

## **HARLOW BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING 11<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2014 AT 2.00PM HELD AT PARNDON WOOD NATURE RESERVE**

#### **THOSE ATTENDING:**

Darren Fazackerley, Peter Tye, Jan Ragg, Bill Weston, Mick Westby, Derek Barry, Eric Gammer, Colin Lincoln, Mike Levett, D Spelling, Pauline Tidmas, Lauren Hull, Chris Rees, Harry Harrison

Terri Bishop – Minutes.

#### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

John Curry, Cllr Jean Clark

Notices – Ray Matthews, officer for Harlow Council and later Kier Harlow has left after 32 years. Has moved on to be a consultant for Hackney Council. Contacts at Kier will now be Suzanne Prunty and Joshua Tinker.

#### **1&2. MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING**

Agreed as a correct record.

Green Flag Award – This year will be the 6<sup>th</sup> Year that the council hopes to be awarded Green Flag status at Parndon Wood. Submission was sent in December and hope to hear who the judges are early April. Mystery shopper visited in December and the report showed that the visit went very well. A full inspection is due this year, with the final results expected in July.

The council has received an award for Greenspace Infrastructure Plan (awarded in December). Now adopted as policy.

Under item 8 Any Other Business the article about horses was on the Star website, not in the newspaper.

Both Hawkenbury and Stort Valley meadows have now been cut.

Tree planting at Jean McAlpine Park has taken place, reported in the newspaper.

#### **3. ECCO UPDATE**

First full year has been very good, with just under 10,000 visitors to the site. A good start to the New Year has also been recorded January – March with 1,000 visitors despite the poor weather. For the same period last year the number was 450.

Already started to take bookings for school visits in June.  
Easter event on 20<sup>th</sup> April, tickets being sold.

The café has been renamed to FOT Rooms. Been on a food hygiene course, hope to sell cakes and other light snacks.  
Partnership with Infinite Wood Turners, items being sold at the reserve.  
Not heard anything further from the builder regarding the wood store.  
Lots of parties have been booked in.

April will see ECCO's 3<sup>rd</sup> year, and will be concentrating on the tea rooms and school visits this year. A 3-page article on the reserve printed in Essex Life magazine.

#### 4. **KIER HARLOW**

Apologies for no representative being able to attend, depleted in numbers at present. A report has been prepared.

Joshua Tinker has been very busy since last October with successive storm damage. 70 trees have fallen and 400 incidents have been reported. Team dealing with emergency works as a priority. An action plan and additional staff and contractors have been put in place to help Kier clear the backlog, but this will take time. Health & Safety, insurance and damage to property reports are being dealt with as priority. Trees in some areas may see remedial works done to make safe, with follow up work coming at a later date.

Trees brought down by the storm will not be replaced as the replanting budget has been cut, however other tree planting programmes will be delivered by the Ward Improvement Programme.

Winter works have been progressing slowly and teams have been hampered by the very wet ground conditions, but dryer conditions have helped to get back on track. The 2 supervisors have made a big push on hedge cutting to complete the programme before the nesting season begins. The 2 yr programme ends 31<sup>st</sup> March and Kier are systematically following the programme. Handwork team follows on behind.

Hedge cutting along Abercrombie Way has been done poorly and sharp branches have been left jutting out, which could be a health and safety concern. Felt that the flail could be doing a better job as it appears to be smashing the hedge rather than cutting it. More care should be taken.

The Environmental Services Manager is now Mick Jenkins.

Paringdon Sport Club - a number of mature trees have been cut down to around 5ft high in front of the new sign. Planning was granted for the sign and retrospective planning was granted for this to be lit. Permission was not given however, for the trees to be cut back. This was carried out by the grounds maintenance staff of the sports club on 24<sup>th</sup> February. This was witnessed and there are photographs which have been passed onto the legal team to take up. A restraining order is being considered to prevent any more trees being cut down and legal advice sought on how to deal with the damage that has already been done.

#### 5. **FLAGSHIP HABITAT FOR 2014 – WILDFLOWER MEADOWS PROPOSED**

The Stort Valley and Hawkenbury Meadows have been proposed to be the flagship habitat for this year, to create awareness and support for habitats in the town. Wildflower meadows have been lost at an alarming rate. These habitats benefit many different types of biodiversity.

Considering the creation of a new meadow, and there are grants available to assist in the initial work, however ongoing maintenance is a concern (cut and collect). Suggestions made for assistance from local farmers or sponsorship from local businesses that would benefit from the increased volume of visitors the meadow would attract. The hay could also be used at Pets Corner.

## 6. **HARLOW WOODS SSSI MANAGEMENT PLAN 2014-2019**

Mike Levett currently reviewing management plans for Parndon and Hospital and Ridsen woods. There have been quite significant changes since the original plan was introduced in 2008.

For the next 5 years to 2019, will be concentrating on the minimum intervention area at Parndon Wood along with Natural England. There is a large area in Hospital and Ridsens that still needs to be looked at.

Meeting with Natural England in April to discuss what can be done about the bramble regrowth. Also looking at a new trail, bridge and the wood store. The new trail would only be open during certain parts of the year, looking at July to October, to reduce impact on wildlife.

Draft plan for Parndon Wood should be complete by the end of the month. Hospital and Ridsens to follow.

It was noticed that a large amount of sugar beet has been placed in the minimum intervention area, which the deer have been eating. DF to check if this is part of the deer survey.

Mark Hall Wood – don't have access to a chipping machine to use the chips to improve the paths. Currently working to set up a volunteer group to help out. Community pay back team suggested to help out.

## 7. **OAKWOOD POND AND OAKWOOD SOUTH IMPROVEMENTS**

From 1<sup>st</sup> April will be looking at the site to see what can be done to improve it. Money has been secured from the Ward Improvements to do tree work, improve footpath and access trails and install a boardwalk to allow access around the whole pond. Mike Levett trying to arrange a meeting with the Stort Valley Angling Society.

Some works have been lined up and looking to get under way April/May and will look at getting grant funding for wider pond reinstatement.

Drainage water is not being put back into the pond, which would improve sediment flow. The natural spring has been blocked.

In the woods to the rear there is a cuckoo pen, would be good to have a sign up to show what it was. Estate records show that the pond dates back to at least 1760 and could possibly be traced back to 1050.

## 8. **BRENTHALL AND BARNESLEY WOODS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Deferred until next meeting.

9. **NATURE RESERVES UPDATE & WILDSpace! REPORT**

Please see report by Mike Levett and Lenny Collins.

Mike reported that there is still some recovery from the poor winter and storm damage ongoing.

Thanks expressed to all volunteers for their hard work that has been done so far, good numbers of volunteers out despite the atrocious weather.

Bluebell Wood by Quarry Springs – the land does not belong to the council, so any activities would need permission from Home and Community Association.

10. **WILDLIFE PROJECTS GROUP UPDATE**

Not much to report at the moment. There are some signs from Veolia (who sponsored a lot of the work) to be put up along the river. Info board to be installed in the small car park behind the station.

Will be looking into options for wildflower meadows.

11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Annual Biodiversity Report 2013

Report issued capturing all the good work that has been done by conservation and volunteer groups. Paper copies are available at the meeting and will be emailed and added to the council website. There will be an article in the summer edition of Harlow Times and this report can be referenced.

A large tree has come down in Marshgate Spring and is completely blocking the path. Mike to report through.

Dates for future meetings: 10th June 2014 at 7pm and 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014 at 2pm  
10<sup>th</sup> March 2015 meeting agreed at 2pm.

Meeting closed 4.00pm.