



Rottingdean Parish Council

Minutes of the Beacon Hill Nature Reserve Stewardship Group Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 15 September 2022

Present: Sue John (Chair), Nick Lane, Louise Arnold, Bob Webzell,
Bernard Turnbull

Chris Hayes, Parish Clerk (minutes)

1. Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on 16th September 2021

The minutes were agreed

2. Matters Arising

None

3. Report on the 21/22 Management Plan and Proposed List of Projects for 2022/23. Nick Lane provided the following update.

- Grazing. The Autumn and Spring grazes both took place. Nick expressed his thanks to volunteers from the Friends of Beacon Hill who attended in all weathers to help construct, move, and pack up the temporary sheep enclosures. The number of graze days were well within the defined parameter of 4 months however Nick would be looking to reduce the developing grass thatch across the extension area with the 2022 autumn graze.
- Fence/Gate Replacement. The oak post/chestnut rail fence along the Marine Drive boundary was renewed earlier this year. Nick expressed his thanks to the patience of people using the hill during slight disturbance while this was taking place. Damaged rails or those unlikely to survive the next 15 to 20 years were replaced. The remaining metal posts that were used to prop up the old rotting fence would be removed this autumn. A new pedestrian gate had been installed near the Blind Veterans UK building.
- Step Works. A start had been made at replacing/renewing steps in North Wood, but there was more to be done – this would be

one of the targets for the year ahead.

- Platinum Jubilee Beacon. A fire beacon took place on Beacon Hill on Thursday 2nd June 2022 to commemorate the Platinum Jubilee for the late Queen Elizabeth II. The event had been coordinated by the Royal British Legion and was well-organised and well-attended by good-spirited and in 99% of cases, well-behaved people. The stewards had been excellent – friendly, welcoming, and providing clear and valuable advice to attendees that they were able to engage with – keeping to paths, having dogs on leads, nearest exit etc. The clear up operation on the following days was also most efficient. The event was well organised but could be further improved for the future by:
 - Restricting the size of the fire, if a similar format is used in the future i.e., a ground-constructed bonfire as opposed to a basket beacon at height
 - Cordoning off path corners with stakes road pins/stakes and hazard tape to dissuade corner-cutting
 - Avoiding using yellow/black hazard tape at ground level as it may pose a trip hazard – instead, consider using red/white tape at waist height which is easier to see
 - If using glowsticks again, also place at waist height so they are easier to see and maybe use larger ones but also consider sourcing sticks that can be recharged in the sun & reused - budget and sourcing issues may affect this
 - Yellow high-visibility vests for stewards rather than purple which would stand out much better in darkness
 - Planning for unexpected publicity via social media which lead to higher attendance than first expected
 - Stewards encouraging more forcefully attendees to move along from the 'coalescing point' nearest the fire/presentation spot
- Drought An extremely dry period leading up to August had been experienced. This led to some fire-risk concerns on the hillside. Nick said he had made quite a few site patrols during the summer, combining a litter pick but did not see any fires/BBQs, however there was at least one report of a BBQ – thankfully no fires. The recent rains had led to rapid grass growth and plenty of material for the sheep to graze on this autumn.
- Rottingdean Village News Short themed articles with some information of interest pertaining to Beacon Hill were submitted for each edition of the Rottingdean Village News.
- Fence Vandalism Some vandalism had taken place at the end of the Autumn 2021 graze period. Many sections of the fence were deliberately cut. Nick said he was grateful to Friends of Beacon Hill volunteers, with their valued and cheerful help the fence was laid across the Beacon Hub Car Park and the damage had been mended sat on chairs borrowed from the Hub.
- The year ahead. Over the coming year, with the valued support of

the Friends of Beacon Hill, Nick looked forward to continuing with the hillside grazing programme, installing a Versalok fence along the eastern euonymus hedge boundary, continuing step and handrail construction in North Wood and reducing scrub encroachment across the hill.

The following points were made in discussion:

- The grazing regime had not raised any concerns. Nick said that the aim was to continue to simplify the grazing regime to make it easier to manage in the future which would be consulted on.
 - The mowing of the central bridle way had made it very wide, and it was now effectively two paths. A single path should be restored.
4. Plans for 2022/23.
 - There had not been any community event in 2021/22 so opportunities would be sought for an event in the coming year potentially associated with the Brighton Festival. The Friends of Beacon Hill would submit ideas.
 - The 'Larks Ascending' children's procession planned for 24th October had originally intended to end on Beacon Hill but given the likely adverse weather this was not now planned.
 - Some of the notice boards were in a poor state of repair and would be refurbished
 - The steps leading up from the recreation group would also be repaired.
 5. Report of our Specialists on 2021/22. The reports had been received and the Chair thanked Peter Whitcomb and other contributors for the excellent reports.
 6. Proposals for a permanent beacon on Beacon Hill. It was agreed that the Task Group that included members of the Friends of Beacon Hill would meet to discuss proposals put forward for a permanent beacon and in the interim Brighton and Hove City Council would be asked to set safety parameters for future beacons.
 7. Friends of Beacon Hill Financial Report, Louise Arnold took the meeting through the following finance report:

<u>Date</u>		<u>Credit</u>	<u>Debit</u>	<u>Balance</u>
07/09/2021	Opening Balance	659.26		
17/01/2022	Rottingdean Village Fair <i>Insurance</i>		10.00	649.26

12/04/2022	Jay Butler (Printing) <i>Sky Lark Nesting Signs</i>	21.08	628.18
09/08/2022	Rottingdean Fair Proceeds	102.25	730.43
09/08/2022	Justin King - Bird Rescue Group <i>Donation Committee Approved</i>	51.25	679.18
09/08/2022	Cash	0.25	679.43
12/09/2022	Closing Balance		679.43

8. Bernard Turnbull updated the meeting on Beacon Hub activities:

- Disability access to Beacon Hill had been discussed by Beacon Hub and a plan had been agreed that was with a drafting engineer.
- Beacon Hub had agreed that the car park should be opened 24/7 and were currently seeking a parking machine that would allow the first hour free.

9. The 2021/22 Annual Wildlife Report. Louise agreed to collate the material for the Annual Report and review the list of hard copy recipients.

10. Any Other Business.

- None

11. Date of the Annual Clean-Up to be notified

12. Date of Next Annual Meeting 10.30 am 15th September 2023

Parish Clerk

September 2022