



Rottingdean Parish Council

Website: www.rottingdean-pc.gov.uk

THE BEACON HILL NATURE RESERVE WORKING GROUP'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held in the Whiteway Centre
on Friday 14th September 2018 at 10 am

Those Present: David Larkin Peter Whitcomb Sue John
 Bob Webzell Jo Spickett Bernard Turnbull
 Louise Arnold Jo Davies John Cumming

Apologies: Rob Walker Colin Dellar Lynda Hyde
 Angela Swinn Atlanta Cook Emma Keane
 Jason Fisher Bernadette Skinner

Chair, Bob Webzell, welcomed those to the AGM that included new Parish Councillor Jo Davies and RPC Chair, Sue John. It was a pleasure that David Larkin, BHCC's Conservation Manager could attend, in Emma's absence.

1. **Minutes** of Annual General Meeting held on 8th September 2017 accepted.

2. **Matter Arising** – Bob confirmed that BHLNR had in 2017 been judged in the South and South East in Bloom as a Large Conservation Area making it Gold 6 years in a row for BHLNR. The decision had been taken via correspondents between BHWG Members not to repeat the entry to S&SEinB for 2018. It was agreed that current management and volunteer practices was guide enough to our continued success without needing annual external judgement.

3. It was confirmed that the Legal Dept of BHCC had **sealed the Declaration of Beacon Hill Nature Reserve on 6th September 2017** enlarging the Reserve from 18.55ha to the new 26.70ha.

This change of a year ago had drawn comment from Natural England that mown paths should be removed from the stewardship agreement, and funding lost, so in 2018 an exercise has taken place to define formal (mown) paths and informal (unmown) paths. Some additional mowing will take place to accommodate sheep fencing.

Time will tell if Peter's Butterfly Transect is still operable after these changes. The legal extension of the LNR rendered our noticeboard maps and flyers out-of-date and work has started in 2018 to update and replace

4. Specialist Reports Peter summarised reports he had prepared as a basis for our Annual Wildlife Report and drew attention to some highlights. Peter reported that moth data and bird data is somewhat lacking this year due to absence of specialist reporters. Jo Spickett confirmed she has become a Bee-Walker and would be assembling Bee sightings for future reports. Peter was thanked for this excellent role he performs for BHLNR as Lead Specialist.

5. Review of the 2017/18 Management Plan A summary review of this plan was discussed. The City Council and BHWG were congratulated for the differential sheep grazing that had enhanced the sward and created more diverse wildlife habitats, ably assisted by our loyal and hard-working volunteers. There is much anecdotal evidence and comment that the wild flower display on BH this year was the best in recent memory and this can be directly linked to the increased and improved sheep-grazing programme. Bob thanked all the Friends and volunteers for all their continued dedication and hard work in making Beacon Hill the success it is.

6 Management Plan Discussions for 2018/19 : Full details will appear in the Annual Report but key issues included:

- A dual programme of sheep grazing across the sectors to help manage the sward and invasive brambles and scrub. The flock arrived 5th September for their first visit.
- Revision of footpaths and mowing practices as discussed above.
- Renewal of Benches and Infrastructure with the generous help of The Friends, RPC, individual donations and SDNP
- To facilitate a British Legion Beacon Lighting ceremony on 11 November 2018 on an agreed site that David secured the removal of the Higher Level Stewardship Agreement from. A visit to confirm the exact site took place immediately after this AGM by four BHWG Members.
- It was proposed this same site could be used by The Friends as a burn-site for cut scrub under careful supervision.
- The Friends have an extensive calendar of work events proposed for BHLNR to manage scrub, the sheep, paths, ivy etc in the coming year. The Friends have given 558 hours of physical labour to the Reserve this year and this has a monetary value when bids and contributions are being considered.
- Emma has reduced her work hours whilst she completes an MSc, we wish her well in this venture. In the interim Will will offer Ranger support to BHLNR.
- Sue and Jason had met with Blind Veterans, who adjoin the Reserve, and discussed their ideas of a wild-flower meadow and co-operations to facilitate their access and information needs about BHLNR. This may accelerate our adoption of QR codes and way-markers on the Reserve.

7 Beacon Hub Progress and Developments Bernard gave a useful update upon significant successful fund-raising and plans for an extended lease to 25 years and building work to commence on the Hub in 2019. The Hub have accepted the educational remit and hope their 35-seater classroom proposed in the development will be regularly used by school parties from near and further afield.

In conjunction with the SDNP the Hub should develop as a SDNP Visitor Centre for the Eastern part of the National Park. Efforts are being made by all to avoid confusion over the identities and roles of The Hub, The Friends and the BHWG.

8 2017/18 Annual Wildlife Report Individual reports of specialists and other contributions will need to be with Peter or Bob by the end of October to allow completion and publication via RPC to the previous high standards. A digital version will also be submitted to appear on the RPC's website: www.rottingdean-pc.gov.uk and the usual 30 or so copies circulated to agreed recipients, schools and libraries. David asked that a hard-copy also be sent to The Keep archiving centre. It was agreed to ask Colin Dellar of RPS to write an article about Beacon Mill for the 2018/19 Annual Report, it was also agreed the Annual Report should carry the strap-line 'Gateway to the South Downs National Park'.

9. 2018/19 BHLNR Events John Cumming helped facilitate the transition for Beacon Hub to take over the School and Open Events with Bernard/Atlanta in 2018 Beacon Hub would review 2018 successes and devise the programme for 2019 and publicise these through their website and social media networks.

Bob thanked them for this along with the efforts of both The Friends and The Hub to promote events and workdays through regular articles in Rottingdean Village News, the Denes Magazine and, via Bernadette, to Ovingdean magazines.

10 Projects proposed for BHLNR Further to 3 above, Bob discussed work started in RPC to renew the information boards, flyers, leaflet dispensers and, through the Friends, the picnic benches on BHLNR. A small working group has twice met, quotes for the noticeboard work sought and agreed by RPC and work is progressing using our specialists to compile and agree the desired content, aided by a Design and Contents Brief tabled and agreed at this AGM. The Friends have successfully raised significant funds and are progressing the picnic benches, and two individual donations to the work have been pledged. RPC have made a sum available and have applied to SDNP for a grant in support of the work on the information boards. The contribution of The Friends to the notice-boards in kind by erecting them for us is much appreciated. It was agreed the work on the information boards was the priority and this should be drafted, fully funded, formally agreed and completed before work on the trifold information leaflets takes place.

As a lot of footfall to the LNR now starts at The Hub, Bernard asked if the Beacon Hub could have a matching Prima-Dura information panel made for The Hub and suggested the Hub would be prepared to finance this. This suggestion was welcomed if Bernard sought to pursue it

11 Parish Council's Beacon Hill Nature Reserve's Web Pages Peter's excellent quarterly Newsletter had become a valuable addition to the RPC website to give current information to the public. Additionally Peter regularly added BHLNR observation data onto i-record, adding our data to a wider UK-wide network of wildlife surveys.

12 Beacon Hill Open Public Meeting would again offer a tripartite presentation from BHWG, The Friends of BH and Beacon Hub and take place on the evening of 14th September 2018. (A total of 23 people attended this open public meeting that evening)

13 Any Other Business:

- Jo Spickett confirmed that work on siting the picnic benches had drawn attention to the archaeological importance of the Reserve and the County Archaeologist had advised test pits will be required where the picnic benches and interpretation boards are to be sited. The Friends and BHCC are contacting the local archaeology group to see if they can undertake this task.

- In the absence of an archaeologist at the meeting, John agreed to approach our link person to try to get a written contribution for the Annual Report
- In response to John's question, David explained that no solution was currently forthcoming for the unexpectedly raised standpipe that contractors had found necessary to erect on BHLNR. The standpipe's value in filling the bowser and supplying water for the sheep was fully appreciated.
- Bernard raised a villager's request for parasols over the picnic tables. As these are provided at The Hub Café close-by it was not felt appropriate at present.

14. **Next Annual Meetings:** should take place in September 2019 at the discretion of the newly elected (May 2019) Rottingdean Parish Council. It was important this was on a day our Ranger, Emma Keane, could attend. Bob confirmed it was unlikely he would be leading the 2019 BHWG AGM and Open Public meeting.