Spanish Bluebells and marked some trees for thinning in the autumn to provide some more glades in the woods. A glade established a few years ago was selected for planting some proper English Bluebells later this year. On the recent July Work Morning we cleared rubbish and excess plants from the two ponds. Promises by the Council to weed the Lilac beds were not met for the Lilac Lark, but more recently the weeds on the beds were strimmed – plus the stems of some of the lilacs! – and weedkiller applied to the beds around the lilacs. Attempts have been made to get something positive from the four recent incursions by travellers by comparing the uninhibited criminal damage they carry out to the red tape put in place to discourage positive actions by volunteers.

CPRE Brighton & Hove District

The B&HCC Core Strategy saga goes on due to the Coalition Government's Localism Bill and the Cala Homes appeals. At the recent Inspector's Procedural Meeting it was agreed that it is essential that a realistic Core Strategy is produced and it would not be sensible to have a plan which then became worthless when the Localism Act comes in, probably in November. Housing numbers remain the key and their potential impact on the "Urban Fringes".