

# Harlow Biodiversity Partnership

## Minutes

Meeting Held 5<sup>th</sup> November 2015

### Attendance List

NAME	ORGANISATION REPRESENTED
Darren Fazackerley	Harlow Council
Derek Barry	Badger Group
Sally Naylor	Green Team Volunteers
Linda Hamling	Harlow Conservation Volunteers,
Andy Bradley	Kier Harlow
Roger Pryor	Volunteer
Josey Travell	ECCO
Colin Lincoln	Harlow Wildlife Project
Patrick Bailly	Harlow Council
Brian Bull	Harlow Beekeepers

1: Apologies: Mark Iley (Essex Biodiversity Project), Joshua Tinker (Kier), Councillor Edna Stevens & Councillor Jean Clarke

2. Notices – The sad passing of Jan Ragg was reported and her invaluable contribution to biodiversity in Harlow was remembered.

3. Minutes of last meeting were agreed.

4. Matters Arising – there were no matters arising.

5. ECCO Update

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

Forest School Training:

Josey had completed the first initial week of training and during the school summer holidays ran a Forest School programme including arts & crafts, and woodland trees

identification. Thanks were given to the volunteers who helped. The second week of training is due to take place in February 2016.

#### Visitor numbers:

Numbers over the summer were very good with increased visitor numbers with no increase in litter. There had been problems with dogs so more notices have been put stating No Dogs at all are allowed in the reserve.

#### Events:

Bats Walks have been popular for which a charge of £2 per person is made. Bats identified include Pipestrelles and Daubentons. Themed events for Butterflies, Bees, Dragonflies were popular and a Memorial Walk for an Epilepsy charity was held.

The Halloween event attracted over 1000 visitors between 3 and 7pm. - no 1<sup>st</sup> Aid treatment was needed and the event was a great success. Each month a Photograph Competition is being held – the theme for November will Patterns and Textures.

Future planned events include a Mammal weekend on 7/8 November, Santa's Grotto on 12/13 December. As part of a new initiative Afternoon Tea will be held once a month. The launch event on 13 November will be attended by Robert Halfon MP, the following event will be on 11 December.

#### Work Experience Students:

Duke of Edinburgh Award students and student volunteers in the summer made a welcome contribution to the reserve. In addition through the National Citizens Service a number of young people volunteering in the community spent some of their time at the nature reserve.

#### Visitor Centre Windows:

The windows in the classroom at the reserve are due to be replaced. There have been complaints by Groups hiring the Centre with a concern that the situation might lead to a loss of room hire booking.

#### Café:

ECCO have recruited an extra member of staff to help with the cafe at weekends.

#### Parndon Wood Honey:

Parndon Wood Honey has been on sale with 100 jars produced which is equivalent to 100lbs of liquid honey. The cost to volunteers is £4.50 a jar with stocks now almost sold out.

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.

## 6. Harlow Council Report & Kier Harlow Report

Parndon Wood Nature Reserve successfully retained the Green Flag Award for 2015/6. The award was collected at a celebration event in Rugby in July and a raising of the flag event was held in September. In the autumn of 2015 the Reserve would be judged by a Mystery Shopper visitor judge and a report would be made available in the coming months.

Mention was made of the Green Flag Special Innovation Awards. In 2015 the theme had been Pollinators, with special awards made for Bees. Unfortunately the Parndon Wood hives had arrived too late to be eligible. The theme for 2016 was not yet known but more information should be available soon.

As part of the Ward Improvement Project further bulb planting had taken place at Tilbury Mead open space and on the Church Langley Way verges.

The project to refurbish Oakwood Pond was now underway. Funding had been secured to have the pond dredged and an island rebuilt with work now in progress. It was hoped the dredging would open up water in-flow as it was believed the spring that fed the pond had become choked up with silt. Silt is to be spread on site and used to build an island which had eroded, some silt will be spread in the woodland.

A concern was raised about Bramble clearing near badger setts as part of a ditch clearing exercise. It would be helpful if operatives were aware where known badger setts were located. It was agreed that Kevin Hanchett, a Kier employee who is part of the Harlow Badger Group, could be a consultee for Kier Operations. It was felt that a GIS layer of Wildlife Sensitive Areas could be of benefit to Kier and the Council.

Following the commencement of the road improvements along the A414 for the Local Enterprise Zone at the London Road site the wildflower verge had been successfully translocated to Harlow Town Park. A replacement wildflower verge and native mix hedgerow of local provenance would be part of the re-landscaping of the highway verge as part of the completed road scheme.

Other highway schemes are proposed for the A414 and Edinburgh Way junction with possible mitigation proposals being considered to offset the loss of habitat. Queries were raised about the impact of widening the road carriageway and the impact this would have on wildlife in the immediate area. These highways infrastructure improvements are necessary to alleviate congestion within Harlow and a possible mitigation scheme is as follows:

Roman Temple Site proposal – Patrick is due to meet a representative from Essex County Council regarding proposed mitigation for loss of woodland habitat. The Roman Temple Site is proposed as a potential wildlife site and could benefit from improvements including coppicing trees, tree maintenance, improvements to benefit wildlife including Great Crested Newts by extending a potential pond feature. In addition infrastructure and interpretation improvements could be made for both biodiversity and archaeology perspectives and be used for education. Safety improvements could also be undertaken by installing fencing along the boundary of the railway line.

## 7. Parndon Lock Meadows

In 2012 a charitable organisation called the Land Trust received the area known as Parndon Lock Meadows as part of a trade off with land acquired for the Harlow North site. The Land Trust are required to oversee management of the land to bring it into conservation management and for use for public recreation. The flood plain meadows have historically been grazed and the site is surrounded by water as it lies between the Stort River and the Stort Navigation.

As part of the improvement proposals work is already underway to restore the ancient hedgerow along Cat Lane which was historically maintained as a laid hedge. Cattle grazing would continue in the summer. A spillway runs through the site and it is hoped to build a big scrape which will infill in the winter and a Lookout hide will be installed. The intention is to also improve across the site, to resurface the byway along Cat Lane, to install disabled access kissing gates, and improve access off the canal bridge by the A414 and restore the footpath network.

The project will be supported by capital and revenue funding over 5 years and will create an important link between the Upper Lea and Hunsdon Meadows and will meet the objectives of the Essex Wildlife Trust Living Landscapes corridor.

A recent water main burst has led to a flood on the field which is now populated by Green sand Pipers, Teal, Widgeon and Snipe and shows the potential for the site once the scrapes are implemented. Although there are concerns regarding the flooding as to whether the water is chlorinated, tests have confirmed the water is not polluted.

## 8. Nature Reserves Update & Wildspace Report

Since June 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:

### **Stort Valley Meadows and Marshgate Springs:**

- Willow control on the ditches.
- Brash burning.
- Path and trail clearance.
- Himalayan Balsam removal.
- Cut and clear wildflower meadow.
- Litter picking.

### **Parndon Wood & Hospital and Ridsen Woods:**

- Path and trail clearance;
- Bracken control;
- Bramble control and opening views across woodland;
- Recovering fencing from older coppice stools.
- Extensive clearance around Conservation Centre.
- Pond cleared out in front and behind Centre.
- Tree nursery constructed.
- Seed collection and cuttings taken from; Acorns, Guelder Rose, Spindle, Wild Service Tree, Hawthorn, Hornbeam and Hazel from within Parndon Wood and to be grown on in nursery.
- Foxgloves and Primrose transplanted from within Parndon Wood and along entrance track to Conservation Centre.
- New trail reclaimed.
- Glade cleared in front of Nortel Hide.
- Wood processing area constructed near tree nursery.
- Concrete planters relocated.
- Lincoln Pond cleared back.
- Taller Aspens felled in front of Lincoln Hide to prevent competition to mature Oaks.
- Betony Area cleared to allow light in.
- H & R main track cleared and ride edges cut back.
- H & R track resurfaced (ongoing).
- H & R kissing gate and field gate moved back from entrance to facilitated access with new height barrier installed.
- H & R timber from last year's coppicing cleared off site.
- Glade and rides opened up across H & R.
- Kissing gate repairs and entrance opened up into Parndon Woods Common.
- Litter picking.

### **Vicarage Wood:**

- Coppicing and trail clearance.
- Litter picking.

### **Brenthall & Barnsley Woods:**

- Sycamore clearance and stump treatment.
- Clearance of arisings and bonfires.
- Footpath 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.

- Trail clearance throughout.
- Pond clearance.
- Brash clearance from previous felling works around mature oaks.
- Installing motorbike deterrents.
- Dismantling dangerous encampments.
- Litter picking.

### **Roman Temple:**

- Path clearance.
- Vegetation clearance on top of Temple mound.
- Clearing vegetation encroaching on Temple paving slabs.
- Litter picking.

### **Corporate Days:**

- 5<sup>th</sup> June: Corporate workday with Pearson's staff at Stort Valley Meadows undertaking willow control on the ditches and burning the brash.
- 26<sup>th</sup> June: Corporate workday with GlaxoSmithKline staff at Brentwood & Barnsley Wood removing sycamore and burning brash.
- 9<sup>th</sup> September: Corporate workday with GlaxoSmithKline staff at Hospital & Risden Woods opening up a glade and ride clearance.
- 30<sup>th</sup> October: Corporate workday with GlaxoSmithKline staff at Vicarage Wood coppicing understorey.

### **Community Work:**

- Passmores Academy Behavioural Group continue to join us at Parndon Wood each Tuesday afternoon.
- 18<sup>th</sup> June: Heart for Harlow Day at Roman Temple Site.
- 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> August: Joint Volunteer task over 2 days at Stort Valley Meadows involving 44 volunteers from Greenteam, Wildspace, Hertfordshire Wednesday Volunteers, Essex Wildlife Trust Roding Valley Volunteers, Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers and Epping Forest Countrycare Volunteers.
- 26<sup>th</sup> August: NCS Students working with Greenteam Volunteers at Latton Woods.
- Community Action Week:
  - 8<sup>th</sup> September: Wildspace tasks
  - 9<sup>th</sup> September: Glaxo Corporate day with Greenteam followed by Green Flag Award Raising Ceremony.
  - 11<sup>th</sup> September: Volunteer task installing motorbike deterrents in Latton Woods involving volunteers from Wildspace, Greenteam and Harlow Cycling Volunteers.

### **Survey Work:**

- 1<sup>st</sup> June: Wildflower survey at Parndon Lock Meadows.
- 29<sup>th</sup> June: Wildflower survey at Parndon Lock Meadows.

- 2<sup>nd</sup> July: Woodland Flora Survey at Parndon Wood.
- 9<sup>th</sup> July: Veteran Tree Survey near Gilden Way.
- 23<sup>rd</sup> July: Veteran Tree Survey by Second Avenue & Tillwicks Road and The Stow Playing Field.
- 22<sup>nd</sup> September: Acute Oak Decline Survey at Parndon Wood.
- 22<sup>nd</sup> September: H & S Tree Survey at Parndon Wood.

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

In addition to the written report above further comments were made as follows ;

The Acute Oak Decline survey had a found a few likely trees were infected and biosafety would be retained. The Wildspace Volunteers had been busy working cutting and clearing around the Conservation Centre and cutting back the aspen in front of the Lincoln Hide. The woodstore had been rearranged and a tree nursery built to enable young trees to be grown to diversify the tree stock.

#### 8: Wildlife Projects Update

Colin Lincoln gave an update. Currently the focus is on maintaining Stort Valley Meadows and in particular the orchid sites. The picnic benches are looking good on site and being used. The willows in the ditches are being maintained. Mink are being monitored and still being caught, most recently at the Gibberd Garden. The Stort Valley is being actively monitored and numbers of mink have dropped significantly over the past two years.. The Water Voles at Thorley Wash are surviving and it is hoped will spread through to Stort Valley Meadows. The path network on Stort Valley Meadows is really good and has made a difference to access at the site.

#### 9: Any Other Business

- a) Latton Priory Housing Development. This is a 20 year project details for which can be downloaded from [LattonPriory.co.uk](http://LattonPriory.co.uk). The Masterplan is about to be submitted as a planning application which will be considered by Epping Forest District Council. The development will put pressure on the countryside and greenspaces with protected species such as Badgers likely to be affected. Mitigation works at Latton Woods and Parndon Wood could be put offered. There are concerns about the impact the development with have on antisocial behaviour, flytipping and access. Details of a Questionnaire were circulated which invited comment about the detailed proposals for the development.
- b) Latton Wood Bylaws. It was suggested that Bylaws such as for Latton Common should be implemented for Latton Woods. These would be costly to implement and costly to enforce.
- c) Mountain Bike Course. A proposal was circulated for a proposed course in Latton Woods (Rundells compartment). The idea had chosen an area of the woodland with the least amount of pressure and it would provide an opportunity for promoting healthy living and activity through a range of community events and a fully accessible course. In terms of impact on the

woodland the course would be in an area of 1960's conifer plantation which was considered to be of low conservation value and there were no badgers in the area.

Two areas of conservation interest would be out of bounds and the permissive footpath would be unaffected. Proposed woodland management for the site is to thin out 30% of the conifer trees over 5 years – this is to remove competing conifer trees and open up ground flora and aid natural regeneration.

The project focus is to provide a facility for mountain bikers that promotes health and fitness and can be used by children, youths and adults. Increased presence in the woods would hopefully mean less antisocial behaviour and more eyes and ears in the wood. The project would be funded by the British Cycling Club who would fund the installation and maintenance of the course, be responsible for health and safety and have adequate public liability insurance. A Woodland Appraisal would be required and any application would be submitted to Epping Forest District Council. If outline planning was approved then permission would be required from the landowner – Harlow Council – and be subject to a Management Agreement and Lease.

It was agreed that the course would be a potential asset and the Harlow Biodiversity partnership unanimously support the idea.

- d) Essex Field Club Exhibition. This is to be held on Saturday 5 December at Wat Tyler Country Park, Basildon. The theme of the Harlow exhibit is to be “Fungi in Harlow Woodlands”. Offers of assistance to support Colin Lincoln will be gratefully received.
- e) Potential Encroachment Issues. Concern was expressed that people could be extending their gardens on council green spaces. Currently the Council is undertaking an audit of its land holding and any potential conflicts might be identified. The Council does also rely on information from the public and so any concerns should be reported to Contact Harlow for the Council's Property & Facilities department to investigate.

Meeting closed 4:20pm

Date of next meeting 10 March 2016 at 2pm at Parndon Wood Nature Reserve

Future meeting dates are 9 June 2016 at 7pm and 10 November 2016 at 2pm