

## Brighton & Hove Council

# Wildlife Advisory Group

Minutes of Meeting held 7.30pm, Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> July 2005  
At The Booth Museum

### Summary of Key Recommendations for the Sustainability Commission

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**1. Damage to Ancient Hedgerow:** The council owns an ancient hedgerow which runs behind houses at Green Ridge, Westdean. The hedge is maintained by the council in partnership with 'Keep the Ridge Green', a local voluntary group. The WAG is concerned about allegations that sections of the hedge have been illegally removed by householders and fly tipping. Letters to householders from the Countryside Team explaining the importance of the hedge have not had an effect. The WAG recommends that council lawyers write to all householders in Green Ridge, pointing out potential infringements of the law and the potential penalties.

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**2. Biodiversity Strategy:** The council should publish a vision for biodiversity in Brighton & Hove as a matter of urgency, to support development of the emerging Local Development Framework and imminent revision of the Community Strategy. Development of the vision should involve both the WAG and the wider community.

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**3. Brighton & Hove Goes Wild:** The WAG welcomes the Countryside Team's 'Brighton & Hove Goes Wild' initiative as an excellent way of raising awareness and helping people to be more involved in local nature. However some WAG members did not hear about events until after they had finished. The event should be repeated in future years but with better publicity.

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#### **Present:**

#### ***Wildlife Advisory Group Members:***

John Patmore (JP)

Botanical Society of the British Isles (Chair)

Angela Marlow (AM)

SWT / Friends of Preston Park

Carole Robinson (CR)	Benfield Wildlife Group
Dawn Scott (DS)	University of Brighton
Helen Fazakerley (HF)	Friends of Preston Park
Janet Stuart (JS)	Friends of Withdean Park
Janice Watson (JW)	Sussex Wildlife Trust
Martin Wilson (MW)	TWEAK
Maureen Holt (MH)	Keep the Ridge Green
Mike Parrot (MP)	Friends of Bevendean Down
Patrick Fitzsimons (PF)	University of Sussex Bat Research Group
Phil Belden (PB)	Brighton Urban Wildlife Group

***City Council Representatives:***

Jane Willmott (JW)	Countryside Manager
Gerald Legg (GL)	Keeper of Natural Sciences, Booth Museum
Matthew Thomas (MT)	Ecologist (minutes)

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Gloria Wheatcroft	Council for the Protection of Rural England
Crispin Kirkpatrick	Council Local Nature Reserves Officer

**2 Minutes of the meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> April 2005**

2.1 These were agreed as an accurate record.

**3 Matters arising from the minutes**

**WAG Representation:** JP had written to English Nature and the Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) asking for nominated representatives on the WAG. PB had also approached the Environment Agency (EA). JW was duly welcomed as the representative from SWT. There had been no response from EN. Aprille Biggs (EA) had confirmed that she would not be able to attend the WAG on a regular basis but would like to continue to receive papers.

***Recommendation:***

- ***MT agreed to contact EN officers who live in Brighton & Hove to ask them if they would like to attend WAG meetings.***

DS: During University term time, lecturing commitments make it difficult to attend WAG. Inviting a representative from the student's Environment Network to future meetings would be a positive move. This was agreed.

**Recommendations:**

- ***DS to invite a Brighton University student representative to future meetings.***
- ***Future WAG meetings to be scheduled outside University terms if possible.***

PF: No longer working for the University of Sussex, although still involved in their bat research group. PF was encouraged to continue attending WAG meetings in that capacity, but an additional University representative would also be desirable.

**Recommendation:**

- ***PF to approach the University of Sussex about an additional representative.***

*Update: Naomi Ewald has kindly agreed to attend future WAG meetings to represent the University.*

**Damage to Hedge at Green Ridge:** No progress.

**Recommendation:**

- ***MT to ask Legal Services to write formally to householders who damage the ancient hedge, warning of further action if the damage continues.***

## **4 Council Updates**

JW: CK's contract as Local Nature Reserves Officer has been extended to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006 (welcomed by the WAG). JW would be on maternity leave from 15<sup>th</sup> July for about a year and the Countryside Manager post would be filled by Hugo Blomfield (currently working for the National Trust).

MT: CityWildlife now has 121 registered naturewardens who have collectively submitted over 1,500 species records to the CityWildlife database. He encouraged WAG members to 'sign up' and use the web site and its Forum as a 'one stop shop' for wildlife issues in Brighton & Hove. A dedicated WAG sub-directory has been set up in the Forum for discussing WAG issues over the Internet.

## **5 WAG Reporting: Links to the Sustainability Commission**

JP: On 25<sup>th</sup> May 2005 the Sustainability Commission agreed to establish a formal reporting line to the WAG. Up to then it had not been possible to develop a clear audit of how WAG recommendations are taken into account by the council. It is anticipated that reporting to the Commission will improve feedback to the WAG on its key recommendations.

PB: Concerned that the Commission does not have decision-making powers.

MT: The Commission has a specific role to promote Sustainability within the council. Its members also sit on a number of other council Committees and are well placed to promote and report on WAG concerns where they affect council functions.

***Recommendations:***

- ***Future WAG minutes should include a list of key recommendations on the cover page for the Sustainability Commission.***
- ***WAG documents should be published on CityWildlife.***
- ***MT to look into publishing WAG minutes on 'The Wave'***

## **6 Developing a Vision for Biodiversity to 2020**

Ways of taking forward the emerging Biodiversity Strategy were discussed. There is a need for the nature conservation community to change focus to meet the needs of the new Local Development Framework (LDF) process. The current emphasis under the Local Plan has been towards protecting the best sites and offsetting losses, but the emerging LDF puts emphasis on developing a spatially-based vision for the future and on measuring results. This opens up new opportunities for biodiversity gain. This is one step further than Biodiversity Action Planning, which sets targets, but is not usually linked to specific land allocations on a map.

Other relevant issues:

- Important nature conservation sites continue to be damaged, especially outside the planning system.
- Nature conservation needs vision which is clearly relevant to core urban issues such as housing, health, social inclusion.
- WAG needs to develop broad consensus amongst key interest groups about what biodiversity in Brighton & Hove will be like in (say) 20 years.
- How can change be monitored?

The importance of linking with the developing Green Space Strategy and Urban Characterisation Study was discussed. Consultation and involving the wider community was also identified as a key area requiring work, as was linking with the LDF Statement of Community Involvement.

**Recommendations:**

- **MT should arrange a meeting to progress ‘biodiversity visioning’, in time to inform LDF development.**
- **MT should seek to ensure that WAG is formally included as a ‘stakeholder’ in the LDF development process and in consultations on the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) before the next WAG meeting.**

**Updates:**

- *A biodiversity strategy meeting has been arranged for 31<sup>st</sup> August from 10am to 2pm in Room 114, King’s House (Grand Avenue, Hove) with lunch provided. All WAG members are invited - please confirm your attendance.*
- *Policy Planning has confirmed that the WAG will be formally consulted throughout LDF development and on the SCI in particular.*

## **7 Planning Issues**

MT briefly updated the WAG on progress with the following current development proposals :

**Application Reference:** BH2001/01811  
**Decision Date:** August 2002  
**Location:** Land at Brighton Station

MT: Discussions are on-going regarding detailed implementation of the Section 106 Agreement, which requires the installation of a ‘green corridor’ through the site. Separate planning conditions on the Outline approval also require incorporation of nest boxes, green walls and naturalistic landscaping throughout the scheme. These are being implemented as detailed planning applications come in on each of the blocks within the scheme.

Concern was expressed about the degree to which the public and the WAG have been involved in progress with the individual development blocks. MT: Planning applications for each of the blocks are advertised in the normal way. MT would inform WAG if proposals differ significantly from that already agreed in the Masterplan.

**Application Reference:** BH2004/03673/FP  
**Decision Date:** Not yet decided

**Location:** Brighton Marina

MT: Discussions are ongoing with the applicant over the details of the proposed nature conservation improvements to be secured through a Section 106 Agreement. These include enhancement and interpretation of Black Rock Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI), green (shingle) roofs, vegetated shingle landscaping and nest boxes (including a Peregrine box for the tower). There may also be proposals for Volks Railway SNCI but these are yet to be clarified.

**Application Reference:** BH2002/02145/FP  
**Decision Date:** May 2003  
**Location:** Bazehill Road, Rottingdean

MT: The S2106 Agreement continues to be implemented over the summer. The translocated downland turf appears to have lost species, possibly due to a release of nutrients during the translocation. The turf will be monitored by the applicant for five years following construction. Other elements of the scheme (wildlife pond, integrated nest boxes and green walls) are being implemented over the summer. The applicant is obliged under the agreement to provide annual reports of the success of the nature conservation works and these could form a basis for good practice elsewhere.

PB: An application is due from Southern Water on their proposals for a new sewage treatment works at Peacehaven. The development includes a new flow pipe from Brighton which may affect important nature conservation sites.

*Update: Application no. **BH2005/01048/FP** includes a very comprehensive Environmental Statement which addresses most nature conservation concerns. However some loss and subsequent reinstatement of grassland and scrub is proposed at Marine Gate and the ES is ambiguous regarding the triangle of grassland at Roedean Golf Course, which supports a large colony of Autumn Lady's Tresses (*Spiranthes spiralis*). MT has asked for clarification of these from the case officer. Determination of the application is on-going and no Committee date has been set.*

## 8 AOB

PB: Welcomed Brighton & Hove Goes Wild but concerned about the level of publicity. WAG members had not heard about some events until after they had taken place.

***Recommendation: Brighton & Hove Goes Wild should be repeated in future years but there should be better publicity.***

JW: Three proposed Local Nature Reserves are still to be declared. Discussions continue with the tenants involved to ensure they are happy to sign-up to the declarations.

MT: Press releases from English Nature and the council are available on [www.CityWildlife.org.uk](http://www.CityWildlife.org.uk) on the latest news about making safe the cliffs behind Brighton Marina.

## **9 Date of Next Meeting**

**10.00am, Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> November, Room 126, King's House**

**PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF DATE AND VENUE**

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