Brighton & Hove's Wildlife Forum
Minutes: 3rd December 2013, meeting at the Booth

Key actions and summary points for the CSP	
Leonard Gouzin (Food Partnership) discussed producing a dataset of wildlife / possible food growing sites	- Item 5
Dog walking professionals taking over in some places- Waterhall particularly bad	- Item 8
Pete West agrees with BHWF and will recommend Wild Park as a LWS	- Item 9
Fate of elms at Dorothy Stringer Eco-school shortly to be decided	- Item 10
Ladies Mile LNR chalk grassland site, survey and future management plans	-Item11

Present: *Martin Robinson* (MR) - chairman, Benfield Wildlife & Conservation Group *Dave & Dolly Bell* (DB & DoB) Benfield and Hangleton Park Groups; *Phil Belden* (PB) Brighton Urban Wildlife Group and South Downs National Park; *Maureen Holt* (MH) - notes, *Colin Leeves* (CL) Keep the Ridge Green; *John Patmore* (JP) Eco21st ; *Jane Hawkins* (JH) Friends of Sheepcote Valley; *Christine Fitzgerald* (CF) Friends of Waterhall; *Marcus Oldfield* (MO), TWEAK, Withdean & Westdene Woods; *Nicola Yuill* (NY) Stanmer Preservation Society; *Stuart Derwent* (SD) Friends of Withdean Park; *Mike Parrott* (MP) Friends of Bevendean Down; *Roger Carter* (RC) Friends of Craven Wood; *Pru Gridley* (PG) - nature enthusiast; *James Newmarch* (JN) Landscape Architect; *Chris Lowe* (CLo) Friends of Queens Park; *Steve Savage* (SS) Sea Watch Foundation; *Norman Watson* (NW) & *Hannah Keely (*HK*),* Friends of Beacon Hill; *Leonard Gouzin* (LG) information officer for 'Food Matters' and guest; *Lee Ismail*, host.

Apologies: *Andrew FitzGerald* (AF) *Gill Taylor* (GT) Hollingbury & Burstead Woods*; Huw Morgan* (HM) Sussex Wildlife Trust; *David Alderton* (DA) Wild Park; *Joanna Walmisley; Robert Hardy;*

1. **Chairman's welcome** to all, introduction of group representatives, our guest Leonard and several new members.

2. **Minutes of last meeting** (3- 9 -13) were approved. **Matters arising** included: CF and PG wished to raise the subject of majority votes being taken on Items 4 (regarding letter to Rob Walker re: BHCC guest) and 7 (contacts from the Food Partnership).

It was agreed that any future Formal Responses sent by BHWF will include the explanatory paragraph:...
"Brighton and Hove's Wildlife Forum is a non-profit community partnership of representatives from seventeen local wildlife groups with local experts in their field; and over a hundred naturalists, students and professional environmental consultants. BHWF has the commitment to conserve and enhance Biodiversity across the Brighton and Hove area. Further details can be seen by visiting www.BHWF.org.uk"

Gillian Marston (now left BHCC) stated, in the context of the wildlife sites panel meetings, that management must be"*evidence based and can't be down to individuals' personal preferences.*"

'Green Spaces Network' meeting was held 10th October, Preston Park, unlikely to receive Admin. support from CVSF in future. Plan to set up Facebook Page. Plus see 'Appendix' regarding Horsdean Travellers site.
CVSF has 're-branded' as **Community Works** www.bhcommunityworks.org.uk (Launch event was 27th Nov. at their new office in Community Base on Queens Road)

3. **Applications for membership (JP)** included the following: **-** Maureen Winder - Triangle Community Chair, Selma Montford - Preston & Patcham Society; Don Fuller - RSPB Brighton, Specialist in bats; Becky Reynolds - Brighton-based Bricycles, interest in wildlife; Robyn Minogue - Councillor for Hanover, part based in France too; Steve Savage and Robert Hardy. All were approved,

4. **BHCC representation at BHWF meetings –** MR had invited David Larkin, who had been elevated to the long awaited new council position of Conservation Manager, to our meetings. DL had to decline this time due to work pressure, but hoped to attend forum meetings in the New Year.

5. **The Food Partnership –** MR introduced Leonard Gouzin**,** funded to produce two draft maps (which were passed round) showing urban fringe (countryside) sites which might also be suitable as food production land. This was being done with a view to ensuring wildlife/archaeological sites are not damaged in the identification of around 50 possible food growing areas locally. PB considered these maps needed clarification before being sent round for BHWF members to comment on, and should preferably be separated into East, West, and Central, areas. Suggested each group should scrutinise their own local area and that a month would be a suitable time scale. The files provide layers capturing the council's declared SNCIs, SSSIs and LNRs. The most recent Local Wildlife Sites could be shown as another layer.
CL raised the point 'who will be producing food for whom, and why allotments were not used instead', JH had experience with allotments, and while there appeared to be a long waiting list, when vacancies arose they appeared to

be difficult to fill. LG stated food would be consumed by groups concerned and education was to be one of the aims. PB thought it would be useful to input principles and pointed out some code of conduct was needed at this stage. JN considered planning 'change of land use' might be applicable.

6. Local Wildlife Sites in Brighton and Hove -JP was concerned over the lack of geological sites.
Meeting held 12 October*: notes available on BHWF web-site [https://sites.google.com/site/bhwildlifeforum/library]*
Present:Roger Carter, Jane Hawkins, Maureen Holt, Colin Leeves, James Newmarch, John Patmore, Martin Robinson.

Primarily it was agreed there is a need to manage our information base, and link this to the BHWF wildlife map.
Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre provides a similar service but their 'user' requirements have not been tested.
The old 'City Wildlife' web-site was not pleasant to use but SxBRC may be able to improve the user experience here.
Note: www.biodiversitysussex.org domain used by the Biodiversity Partnership was 'lost' by the SBRC.

7. Reviewing the Conservation Agenda - which now needs bringing up to date. Detailed amendments have been posted on: http://s4.zetaboards.com/bhwildlifeforum/topic/9959320 .

- Amend/ Save the Booth' to 'Promote the Booth Museum as a resource for Environmental Excellence'
- Define how Sustainability Goals will incorporate local biodiversity and geodiversity.
- Produce summary description of Brighton and Hove's biodiversity and geodiversity features.
- Ensure at least 20% of the land area south of the National Park boundary is clearly managed with biodiversity as an objective.
- Deliver a more evidence-based countryside management service which clearly defines objectives and priorities in Council environment services. But note that many conservation objectives are delivered by others, not just the council. (JP proposed details on text can be agreed by e-mail and the 'Agenda' then updated on-line).

Detailed Amendments have been posted on: http://s4.zetaboards.com/bhwildlifeforum/topic/9959320 . Please contribute to this discussion.

8. Local Groups updates - concerns & successes.

Benfield Wildlife & Conservation Group (DoB) are busy once again clearing overgrown bramble, hawthorn and scrub during regular weekly sessions on the hill. 20 nest box tubes have been collected to put up in the spring to see if they have any Dormice on the reserve after an excellent autumn talk on the Dormouse. The new lectern information board will be with us shortly and is looking good. Dave attended a workshop on developing a new shared identity for the National Park rather than a corporate identity. The Herdwicks from the conservation flock are on the reserve presently and we have a woolly jumper, i.e. one sheep who keeps leaping over the fence into the adjacent farmers field, luckily it is agile like a goat and under pressure, jumps back uphill over the barbed wire fence. One disturbing occasion was a man using the hillside for target practice but facing the bridle path and footpath as he did so, Rangers and police were informed. Again the Ranger has been informed regarding another worrying incident on the hillside where two men with metal detectors dig up the ground relentlessly on regular days....
Our next event is on May 14th 2014 our AGM, with a talk by Dr Dan Danahar on "Fifty Years of Butterflies" an exciting story not to be missed, all welcome. See our web site on http://benfieldlnr.tumblr.com/

Friends of Hangleton Park (DB) attended an event with the information board to raise the group's profile at the Hangleton and Knoll 50+ Group at St Richards Community Centre. Work days take place every month; time has been spent litter picking and delivering leaflets to advertise the Christmas event. Next workdays are 18th January and 22nd February 2014 -everyone is welcome to come along and help.
We have been working hard towards our next event on the 14th December 11 -3 pm. which is The Christmas Fair and free Wreath Making Event, to be held at the Hangleton Community Centre, Harmsworth Crescent, Hove. Painting pinecones and making items to adorn the wreaths and free table top decorations, all welcome to come along.

Friends of Beacon Hill (NW) –has only just been set up, but already a full committee had held two work sessions including litter picking, and Peter Whitcomb had created a webpage.

Friends of Bevendean Down (MP) – have been concentrating on amphibians and besides finding 5 frogs and 4 toads were monitoring the needs of a family of orphaned slowworms.

Friends of Craven Wood- (RC) – reported on how quickly wildlife moved in once wildflowers were present in their new glade. RC felt the death of masses of sycamores in the spring had been a lucky opportunity to increase species diversity, the Silver Wash fritillary had been discovered on site.

Friends of Queens Park (CLo) **-** as Swiftconservation.org 'local helper' I work with the Chief Surveyor at the General Hospital, Nursing staff and Contractor and Clients, to minimise disturbance to active nest sites by creating scaffold

bridges to protect the swift flight path. Also to install 12 retrofitted 'Ecosurve' nest boxes in Dyke Block incl. three which duplicate active holes. With enough volunteers they carried out observations on all 12 active swift nest sites at the Hospital and they photographed Swifts entering and leaving all active holes. Installed MP3 player for swift calls in Queens Park Clock Tower. Got City Parks go ahead to install 50 green PVC covered welded mesh cages in Queens Park Pond to defeat water-bird grazing of Lilies, marginals etc. Proposal to be funded by Friends of Queens Park and Grant application. NB Cages are recyclable and could be used gratis.

Friends of Sheepcote Valley (LB) - The last workdays have been spent clearing paths of the brambles and buddleias that have grown up like thickets in several areas. Volunteers are few – and an ageing group unfortunately – but those that do attend are enthusiastic and enjoy the workout in fresh air. Sheep are grazing the eastern slopes of the valley and are gradually being moved northwards every few weeks so that the grazing can be utilised over the whole area.
This next Saturday FSV hold their annual "Green Decoration Making Morning" at Robert Lodge opposite the Whitehawk Bus Garage where all greenery will be provided for making Christmas Wreaths and garlands. Ranger Paul has organised a BTO bird Ringing Session in the valley as it is such a good migratory corridor.

Friends of Withdean Park (SD) - The monthly Work Mornings were held in September, October, and November. The first two involved doing our best to try to raise the standard of the lilac beds to an acceptable standard and for the third we returned to the Pond Garden where Keith Cobbett gave some valuable advice relating to the fish pond and the wildlife pond. Sadly, litter picking also remains a necessary task as it does elsewhere in our town's parks, open spaces and elsewhere.
The Nursing Home on the corner of London Road and Carden Avenue adjacent to Withdean Park appears to be nearing completion. The Friends wait to hear from the Council as to the funds being made available from the Section 106 monies to the benefit of the park. The Friends have said that they will add some of their own funds to enable some more significant works to be carried out. The ninth Lilac Lark Fayre will be on Sunday 11 May 2014.

Friends of Waterhall (CF) - The Friends of Waterhall have received through the Millennium Tree Planting Initiative, 375 native tree whips which have been shared with Green Ridge. Most of these have now been planted with the help of Green Gym. Our ranger has obtained his brush cutting licence and been busy reclaiming cleared pockets of scrub that have been overtaken by nettle and bramble. Further areas for sheep grazing have been identified and notices have been posted advising people of the new fencing. Additional dormouse boxes have been purchased allowing Waterhall to form part of the national survey undertaken by PTES.

Keep the Ridge Green (MH) - Sheep returned to graze the site in sections during Autumn. The memorial tree to previous chairman John Golds, regularly watered by his widow, survived the summer drought but needed further protection by ranger Peter Craske as Gill came back from holiday to discover it had been damaged by the 'woolly munchies'. Christine from Waterhall shared their quite substantial number of Millennium trees with KTRG group for placing in the wood. Recent workdays have included removing outgrown tubes and stakes from the copse in front of the Mill and planting 750 plug plants, mostly primroses- in the wood. Bluebell planting in conjunction with Westdene School .is planned. No successor has been found yet for the post of Secretary (although Annabeth is kindly standing in) or Colin as outdoor meetings organiser. Rosemary continues to find evidence of dormice.

Preston Park (JP, local resident). No significant wildlife reports. There was a small amount of branch damage to trees during the high winds in October. Annual General Meeting held on 13th November 2013. Became clear that the gardening/horticulture manager was not keen on perennials and did not see native perennials as being appropriate to a "*Public park used by many people, most of who were not very interested in nature*".

Stanmer Preservation Society (NY) - **Mediaeval heritage site of Stanmer under potential threat** - thanks to a good vigilant local, SPS recently heard of planned orchard planting in part of the paddock opposite Stanmer tearooms. This is the site of the mediaeval Stanmer village mentioned in the Doomsday Survey as having between 51 & 75 households *(A History of Sussex – J.R.Armstrong)*.
Both BHAS & the County Archaeologist described the potential loss of heritage as 'tragic' and at very short notice BHAS organised a geophysics survey for 19th October. Our thanks go to the band of volunteers completing two surveys of the proposed orchard site.
Threat to the Rural Museum -In Oct '13 the lessee of this site served a termination notice to the Museum, who now have just a few months to quit the site and find alternative accommodation. **Tree planting**: a small sum of grant money for Stanmer is to be used to replace diseased elms removed from near the toilet block in the village.

TWEACK - Withdean and Westdene LNR (MO/MW) - Planning is still in progress for the new nature trail in the Withdean Stadium Woods and an official opening is aimed for in July 2014. Twentieth Anniversary celebrations in the Stadium Woods meadow were a great success and attracted about a hundred visitors including a large number of children who enjoyed their picnics and the various 'environment activities' organised by Neil Doyle (BHCC ranger),

Huw Morgan (SWT) and the TWEACK committee. We finished with the cutting and eating of an enormous anniversary cake (made by Lili, our secretary) and drinking a toast to TWEACK .
We have also had three woodland management days in the Stadium Woods with an emphasis on 'step repairs'.
Our next activity is Christmas Wreath Making at the Westdene School Christmas Fayre on Saturday 7th December between 12.00-16.00.

9. CSP – RC reported little was said about wildlife as the BHWF meeting prior to it had been cancelled. EU funding for transport & growth was discussed. Mention made of good news over marine conservation sites. Cllr Pete West advised that Wild Park, one of the best chalk grassland sites in the city will be recommended for designation as an LNR.

10. Planning –
(1) Marina development applications: JH reported there appeared to be two separate applications:-
The Sept 2007 application was refused 19 December 2008. Appeal and new public enquiry 3/11 – 16/12/2009,
Inspector's report 19/4/2010. Appeal dismissed, except if 'flaws in S106 obligation can be resolved'. At some point between April 2010 and now these 'flaws' were resolved…
Tim Ridgeway on 25 April 2013 in Argus reported "no barriers to this development going ahead".

The earlier planning application was from Brunswick Developments 2004, 988 flats in 11 buildings, then reduced to 853 flats in 11 buildings, from 6 - 40 storeys. This was approved June 2006. Development commenced but not completed, so planning permission stands – it's not *'out of time'*. (Friends of Sheepcote Valley had responded to the application – put in objections ref height of tall tower block – only a couple of metres lower that the northern highest point of Sheepcote, so effect on migratory birds etc. . . . .)

(2) Dorothy Stringer Application - Dorothy Stringer application has recently been updated on the online planning register (21 November) to include Phase 1 map. However it still fails to address the points BHWF raised on BAP species, including reptiles which are likely to be hibernating in the proposed 'Copse' area and hedgerow. Still no indication from Jason Hawkes (B&H Planning officer) on what the officer's recommendation will be. So far he thinks that there are an approximately equal numbers of letters of support and objection. The application will go to the planning committee on 11 December. (Since the meeting the application has been refused)

(3) Plans for permanent Traveller site at Horsdean (information from Green Spaces Network)
Brighton & Hove City Council has submitted a planning application for a permanent Traveller site to the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA). The proposed new permanent Traveller site is next to the recently re-opened transit site at Horsdean. SDNPA say that a final decision is expected by 31 December 2013. South Downs National Park Authority has now finished consulting with the public about the proposal.
Information about our plans: The plans include 12 new permanent pitches alongside 21 retained transit pitches. Each permanent pitch will consist of space for a static caravan and other vehicles, plus a kitchen, bathroom and dayroom in an amenity block. Tenants will have to sign a lease that will, like all social housing, ensure that any anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated. Like all other council tenants, all residents will be responsible for rent, bills and council tax.
The permanent site will provide long term secure residential pitches for either caravans or mobile homes. The transit sites provide short term pitches for Travellers to stop for up to three months. This should increase the council's capacity to deal with unauthorised encampments, although the permanent Traveller site will not provide a complete solution.
Landscape: We have worked with landscape advisors who are specialists in the national park to prepare a scheme that minimises the visual appearance of the new site through using the location at the bottom of the valley and by screening with new planting. The planting also reduces the visual impact of the existing transit site, so offering benefits to the national park setting.

11. Any other business –

- **Dog fouling**. PB mentioned that he had met up with BHCC's Head of Licensing to discuss "the dog problem" on wildlife sites, particularly with professional dog walkers. He suggested that local groups log activity when on their sites (dates, numbers, issues etc) that could be submitted to BHCC to provide solid evidence for the council to then take action.

- **"Future management of Ladies Mile LNR** after recent consultation by BHCC." Dave Larkin sent MR a summary of proposals for the Management of Ladies Mile Nature Reserve, to include grazing plans for improving the chalk grassland community. Areas of blackthorn would cater for the Brown Hairstreak butterflies found nearby.
- **RSPB Big Garden bird watches** taking place 25th & 26th January 2014.

- **'What Has Nature Ever Done For Us**? How Money Really Does Grow On Trees.' Tony Juniper, 10 Jan 2013, Profile Books. ISBN: 9781846685606. He uses evidence to demonstrate financial value of natural processes to support *human benefit*. Identifies how costly environmental destruction can be in terms of water supply, land erosion and food production. Also emphasizes 'Ecosystem Services' concept.
- These concepts are also covered in the **'Paying for Ecosystem Services - Best Practice Guide'** DEFRA guidance, see BHWF Discussion Board: search for 'Green Economics- does not value nature adequately' 'One Planet Living' booklet - p.33 *"Leave space for your local wildlife* - it's declining faster than you can imagine.

- PG reported a sighting of a Merlin in the city.

12. **Date of next meetings -** 11th February, 22nd April. 2014.

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