

Harlow Biodiversity Partnership

Minutes

Meeting Held 9th June 2015

Attendance List

NAME	ORGANISATION REPRESENTED
Darren Fazackerley	HDC
Peter Maynard	Badger Group
Sally Naylor	Green Team Volunteers
Andrew Tomlins	Harlow Conservation Volunteers, HWP
Edna Stevens	Councillor
Eric Gammer	Volunteer
Chris Rees	Stort Valley Angling Society
Colin Lincoln	Harlow Biodiversity

1: Apologies: Derek Barry & Councillor Jean Clarke

2: Matters Arising

- Rosemary Close: block of chalk being broken up and damaged. The replacement piece was now being damaged.
- Roman Temple Site: Anwen Cooper, Miranda Cresswell and Passmores Academy would be holding a working party task on 18 June.
- Riverway car park: Highways Panel petition for volunteers - no further progress made.
- Harlow Museum: cataloguing papers of Roman Temple site archaeology
- Illegal Tents encampment: It was reported that at Ladyshot and Fennells Field young people camping over school holidays
- Bee Orchids on Stort Valley Meadows: Second cut, cut down Bee Orchids possibly (to be confirmed) Neil Armstrong – Kier Supervisor - aware.
- Oakwood Pond – Ponds Forum next meeting scheduled for 15th June.
- Ward Improvements Projects – the youth shelter had been installed at Sumners playing field.

- Poundland: Were contacted but no reply was received. SN suggested contacted the Co-Operative who were in favour of supporting bees.
- It was agreed that the next two Harlow Biodiversity Partnerships meetings would be held on a Thursday – revised dates are 5 November and 10 March 2016.

3: ECCO Report

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

Forest School Training:

Josey has completed the first initial week of training for this and is now looking to organise a forest summer school at the reserve for the 6 week summer break.

The second week of training is due to take place in February 2016.

Visitor numbers:

Numbers continue to increase with the better weather, but this has also shown a slight increase in litter, although the dead hedge and signs around the path seem to be keeping visitors to the trail. We have however had a problem with visitors walking to the large pond by the Nortel hide and there was an occasion where an adult visitor brought his own net and went pond dipping in this pond....on his own. We have also had a few dog walkers trying to take dogs around the trail. ECCO are happy for dog walkers to have refreshments with dogs on leads by the picnic benches, but dogs are not allowed to go further into the reserve. Signs dictate this by the den building area but have on a few occasions been ignored, promoting Josey to run after the walker and ask them to leave.

Events:

We have had several events since the last meeting, including an amphibian weekend, a bat weekend and Easter. Easter was a huge success, with several thousand visitors using the reserve. We have also 3 bat walks upcoming in June, July and August, which we are charging £2 per person, with the proceeds being split between Essex Bat Group and ECCO.

Work Experience Students:

Our work experience students have now finished their time at the reserve and one is due to take a place up at university in September, when they previously were not keen on further education. Both seemed to have gained lots of experience and knowledge from their time at the reserve and gave positive feedback about the placement.

Visitor Centre Windows:

The windows in the classroom at the reserve have been in a state of disrepair for a long time but it has now been confirmed that Harlow council will foot the bill for their repairs and replacement. This should make the centre more secure and also warmer in the winter months.

Café:

Josey has increased the range of food on offer at the café and is in talks with Coca Cola to look to install a drinks fridge in the café.

Those are the main updates from ECCO since the last meeting, and apologies once more for being unable to attend.

4: Harlow Council Report & Kier Harlow Report

- Councillor Mark Wilkinson is the Portfolio Holder for Environment
- Councillor Jon Clempner is the Leader of the Council
- Green Flag judging: Parndon Wood Nature Reserve would have a mystery shopper visit in the autumn. The Green Flag Award would be presented in July.
- Town Park Green Flag application : Green Flag judging would take place on 15th May – this would involve the HLF Project team in the Town Park and the Town Park Volunteers and Town Park Users Group.

Kier Harlow Report: Concern expressed about the national survey regarding Oak Processionary Moth and Acute Oak decline. Observations were ongoing as part of the national survey for reporting occurrences.

Summer face back of encroaching vegetation has started at Maymeads and School Lane.

Health and safety maintenance has taken place in Parndon Wood Nature Reserve, removing dead wood from trees. Now the oak trees are in leaf, inspections are scheduled to take place for Acute Oak Decline

Bee Orchids in flower, mowers aware and avoiding these areas – [EDIT: except at Stort Valley Meadows]

5: Beehives

- 4 Hives were planned to be installed as part of an initiative involving the Harlow Beekeepers Association. It was hoped that Parndon Wood honey would be available for sale in the summer.
- Wildflower Meadow Project: Stort Valley Meadows maintenance programme scheduled for the summer.
- Wildflower Verge: Relocation of A414 protected verge from side of Mark Hall School to Harlow Town Park is being proposed with likely timescales in August.

6: Harlow Conservation Volunteers

- Summary of volunteer activities given as follows :

- Since the March Biodiversity meeting Harlow Conservation Volunteers have carried out hedge laying on Stewards Academy wildlife site, and have visited the Roman Temple site to clear some of the invasive scrub,
- In April volunteers installed the foundations for the new trail footbridge in Parndon Wood nature reserve this was followed by reed control on Maymeads Marsh nature reserve to improve the view from the bird hide,
- Then in May we were back in Parndon Wood with timber preparation for the new footbridge construction this will be ongoing work into the summer.
- Footbridge for new trail route – project on hold whilst preparing the timber – the wood needs planing.

7: Nature Reserves Update & Wildspace Report

The following report was given as follows :

Since March 2015 the following tasks and events have occurred on our Nature Reserves with the Wildspace Group, and Greenteam who on occasions have 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.
- Kayleigh Long, the Writtle College student has been continuing her student work placement at Parndon Wood but focussing more with assisting Josey Travell.

Nature Reserves:

Range of tasks completed by Wildspace and Greenteam Volunteers included:

Stort Valley Meadows and Marshgate Springs:

- Willow control on the ditches;
- Path and trail clearance

Parndon Wood & Hospital and Ridsen Woods:

- Completing the hornbeam coppicing coups;
- Coppice stool protection;
- Dead hedging coppice coupe areas;
- Path and trail clearance;
- 35 to 40 oak trees planted and protected with tree guards and fencing;
- Bracken control;
- Ditch and silt trap clearance;
- Bramble control and opening views across woodland;

- Passmores Academy Behavioural Group undertaken conservation work on Tuesday afternoons during term time;
- Preparation for the new bridge and trail;
- Recovering fencing from older coppice stools.

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.

Roman Temple;

- Path clearance and tree crown lifting;
- Haloing and opening up vegetation and scrub around veteran oaks;
- Clearing vegetation encroaching on temple paving slabs.

Hawkenbury Meadow;

- Willow clearance and coppicing;

Netteswell Plantation;

- Trail clearance;
- Removing fallen trees and limbs;
- Bramble control.

Mark Hall Woods;

- Tree felling;
- Path clearance;
- Ride widening.

Katherine's Pond (AKA Church End Pond);

- Trail and Ride clearance;
- Tree felling;
- Pond clearance;
- Grass cutting.

Corporate Days:

- Corporate workday with Pearson's staff at Stort Valley Meadows undertaking willow control on the ditches;

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

Other issues reported were as follows :

- Brenthall & Barnsley Wood task with corporate task involving GlaxoSmithKline staff is planned. Community Activities Day task with pupils from Passmores Academy planned for June
- Greenteam day out & Wildspace Volunteers visit taken place at Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve.
- Stort Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve: tasks planned include possible haymaking and cutting of the wildflower meadows
- Enquiries to be made to see if it is possible to borrow equipment from the Essex Wildlife Trust or the Grange Farm Trust.

8: Wildlife Projects Update – no update to give

- Now at end of project of Stort Valley Meadows Project
- Wildflower meadow creation now on hold, awaiting further progress. No response Poundland
- Harlow Wildlife Projects mainly maintaining what is on site and looking after the benches etc.
- Cutting grass path through the orchid meadow
- Orchids are in flower – Southern Marsh Orchids and Bee Orchids on the water meadows.
- Orchids being counted: Meadow to be cut end of July to mid-August. Looking to engage local contractors to do so or may be use volunteers.

9: Any other business

- Purchase hay cutting machinery – machine bought with Lottery Funding to cut grass areas
- Bid for funding from Poundland to be pursued
- Machine to be used by volunteers
- Water voles put into Thorley Wash – 500 in total. Translocated from Devon, most of them are pregnant, hoping to spread them through the Stort Valley System. Essex Wildlife Trust and Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust joint project.
- Mink monitoring ongoing on Stort Navigation

Meeting closed 9:15pm

Date of next meeting 5th November at 2pm at Parndon Wood Nature Reserve