

## **HARLOW BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING 12<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2013 AT 2.00PM HELD AT PARNDON WOOD NATURE RESERVE**

#### **THOSE ATTENDING:**

Colin Lincoln (Chair), Darren Fazackerley, Linda Hambling, Jan Ragg, Harry Harris, Mick Westby, R Weston, Cllr Jean Clark, Sean Folan, Tom Edwards, D Spelling, P Tidmas, Andrew Tomlins, Josh Tinker, Ella Barnett, Lenny Collins

Janet Cable – Minutes.

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

Chris Rees, Cllr Edna Stevens, Sally Naylor, Eric Gammer, Mark Iley, Rebecca Banks, David Tidmus

#### **NOTICES**

Condolences to the family and niece (who works for the Council) of John Deards from the Civic Society on his death.

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

Agreed as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

Q. Page 2 – trees but there is no budget. A Kier van was seen loaded with trees.

A. These were replacement trees but there is no budget.

There is no budget but Ward Improvement Budget for the year 2012/13 has a sum put aside for each ward for environmental projects, one of which is tree planting to reflect Olympic 2012 games – this is town wide. Plantings will be in prominent places but there may also be other trees planted from this pot of money. The schemes are in excess of budget but if there is an underspend this will be used for tree planting. Black poplars will be planted.

Q. Are the public involved?

A. Not sure but school children may be involved. In Jean McAlpine Park and Jubilee Wood a day has been set aside for children to tree plant.

Q. £10,000 from the Council and £10,000 from Kier.

- A. 18 months ago the money was put in the budget for 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 to March 2013.
- Q. We have heard nothing more about the scheme?
- A. Requests have been collated and priced up behind the scenes. Money would be rolled forward to the next financial year so that it would not be lost. Councillors will decide which schemes are a priority. There appears to be a lack of communication.
- Q. Bill made mention of a newspaper article regarding Colchester Council who gave away shrubs and said plant them yourselves. This took just 2 hours.
- A. There are pros and cons to all projects. Many would take the trees and sell them or plant them inappropriately.
- Q. Page 2 last question. Is there any news regarding the encroachment issue.
- A. The Council is going through the legal process of instructing the resident to remove any structures and reinstate by a given date or legal action will be taken.
- Q. Page 3 library books, still temporary.
- A. It is hoped to refurbish all rooms and bring the books out on a rotational basis.
- Q. Page 4 ground cover plants has gone even though it took years to develop.
- A. It is needed to be taken back under the transformation plan so that litter etc can be removed.
- Q. Page 5 first paragraph Forestry Commission April 2012. Is there any new information?
- A. No probably not until the spring flush. Recommend to check Forestry Commission website.
- Q. Page 5 pollution Marshgate Spring – something is still happening there.
- A. Thames Water have been there to try and resolve the problem, they have put cameras down but couldn't see any blockage. They started pumping but the lorry broke which meant they had to stop for a week. They are now continuing to pump it appears that there are lots of stones. 5 tonnes of material has been taken away. We will have to wait and see.
- Q. Are they responsible for the damage to the fence?
- A. Not sure if it was Thames.

### 3. **ECCO**

Tom, who has been in post for 9 months, is leaving. Lauren Hull from Writtle College starts on 23<sup>rd</sup> March. There will be a 1 week handover period.

The refurbishment work has been done, there is new flooring, 2 new toilets in the ladies and a new sink in the disabled toilets. The kitchen has a new fridge freezer and work tops. The new cafe will be fully operational by Easter weekend. Equipment such as cutlery and plates is still needed. It has been agreed with Environmental Health to start with we will be selling teas, coffees, soft drinks and cakes.

The entrance path still needs a little bit of work but in the main has been done.

The website has been updated with new events up to December.

We have reinstated the fire wood sale. Plans have been drawn up for a wood store. Andrew Tomlins has been asked to come in on the project to assist

We are to clear some wood from Latton Woods.

Rooms have been painted and now the displays can go back up.

Q. Catering – people can sit either inside or outside to eat.

A. Yes Environmental Health agreed on what can be sold. You can also bring your own food.

Q. Consider ice-cream for children.

A. Yes definitely.

Q. Tables, square ones are more versatile.

A. Yes, it was just an idea to get round tables.

Q. How much is the wood?

A. £4.50 a bag of average 10kg and the wood is of good quality,

Q. How is it to be marketed?

A. In our shops at present and we will be looking into advertising in the future.

Kier generates a lot of wood waste which could be taken to ECCO.

### 4. **KIER HARLOW**

There will be answers to any questions at the next meeting as the representative wasn't aware he had been given a slot and so hadn't prepared anything.

Trees one or two transplants – there will be but not yet. Harlow Council does not

water its trees, trees do not always need to be watered.

Hedges/shrub beds – Kier are coming to the end of the first cycle of the hedge reduction programme. This has been successful and on target. Brambles and winter works programmes all ok. After last year Kier are looking at an action plan to address what went wrong so as to be better prepared this year.

Q. Walkabouts with Housing Officer – officers say they have actioned everything. Who do we go back to Kier or Harlow Council?

A. Contact Harlow or the Housing Officer.

Q. Kier renewal – why wasn't a public meeting held to ask what they wanted?

A. On renewal of the JVCO contract there was consultation meetings, public consultations and surveys done. All figures are collated on a monthly basis and reported.

Q. Why not put it in Harlow Times?

A. May have been, Darren to check back.

## 5. **NATURE RESERVE UPDATE & WILDSpace REPORT**

Glenn left November 2012, Ella started at the beginning of January and Lenny started mid December. 2 assistants to lead volunteers. Funding is in place for a Landscape & Biodiversity Officer. Ella will be leaving on Friday. Both Ella and Lenny and the volunteers have stepped up to the plate. There is a Greenteam and Wildspace meeting every week. Things have gone well for the winter work and volunteer projects. Samantha Slaney has also joined us as a 2 day apprentice working with Lenny and things will carry on as normal.

The recruitment process for the Landscape & Biodiversity Officer is ongoing at present.

Ella presented the Wildspace Report dated March 2013.

We have felled 5 oaks in the woods. Some is to be milled up for the wood store project and some for bench seats like Latton Common.

The new website was launched at the end of February.

Monthly e-news letter to be discontinued at present.

Ella is working on a volunteers newsletter which will be quarterly. There are weekly mail outs to volunteers at present.

Q. Any long length timbers to be left. Longer lengths are good to have.

A. The contractor can do a maximum length of 16 feet. Let us know what dimensions you want by midday tomorrow (13<sup>th</sup>) as the contractor will be

coming on Thursday. There are 5 trees to mill in total.

Q. Is there any wood to be left dense?

A. We have a minimal intervention area, it was 10% that had to be left but that has now been relaxed

Q. There used to be a section of oak outside.

A. It is still there in storage and will be replaced.

## 6. **WILDLIFE PROJECTS GROUP UPDATE**

At the end of August phase 1 completed – ready to move to phase 2. There have been a few delays, was started last week and the contractors are now in. This involved small pools of open water and reedbed expansion.

Pictures were handed round showing the ongoing work. This should take 2-3 weeks. There was a problem with an electrical cable and the power to a vast area was knocked out. The electricity company are coming in tomorrow (13<sup>th</sup>) to rectify the problem. We can still move soil from the site but cannot dig.

2 groups are working together and will modify plans for the reedbed. Tomorrow hopefully work can continue.

Q. In the newspaper on Saturday a family of 4, the children were on an ipad and did not look at the bittern. What does the future hold?

A. We need to educate them. We have a sustainability grant which we used to educate and train. We are also in the process of a primary school competition to create a collage and guided walks are offered to the children. Exhibits will be displayed in the art gallery in the Civic Centre. There will be 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> prizes offered.

Darren also advised that for the next 2 weeks the Council are involved in Crucial Crew to educate children. Harlow does a lot with children and there are lots of opportunities for children to get involved.

Q. Will the paths be reinstated when the works are completed?

A. Yes once the works are completed we will get a price.

## 7. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- **Oakwood ponds Forum survey for Great Crested Newts**

Oakwood Pond was a big project looking at £60,000 for improvements to footpaths, bridges need rebuilding and a boardwalk section to be built. You will be able to walk round the whole of the ponds, there will be maintenance works to trees with regard to bats. Exposed tree roots are to be looked at. Stort Valley

Society will be working in partnership.

There will be a survey for Great Crested Newts by Adrian Knowles.

There are no live fish in the pond as they were diseased.

- **Leisurezone drain access & monitoring**

Needed to be monitored and looked at.

- **Vicarage Wood – Halling Hill contractors**

They have a compound – work is by a power company and there is no threat to trees etc.

**(d) Latton Woods**

Work has commenced on resurfacing the rides and removing dangerous trees.

- **Town Park Heritage lottery bid**

Successful at meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> March. There is an item in Harlow Times.

Spurriers – improvements due.

Improvements in Water Gardens.

Wall garden – Pets Corner – being revamped.

Training opportunities for volunteers.

Pets Corner, there will be a new building etc. Will be closed January/February 2014 to enable work to be done. Education and volunteer officer will be involved.

Q. Jean McAlpine Park – any possibility of signs because people don't know where it is?

A. No money at present but maybe for the future.

Q. There was a tethered horse there.

A. Rangers will move them on and locate owners etc.

Q. Will they prevent people riding motorbikes?

A. Yes.

Q. Grass cutting – are you going to delay cutting?

A. Yes, to the middle of June where there are plantings.

Parndon Mill – 8 meadows have all gone now. In control of Land Trust. Looking for someone to manage them, have approached Harlow Council and so are looking into that possibility. Funding and income involved. Still in the process of negotiations. Council to come up with a 5 year plan. Black poplars – there will be quite a few planted around the site.

Arrangements have been made for Essex Wildlife Trust to speak about meadow land management. There is an open invitation to the meeting.

On the site at the river contractors have offered Essex Biodiversity Project who were there to supply wild flower planting.

Councillor Mike Danvers asked if we would accept an award for the work being done there.

Colin and Andrew attended Stort Valley Catchment Partnership meeting to introduce new website [www.stortriverpartnership.org.uk](http://www.stortriverpartnership.org.uk). Andrew will put a link on the website. There is a huge amount of work going on around the Stort. You can add things to the website i.e. sitings.

Darren passed on his thanks to Tom and Ella and wished them both well.

Meeting closed 4.10pm.

#### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

11<sup>th</sup> June 2012 at 2pm Parndon Wood Nature Reserve

Several people asked if this date was a misprint as it had previously been agreed that there would be one evening meeting.

When someone is in post maybe but at present this will be in normal working hours. Darren is more than happy to have the meeting in the evening but he cannot attend.