

# Harlow Biodiversity Partnership

## Minutes

Meeting Held 10<sup>th</sup> November 2016

### ATTENDANCE LIST:

NAME	ORGANISATION REPRESENTED
Darren Fazackerley	Harlow Council
Patrick Bailly	Harlow Council
Becca Pullen	ECCO
Colin Lincoln	Harlow Wildlife Project
Mike Barham	Wildspace and Greenteam Volunteer
Sally Naylor	Greenteam Volunteer
Andrew Tomlins	Harlow Conservation Volunteer
Eric Gammer	Resident/Volunteer
Derek Barry	Harlow Badger Group
Joshua Tinker	Kier Harlow
Cllr Edna Stevens	Harlow Council
Brian Bull	Harlow Beekeepers
Peter Leslie	Green Team
Mark Hamilton	HCV & Green Team

Liz White	RPS
Chris Elias	PHE
Vanessa Clipstone	PHE
Jenny Broad	Linford End Allotments
Jim Conn	Linford End Allotments
Linda Hamling	HCV
Chris Rees	Stort Valley Angling Society
Gill Jones	Essex Bat Group
Kevin Dixon	Harlow Council (Minute Taker)

1. Apologies

- Andrew Bradley - Kier Harlow
- Cllr Jean Clark – Harlow Council
- Roger Pryor – Harlow Green Team / Volunteer
- Mick Westby – Harlow Badger Group
- Charles Langtree – Land Trust

2. Minutes of Last meeting – agreed

- Comment regarding the flood alleviation project – Rugby club put new pipes across field with the ground to the north being higher (Second Avenue to the brook) - need to check with the environment agency if there is capacity to take water to link with Nicholls Field bunding.

- Derek Barry has not heard anything regarding this.

- Kier contact is due to end 31st January 2017.

3. Matters Arising

CL advised – funding has been granted for work on the wildflower meadow and should be for £8k+ from Tesco donation. Amount is based on number of public votes on 3 projects, so amount received could be £8k, £10k or £12k depending on the votes received.

DF mentioned that the Tesco donation scheme will be changing to focus on helping a greater number of smaller projects where the funding will reduce to £1k/£2k or £5k.

#### 4. ECCO update

- Becca Pullen Introduction

I've been at the nature reserve for a month and a half now, having shadowed Josey for almost two weeks. I had recently graduated from university in Environmental Management and have also had experience with another environmental charity.

- Events

##### - Mammal weekend

Josey said that double the amount of last year's turnout came in just on the Saturday morning! This was due to moving the event forward compared to last year, the weather was lovely. Visitors thoroughly enjoyed engaging with the Badger and Bat groups

##### - Fungi foray

No guided tour due to the guide being ill, self-guided tour organised instead. Low turnout, rubbish weather although there wasn't much fungi out anyways due to the previously dry weather

##### - Halloween

Sold out of 1,000 tickets, massive turnout. Went very well with adults and children giving great feedback throughout the evening and afterwards.

- Litter

A little, only in the car park. McDonald's and chip shop – not bought here, mostly found in the morning so is most likely people turning up at night

- Flooding issue

During the mammal weekend there was concerns that the stream was flooded – this was clarified by PB to be due to a burst water main in the cottage by Fern Hill Lane

- School trips are still happening regularly
- Birthday parties are having a large focus on bug hunting – good to see engagement with nature
- Honey all sold out, people looking forward to the next batch with people still coming in asking for some

- Upcoming
  - First aid training next week
  - Autumn event this weekend, make a bird feeder end of this month and Santa's Grotto happening during December
  - Christmas opening hours not yet finalised – should be sorted by the end of this week

## 5. Parndon Lock Meadows

Patrick Bailly gave an update (main detail below from PB's published update report) :

- Planted trees maintained - competing vegetation cleared.
- Trees and branches cleared off fence line.
- Oak notice boards installed at two entrances.
- Large block of trees and vegetation cleared from a strip between the canal towpath and meadows in preparation for the construction of the bird viewing platform.
- Approximately 80 m of mature hedgerow coppiced.
- Fencing repairs throughout.
- Litter picking throughout.
- Eight Longhorn cattle on site since mid-June joined by a couple of redpolls and a few Angus cattle at the end of the summer. (Due to good weather, just gone off this week)
- Contractor works completed so far include:
  - 150 metres of fencing replaced.
  - Cattle coral installed.
  - Maintenance work on a cattle drink.
  - Six stiles dismantled and replaced with mobility kissing gates.
  - Two crossing points over wet ditches constructed with culverts.
  - Steps installed from A414 down to canal towpath.
  - Bird viewing platform constructed with interpretation incorporated.
  - Cat Lane and one side of the spillway flailed. Cat Lane will be resurfaced and this will be funded by Land Trust
  - Approximately 80 m of ditch slopped out alongside recently coppiced hedgerow – reconnecting flow from weir by Parndon Lock.
  - Two hay meadows cut for hay in June.

CL – reported 50 species of wildflowers and 51 bird species recorded.

DF – Celebration event to be planned for April 2017 (date to be confirmed) and possibly Cllr Edna Stevens to be invited to cut ribbon

Comments on Land Trust Project – will ford still be flooding?

PB advised – Fly tipping off A414 is a hotspot but it's actually happening on Herts CC land. Want to leave ford rough to avoid the fly tipping spreading to the Essex part. As this is a by-way, road cannot be blocked. Problems with 4x4's churning through causing mud/spray. PB

suggested a proposal to install substantial wooden posts as a deterrent to fly tipping, to slow down traffic and protect the verges

6. Nature Reserves update & Wildspace! Report  
(main detail below from PB's published update report)

- Patrick Bailly gave an update : Good work achieved with help from 35 volunteers from Glaxo Smith Kline.
- Going forward, ideally targeting fewer wildlife sites but making a bigger impact by having 3 or 4 visits rather than just a single visit to a larger number of sites.

Since June 2016 the following tasks and events have occurred on our Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites 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 Risdén Woods:

- Path and trail clearance.
- Bramble control and opening views across woodland.
- Bracken rolling.
- Recovering fencing from older coppice stools.
- Trees in nursery kept alive over the dry summer.
- Oak milling ongoing.
- Oak bench top replaced.
- Repairs to boardwalk infrastructure.
- Perimeter fencing maintained.
- Milled timber store complete.
- New work bench construction started.
- Major clean-up of timber storage area (forever ongoing).
- Litter picking throughout.
- Main ride and two glades opened up in Hospital Woods with help from Glaxo Smith Kline corporate volunteers.
- New trail opened and named "Travell Trail" in recognition of Josey Travell, Centre Manager who left Parndon Wood to go travelling.
- New bridge constructed over stream along the new "Travell Trail".
- Three new benches constructed along the "Travell Trail".
- Finger posts installed directing visitors along the "Travell Trail".
- New drainage system being constructed for the main trail in a particularly wet area.

#### Latton Woods:

- Capel Manor College students working on site undertaking chainsaw training with removal conifers, haloing oaks, opening glades and rides and some pollarding - stacking and chipping of arisings.
- Network of nine ponds opened up, vegetation cleared, trees felled and crowns lifted.
- Main ride heavily overgrown cut back and trees felled allowing improved light conditions.
- Contractor work repairs to fencing and kissing gates throughout and ditches maintained in efforts to deter motorbike/quadbike access.
- Litter picking throughout.

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#### Stort Valley Meadows:

- Contracted hay cut from wildflower meadow in August.

#### Brenthall & Barnsley Woods:

- Sycamore control with Glaxo Smith Kline and Wednesday Volunteers.

#### Marshgate Spring:

- Removing dangerous trees from along the path and creating habitat piles with arisings.
- Path and trail clearance.
- Assisting Harlow Conservation Volunteers with the dismantling and rebuilding of a 30 m boardwalk.
- Cutting sedges back from footpath and ponds.
- Litter picking throughout.

#### Markhall Wood:

- Removing dangerous trees over rides.
- Coppicing hazel.
- Widening the main rides and opening up the main cross-road glades.
- Cutting back brambles and mowing from rides.
- Litter picking throughout.

#### Hertfordshire's Wednesday Volunteers:

- Hertfordshire's Wednesday Volunteers joined Greenteam at:
  - 10 volunteers at Brenthall & Barnsley Woods clearing sycamore and burning arisings on 10<sup>th</sup> August.
  - 14 volunteers at Parndon Lock Meadows coppicing mature hedgerow and burning arisings on 5<sup>th</sup> October.

#### Corporate Days:

- GlaxoSmithKline joined the Greenteam at;
  - Brenthall & Barnsley Woods on 24<sup>th</sup> August.
  - Hospital & Ridsen Woods on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October.

#### Community Work:

- Heart4Harlow Day on 30<sup>th</sup> July with students from Passmores Academy working at Hospital & Ridsen Woods, opening up a new footpath.

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

#### 7. Harlow Council update & Kier Harlow report

- DF – Harlow now has 2 Green Flag Awards. Parndon Wood has been awarded a Green Flag for the 8<sup>th</sup> year in a row. Harlow Town Park has been awarded its first Green Flag.
  - Josey Travell arranged installation of 3 hives last year and there is a possibility of a 4<sup>th</sup> due to the high demand for honey. There is an active volunteer group. A huge number of foxgloves were

seen in the wood this year and it was noted that this gave an improved flavour to the honey.

- There was also a supplementary award – The ‘Bees Needs’ Award 2016 is part of the National Pollination Strategy. The Town Park was a winner of 1 of the 15 national awards to encourage bees and promote awareness. Congratulations to all.
- Kier’s contract finishes at the end of January 2017. There has been work going on behind the scenes in preparation for the transition process when HTS will take over from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2017. A lot of the Kier staff will be transferring over to HTS. A new, more dynamic business model will mean resources for landscape/wildlife management will be tweaked to get services right and give a better fit for Harlow.
- Joshua Tinker – Kier Tree Manager
  - The new local authority trading company will do works for the council and but will also be able to do external works.
  - Company is owned by the council, there are no shareholders so profits will go back into the company.
  - Will look to develop apprentices
  - Recent works : extensive snagging for the green flag awards. Watering newly planted trees. Work on new trail in Parndon Wood. Oak Tree surveys for disease – being monitored. Some Ash Dieback has been seen in Harlow including at Toddbrook. A big oak tree has split in Moorfields – hope to retain it, and the spare timber will be used at Spitalfields City Farm.

#### 8. Any other business

- Essex Field Club Annual Exhibition 3<sup>rd</sup> December 11am – 4pm. Carstairs room at the Green Centre, Wat Tyler Country Park, Pitsea. Open to all.
- Mark Hall Wood
  - Now got mitigation. Essex County Council to provide funding for coppice in woodland and removing invasive species
  - Q : problems with paths eg in Ladyshot chippings are not good, need access improvements, puddles/drainage problems.
  - A : may be able to get Tesco funds from the Bags of Help Scheme?
- Oakwood Pond Project
  - Been in decline for many years
  - Found the water. £20k funding from Essex County Council

- Use pond pioneer – crowd funding £100k + possible. To improve habitat, correcting water levels, discover/celebrate history, restock fish, floating islands, disabled access, filter water, nice planting, carving to celebrate site (Oakwood Pond may go back 1000 years). Project to go live by end of February 2017 – lots of work involved but mainly by contractors.
- General questions/comments
  - SN : Volunteers work - Hawkenbury Meadow, now got very small, little cutting of grass back to trees, ancient important sites but brambles have taken over and we may lose the meadow. The priority is to push back the boundaries to the stream, encourage growth to come back – recolonise. Kier didn't cut & clear – didn't have the equipment to do it. Willows also dropping, causing issues. Maybe look to prioritise Hawkenbury.
  - May Meads Marsh : choked ditches need to be freed-up. Contractor to clear up pond networks.
  - CL : was created in 1982/83 as one big expanse, but now the open water has disappeared. Flood alleviation funding to dredge it to open up as the flow has been impeded. Essex County Council works to start in the next few weeks.
  - PL : Use of contractors for projects, where is the quality management. PB advised he was monitoring. DF said we now have to work with a reduced budget. Cut and collect stopped due to budgets, doing best we can, don't want to spread too thinly possibly use own equipment in the future to do own management of meadows etc.
  - CL : Look out for opportunities for gaining sponsors
  - DF : It is all about having a management plan that can deliver. Funding by Land Trust should free up some of the budget.

Meeting closed at 4:20pm.

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2017, at 2pm, at Parndon Wood Nature Reserve.