



# Rottingdean Parish Council

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

Held in the Whiteway Centre  
on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2017 at 10 am

### Those Present:

Bernadette Skinner	Peter Whitcomb	Emma Keane
Bob Webzell	Jo Spickett	Bernard Turnbull
Louise Arnold		

<b>Apologies:</b>	Larissa Reed	Rob Walker	John Cumming
	David Larkin	Colin Dellar	Ian Wilson
	John Funnell	Anthony Delow	Sue John
	Lynda Hyde	Angela Swinn	Atlanta Cook

Chair, Bob Webzell, welcomed those to the AGM that included Bernard Turnbull, Chair of Beacon Hub

- 1. Minutes** of Annual General Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2016 accepted. There were no Matters Arising not dealt with elsewhere.
- 2. Report on the 2017 “In Bloom” competition** – Bob confirmed that in July 2017 BHLNR had been judged in the South and South East in Bloom as a Large Conservation Area. Bob thanked Louise, Jo, Jason, Jay and Colin for facilitating this. NB On 20<sup>th</sup> September at the S&SEinB Award Ceremony BHLNR received Gold in the Conservation Area category for 2017, making it Gold 6 years in a row for BHLNR.
- 3.** It was confirmed that the Legal Dept of BHCC had **sealed the Declaration of Beacon Hill Nature Reserve on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2017** enlarging the Reserve from 18.55ha to the new 26.70ha. The completion of this long process was celebrated. Bob had sent formal documentation and site details to Natural England.
- 4. Specialist Reports** Peter summarised reports he had prepared as a basis for our Annual Wildlife Report. Peter will try to secure moth data also.

**5. Review of the 2016/17 Management Plan** A summary review of this plan was discussed. No work had been possible on the old allotments in 2016/17

Emma reported on the issues on the Reserve of the ongoing problem with keeping the 'scrub' (the Hawthorn, brambles and Sycamore) under control. This growth really does threaten the important chalk grassland and the many species of plants and animals that depend on it. There is a section adjacent to South Wood where this has become particularly problematic. It is far from ideal to cut it mechanically and is the least preferred option because of the damage to the habitat that it causes. Last year the Friends spent a great many hours carefully hand cutting out brambles and problematic plants in a specific controlled area, making use of tree-poppers when available, next to an area that we had to cut mechanically for grazing, in order to compare the difference.

Jo confirmed survey results showing the results that all this hard work by volunteers has achieved. The re-growth of the 'scrub' in the hand cut section has been remarkable reduced this year from 70% to 10% compared to the mechanically cut area and has improved the quality of the grassland and wildflower cover from 23% to 60%. This promising success and our altering of grazing timings meant they were very confident that by continuing to manage in this way will greatly improve the conservation of the whole reserve. Emma and Jo 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 2017/18 :** Full details will appear in the Annual Report but key issues included:

- In order to utilise the grasses more the sheep arrived 9<sup>th</sup> August to graze the compartments of BHLNR until late October. A flock will be back on the Hill in the spring of 2018 to double graze agreed areas.
- The Friend fund-raising successes will be targeted at tree poppers and secateurs with any excess going towards Notice Boards, which need updating with the enlarged Reserve.
- The picnic benches are in a sorry state and the Parish Council will be approached to endeavour to get these repaired or replaced. RPC will need to review and revise the Information Leaflet also
- Emma explained the need to burn cut scrub on site, which Natural England had agreed to. BHWG agreed to this using the raised and ranger-controlled fire system discussed. A location in a non-archaeologically sensitive area was agreed close to the top of Hog Plat. Bernard suggested the Hub may be able to store necessary equipment.
- Metal detecting and drone flying on Beacon Hill is forbidden unless the City Council has given formal permission
- Natural England seek to reduce cut paths on BHLNR and BHCC are required to cut and collect under EU Guidelines. Dog mess renders these grass-cuttings as contaminated waste. The implications for the butterfly transect and the true continuation of those records was of great concern. Members were asked to email their views to Bob and Emma before a final decision made.
- Bernadette drew attention to a section of North Wood that needed attention and ivy-cutting
- Bernard discussed the pedestrian gate on the Hub drive and possible joint funding with The Lions to improve this

**7 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](http://www.rottingdean-pc.gov.uk) and the usual 30 or so copies circulated to agreed recipients, schools and libraries. Jo offered to write pieces upon the bramble control and the 3-yearly plant surveys

**8. 2018 BHLNR Events** John Cumming would facilitate a transition for Beacon Hub to take over the School and Open Events with John and Bernard/Atlanta visiting schools together in the first instance to agree need and dates and appropriate groups (maybe Year 5 instead of Year 6). Jo, Peter and Bob agreed to lead when available to do so. BHCC are no longer able to undertake Moth Nights. John would promote events through Rottingdean Village News and, via Bernadette, to Ovingdean magazines.

**9. 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.

**10. Beacon Hill Open Meeting** This would again offer a tripartite presentation from BHWG, The Friends of BH and Beacon Hub.

**11. Beacon Hub:** Bernard Turnbull Outlined changes in Trustees and Officers and needs for a clear identity and rebranding as an Eco-Education Visitor Centre. They proposed a launch and media campaign. The café was open and bringing in funds and the car-park was in use. Crowd-funding was proposed to fund necessary building advise for development and proposals to seek a grant to take into schools, course and events. Full details were given by Bernard and Atlanta in the evening Open Meeting.

**12. Friends of Beacon Hill:** Success in 2017 with the Skylark and Information Posts was noted along with bird-boxes and fundraising at the Fair. Louise and Bernadette had trained as leaders and first-aiders for working sessions on the Hill. New 17/18 income will initially be directed to the noticeboards.

**12. Any Other Business:**

- Bernard identified a need for better umbrella/clearing-house co-ordination of village events and offered to give thought to a paper on the same in 2018.

**13. Date of Next Annual Meetings:** Friday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2018 10 am for the AGM and the combined FoBH/BHWP/ Beacon Hub Annual Public Meeting at 7 pm in the Whiteway Centre.

**14. Date of the Annual Cleanup:** Proposed for 10am Saturday mid Feb 2018 To be confirmed by John Cumming and Bernadette