

Harlow Biodiversity Partnership

MINUTES OF MEETING 4TH NOVEMBER 2014 AT 2.00PM HELD AT PARNDON WOOD NATURE RESERVE

THOSE ATTENDING:

Jan Ragg, Bill Weston, Darren Fazackerley (HDC), Cllr Tony Hall, Eric Gammer, Colin Lincoln, Andrew Tomlins, Cllr Jean Clark, Chris Rees, Josey Travell (ECCO)

Terri Bishop – Minutes.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Cllr Edna Stevens, Peter Tye, Sally Naylor, Mick Westby, Lenny Collins

1&2. MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING

Agreed as a correct record.

Green Flag Award – Awarded for 6th Year running. Thanks to volunteers.

Brenthall and Barnsley Woods management plan – deferred until next meeting

Biodiversity Report 2013 has been distributed on website. Looking to write the report for 2014 in coming months.

3. ECCO UPDATE

Introduction of Josey Travell.

The number of visitors to Parndon Wood has been quite high compared to the same period last year, which is likely to be due to the good weather for the time of year.

Halloween Event – 250 tickets sold (children only). Event went well and was very busy. Lots of good feedback received.

Tea Room – kitchen is in use more often as home baked cakes are the most popular.

Fungus Walk – walk around the reserve, 12-15 people attending. 36 types of fungi found on the path.

Mammal Weekend coming up.

Lots of school visits have taken place, Primary and Secondary school students

Encouraging visitors to take photos and post on social media. This is encouraging more visitors to come.

Not yet fully sustainable on current income from school visits and the café. Some income from ECCO charity shops is still required. As visitor numbers build it will be achievable to become financially independent, just taking longer than expected.

Thanks to Lauren Hull who helped to make a significant difference.

4. HARLOW COUNCIL UPDATER AND KIER HARLOW REPORT

Mike Levett has moved on from Landscape & Biodiversity Officer post. He is now working on the Town Park HLF project.

A new Landscape & Biodiversity Officer will be joining on 12th January. Very knowledgeable and keen, felt he will be a real asset to the team. The Council is now looking for a replacement staff member to cover the interim period.

Priorities – Sort Valley Water Meadows have been cut.

Budgets – waiting to see what will happen for 2015/16. Consultation survey with the public has taken place for views on budget.

Thanks to volunteers that works have been able to continue.

No attendee from Kier at the meeting and no update report has been provided. Ongoing monitoring of the contract is taking place.

The 2 year hedge reduction programme has been completed and the 5 year bramble programme is continuing into its 3rd year. If the brambles can be grubbed out then this happens, but if this is not possible they will be chemically treated, with re treatment in spring.

Trees – significant storm damage from last winter has caused a delay in dealing with tree enquiries. More resources have been put in place and now getting back on track.

More resource has been put on to the grass cutting round to improve strimming.

Winter work programme is progressing.

Marshgate Spring – campers have been on site for around 6 months, has been very difficult to get them evicted. The Community Safety team are involved, but they have been stretched due to dealing with the traveller issue. A letter has been issued to the campers asking them to move on, but resisted. Formal action has been taken for eviction and in the hands of the police. The site appeared to be uninhabited, but they returned and the process had to restart. DF to get an update. Any works carried out should be done well away from the encampment.

5. FLAGSHIP HABITAT FOR 2014 – WILDFLOWER MEADOWS UPDATE

No new meadows have been created. Concentrating on sustaining what we already have. Marshes have been cut. We are waiting for the new Landscape & Biodiversity Officer to start to be able to continue with these projects.

ECCO looking at the possibility of having a bee hive at Parndon Wood.

The government announced today that there is a £900m funding pot available for landowners to improve wildflower meadows across the country due to concerns about bee numbers.

6. HARLOW WOODS SSSI MANAGEMENT PLAN 2014-2019

The management plan has been approved by Natural England. The next 5 year management plan is in place.

There is provision to create a new nature trail at Parndon Wood. Sites receiving treatment are priorities depending on a number of factors including environmental importance, funding and resources.

7. OAKWOOD POND AND OAKWOOD SOUTH IMPROVEMENTS

Works have begun following funding from the Ward Improvement project. Tree works have been carried out. Work in the area is ongoing. The new Landscape & Biodiversity Officer will be able to move the project forward. No information on timescales available at the present time. The Stort Valley Angling Society has secured funding for renovation of the pond.

8. WARD IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT UPDATE

Now starting to see significant progress, schemes identified by the public that have so far been completed include: new benches, planting of trees/bulbs and wild flowers.

There are 80 schemes across the town. Community noticeboards, art projects, Olympic Tree Trail – each ward will have 5 trees planted. All projects should be completed by 31st March 2015.

Cllr Hall asked for an update on Kingsdon Lane Pond – Kier to do site visit, DF to chase.

9. NATURE RESERVES UPDATE & WILDSpace! REPORT

Copy of Wildspace! report issued – see attached below..

A lot of work has been carried out over the course of the year making a great deal of difference to locations.

Roman Temple – working with Oxford archaeologists. Bidding for funding to make biodiversity improvements to the site.

10. WILDLIFE PROJECTS GROUP UPDATE

Maintenance continuing. Some repairs have been done to picnic benches. Path mown through orchid meadow and willows cut back.

New scrape bed well established and looking in good condition.

No projects in the pipeline at present.

Wildflower survey – keeping a record of bird/butterfly species.

Possible amphibian survey with ECCO.

11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Guided Remembrance Walk – taking place on 11th November between 2-3pm at Netteswell Cross. Please contact Mike Levett to book place.

Greenteam tasks programme issued, also on website.

Star article re water voles – article incorrectly stated the location as Harlow, but was in fact the other side of Roydon.

Paringdon Sports Club – trees cut down at entrance to premises. Being dealt with at the moment by the legal department and looking to take court action.

Rosemary Close Memorial – tree planting taking place at 11am on 11th November. Cllr Jolles will be planting a memorial silver birch tree with soil from France. Will be remembering 2 VC winners Lt. Col. Marshall (1918) and Evelyn Woods (most decorated soldier outside the Royal family).

Oak Nursery – Josey to speak to Lenny as some of the oaks need repotting.

Date of next meetings: 10 March 2015 (2pm)

9 June 2015 (7pm)

3 November 2015 (2pm)

Meeting closed 4.00pm.

HARLOW BIODIVERSITY FORUM MEETING - 4 November 2014.

NATURE RESERVES UPDATE & WILDSpace! REPORT

Since March 2014 the following tasks and events have occurred on our Nature Reserves with Harlow Conservation Volunteers, Wildspace Group, and Greenteam who on 6 occasions worked with the Hertfordshire based group the Wednesday Volunteers:

Staffing:

- Thanks to Mike Levett for the 6 months he contributed to the role of Landscape & Biodiversity Officer and oversaw the new management plans for Harlow Woods SSSI;
- John Wheatland who joined the Biodiversity team in January to assist Lenny in the running of the volunteer group activities;
- Kayleigh Long joined as a student work placement volunteer from Writtle College in September;

Nature Reserves:

Range of tasks completed by Wildspace, Greenteam and Harlow Conservation Volunteers included:

Stort Valley Meadows – Maymeads Marsh, Parndon Moat Marsh & Marshgate Springs:

- Reed planting – new scrape;
- Willow control on the ditches;
- Removal of Himalayan balsam from Maymeads Marsh;
- Orchid meadow has been cut and arisings been removed off site;
- Ponds and ditches cleared of vegetation and paths / views cleared;

Parndon Wood & Hospital and Risden Woods:

- Secured Green Flag Award for 6th year running;
- Wildspace painted fencing, Lincoln Hide and the Crater Hides;
- Passmores Academy Behavioural Group undertaken conservation work on Tuesday afternoons during term time;
- Improved bark chip surfacing in Hospital and Risden Woods;

Latton Woods:

- Capel Manor College students working on site undertaking chain-sawing training with removal of non-native conifers, stacking and chipping of arisings;
- Trail and pond clearance, bracken slashing around pond complex;

Brenthall and Barnsley Woods:

- Sycamore thinning & path clearance;

Roman Temple;

- Path clearance;

Upper Wood;

- Pond clearance, hornbeam thinning and rubbish clearance;

Hawkenbury Meadow;

- Willow clearance and coppicing;

Wildspace:

Volunteers have undertaken the following tasks at Parndon Wood Nature Reserve:

- Trail, ride and pond/ reed clearance near to Main hide;
- Creation of new trail and dead hedging near to Main hide -proposals for new bridge on route agreed using locally sourced timber, foundations for bridge constructed;
- Boundary fence repairs;
- Fallen tree and shrub removal along trail and on boundary fence;
- Bramble & bracken bashing in glades and coppiced areas.

Corporate Days:

- Corporate workdays with Glaxo Kline staff at Parndon Woods undertaking trail and path clearance;
- Church of Latter Day Saints helped barrow sand and ballast to new bridge construction site and cleared the new trail;
- Ingeus helped to clear the area in front of the Crater Hide to reopen the views of the pond;

Thank you to the Volunteers for their hard work and dedication which has resulted in the completion of all the scheduled tasks and the achievement of the 6th Green Flag Award for Parndon Wood Nature Reserve.

Darren Fazackerley/ Lenny Collins

4 November 2014