

Harlow Biodiversity Partnership

Minutes

Meeting Held 10th March 2016

Attendance List

NAME	ORGANISATION REPRESENTED
Darren Fazackerley	Harlow Council
Patrick Bailly	Harlow Council
Josey Travell	ECCO
Councillor Tony Hall	Harlow Council
Colin Lincoln	Harlow Wildlife Project
Mike Barham	Wildspace & Greenteam Volunteer
Chris Rees	Stort Valley Angling Society
Laurence Norwin-Allen	Bishopsfield Resident

1: Apologies: Joshua Tinker (Kier), Councillor Jean Clark, Derek Barry, Sally Naylor, Linda Hamling

2. Minutes of last meeting were agreed.

3. Matters Arising – How is himalayan balsam controlled? – Easily pulled at the right time of year when the main stem is strong enough not to break, it is shallow rooted.

DF - Green Flag update – Parndon Woods was mystery shopped last year for which it received a glowing report. The 2016/17 application has been submitted and a full inspection is due in May. A Special Innovation Award is also being applied for, based on the ECCO partnership, the ECCO bees and their honey, the “Trolls of Parndon Wood” book and café among other things.

CL – Asked if the A414 Bee orchid wildflower verge/Town Park translocation was successful. DF – showing signs of working well with the turf settling in well. There will be fencing installed to protect the regrowth area.

Cllr.TH – Will the A414 works affect the hedgerow flailing/maintenance alongside the allotments? DF – Flailing will take place from inside the allotments so this will not be affected.

Mitigation work along the A414 was proposed for the Roman Temple Site but this was assessed by PB and Luke Bristow (ECC Senior Ecologist) and deemed unsuitable. Mark Hall Wood was a preferred site for mitigation. A management plan is being written for the site under consultation with the Landscape and Biodiversity team.

4. ECCO Update

Below is a quick update from ECCO though since the last meeting:

JT - Forest School training is going well with stage 2 training complete and stage 3 almost complete which will give a fully qualified status.

JT has received good feedback from the surveying opportunities. RSPB bird watch and invertebrate survey results are now available. Afternoon teas each month are very popular. A monthly photo competition generates a lot of interest and participation of ECCO's Parndon Wood Facebook page. Over the Christmas period there was a Santa's Grotto and two 'Make a Bird Feeder' events have been held. Mammal Weekend was poorly attended due to inclement weather - in 2016 it will be moved to an October weekend in the hope of better weather.

Harlow College still provide young volunteers from time to time who help with some of the reserve maintenance.

The new windows have been installed and have made a huge difference with good feedback from regular users.

There is a lot of litter and flytipping appearing overnight in the car park. On a couple of occasions horse manure has been thrown from the car park area into the reserve through the fence, which has come from a horse drawn funeral carriage.

Q – Could cameras be used to catch perpetrators? DF – this is probably not permissible in a court. PB – police patrols are active in this area but possibly at the wrong times?

Thanks were expressed to ECCO for their valuable contribution in providing a high quality facility which is very much appreciated. It was mentioned that ECCO in addition to maintaining the opening hours for the Reserve, providing a wardening role and a full programme of events also provide financial support for the upkeep of the woodland and in supporting the work of the volunteers enabling clothing, tools and equipment to be purchased with the £2800.00 funding provided.

5. HDC & Kier Harlow Report

HDC Report:

DF – distributed the Harlow Times to highlight council updates, such as the Kier Harlow ending and HTS replacement from 1st February 2017, which will hopefully be a seamless transfer.

The Council budget is by and large to remain the same for 2016/17.

Forestry Commission funding through the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) will end in mid-2017 and we are looking into entering a new scheme – Countryside Stewardship which is likely to be far more bureaucratic and harder to gain a successful application. Funding of £2,800 has been provided through ECCO's woodland maintenance grant.

A capital programme over 5 years will provide funding over 5 years for biodiversity improvements with £30,000 available in 2016/17.

Kier Harlow Report:

Winter works programme is going well. At the Environment SIT meeting it was reported that the tree works performance dropped from 100% down to 80% which has been put down to November storms. An action plan has been put in place to catch up.

Mild winter weather has led to the grass growing throughout the winter. Cutting has not been an option due to wet ground conditions. Cutting will start as soon as ground conditions allow.

Q. Laurence Norwin-Allen complained that a 70m section of pyracantha hedgerow at Bishopsfield was in need of trimming but was instead coppiced displacing wildlife and leaving his home feeling overlooked. DF – The programme of removing shrub beds is to allow the brambles to be grubbed out and the deep seated litter to be removed. The shrubs will then grow back. This is the most effective way of controlling brambles now that many herbicides have been taken out of use.

5. Parndon Lock Meadows Introduction

PB introduced the Parndon Lock Meadows project:

The Council recently entered into an agreement with the Land Trust to undertake ongoing maintenance and management of Parndon Lock Meadows, with the aim of improving the area for local people and visitors and to contribute to the Stort Valley Living Landscape Project.

By working closely with site stakeholders and the local community, the Council will be managing the grassland and wetland areas and by creating a scrape (a shallow depression in the land designed to seasonally trap water and attract local wildlife) overlooked by a viewing platform. Access throughout the site will also be improved by replacing six stiles with mobility kissing gates and by resurfacing the ancient byway, Cat Lane which connects the A414 to Hertford and Parndon Mill.

The first year of this project has focused on hedgerow restoration and the Council's Landscaping and Biodiversity Team has been working in partnership with volunteer groups from the Council's Greenteam volunteers and Parndon Mill to restore Cat Lane. The teams have been working to coppice a 200 metre section of neglected ancient hedgerow; Greenteam Volunteers have so far put in over 400 hours of their time to take this on.

6. Flagship species/habitat for 2016.

It was agreed by all that the flagship specie/habitat should be extended to a flagship project and that being the Parndon Lock Meadows Project.

7. Nature Reserves Update and Wildspace report

Copy of Wildspace! report issued – see attached below.

MB - The investment into Lenny Collin's chainsaw usage has proven to be very effective in the productivity of the works we carry out in our reserves. Is there a strategic plan for equipment to make the volunteers work more efficient?

DF – the £30,000 biodiversity improvement capital for this coming year and for the next 5 years, it may be possible to determine what it can and cannot be used for.

CR – Can we tap into development funds?

PB – We are already doing this with the Parndon Lock Meadows Project and with mitigation for Mark Hall Woods being worked on currently.

8. Any Other Business

CR – Can anything be done about the Hospital car park diverting the water that once fed the Oakwood Pond?

PB – We are currently working with the land drainage team and properties and facilities team to ascertain if the car park is in fact the cause of the pond failing to fill. Actions will then follow.

CL introduced Harlow Wildlife Projects Wildflower Restoration Project along the Stort Valley Meadows: We wish to replace the current tall rough grasses growing there with less vigorous grass species, and include in the re-seeding a variety of native wildflower species to increase the biodiversity quality of the site, adding in the process an attractive feature to this area of the Town Park, in appearance it would still be a grass meadow but containing within it a high floral content.

MB – Q – What is the Council's position on the Town Park development proposal?

DF – 31st March is the deadline for comments for the planning consultation. Derek Barry of Harlow Badger Group is looking into this.

Meeting closed 4:20pm

Date of Next Meeting: 9 June 2016 at 7pm at Parndon Wood Nature Reserve

Future meeting dates are 10 November 2016 at 2pm and 9 March 2017 at 2pm

HARLOW BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP MEETING 10th March 2016.

NATURE RESERVES UPDATE & WILDSpace! REPORT

Since November 2015 the following tasks and events have occurred on our Nature Reserves with the Wildspace Group, and Greenteam who on occasions worked with the Hertfordshire based group The Wednesday Volunteers:

Staffing:

- Patrick Bailly has been assisting Lenny Collins in the running of the volunteer group activities.

Nature Reserves:

Range of tasks completed by Wildspace and Greenteam Volunteers included:

Parndon Wood & Hospital and Ridsen Woods:

- Path and trail clearance;
- Bramble control and opening views across woodland;
- Recovering fencing from older coppice stools.
- Wood processing areas constructed.
- Six Oak standards felled in coppice areas.
- Deer fencing installed around 2014/15 area.
- Deer fencing installation around 2015/16 area (ongoing).
- Perimeter fencing maintained.
- Signage and interpretation installed throughout.
- Bicycle parking point installed by Conservation Centre.
- Small hurdle built around bluebell area in front of Conservation Centre.
- Acorn collection and a number of young oaks transplanted from Parndon Common and healed-in to the tree nursery.
- H & R track resurfacing works completed.
- H & R 2015/16 coppicing completed, brash and timber management ongoing.

- H & R deer fencing brought in on site (ongoing).
- Litter picking.

Vicarage Wood:

- Coppicing and trail clearance.
- Litter picking.

Latton Woods:

- Capel Manor College students working on site undertaking chain-sawing training with removal conifers, haloing oaks, opening glades and rides and some pollarding - stacking and chipping of arisings.
- Brash clearance from previous conifer thinning works.
- Litter picking.

Parndon Lock Meadows:

- 2 x 100 m sections of mature hedgerow coppiced
- 1,000 trees planted over 2 days as part of National Tree Week 40th Anniversary.
- Ditches cleared out.
- Trees around spillway cleared back.
- Overhanging willows cut back from fencing.
- Footbridge handrail repaired over River Stort.

Corporate Days:

- 20th November 2015: Corporate workday with GlaxoSmithKline staff at Parndon Wood coppicing and moving firewood.
- 4th January 2016: Hertfordshire University Corporate workday at Parndon Wood coppicing and moving firewood.

Community Work:

- Passmores Academy Behavioural Group continues to join us at Parndon Wood each Tuesday afternoon.

Thank you to the Volunteers for their hard work and dedication which has resulted in the completion of all the scheduled tasks.

Darren Fazackerley, Patrick Bailly and Lenny Collins

1st March 2015