



Rottingdean Parish Council

Minutes of the Beacon Hill Nature Reserve Stewardship Group Annual General Meeting on Thursday the 6th of November 2025

Present; Cllr Mike Nixon, (Chair), Cllr Phil Evans, Russ Greenwood, Bernadette Skinner, Neil Doyle, City Parks Ranger, Andrew Wilson, Andrew Rose, Bob Webzell, Atlanta Cook. Chris Hayes, Parish Clerk.

1. Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on 23rd October 2024. The minutes were agreed as drafted. Russ Greenwood and Andrew Wilson updated the meeting on plans to provide new Notice Boards for the reserve. The design had been agreed and the new panels produced. It was hoped to arrange installation before the end of the year.
2. Health of the Nature Reserve. The group discussed concerns raised by Andrew Rose about the fall in population of skylarks that was thought to be due partly due to dogs not being kept under control during the nesting season and the fact that the sheep grazing had been extended. Neil Doyle agreed to look at the grazing timetable and the group agreed that signs should be posted at the entrances to the Reserve during the nesting season, with an article in the Deans Magazine. Andrew Rose agreed to convene a small group to develop a plan to look at skylark retention and how skylarks might be encouraged to return to the reserve.
3. Autumn 25/Spring 26 Management Plan. Neil Doyle took the group through recent work and the grazing and the plans for next year,
 - The bramble at the North East corner of the reserve was out of control which is why a mechanical cut was undertaken last year which had been controversial but necessary
 - This winter the grazing will take place in four stages during January to April. Grazing will commence in the northeastern section, then move around the reserve from section to section in an 'anticlockwise' fashion, arriving back in this section again just in time for spring. The sheep would be moved round when the area had been fully grazed

which meant that Grazing in the skylark nesting area could extend until late April.

- The hope is that grazing the section that is worst affected by scrub twice in the same season (especially when the sheep eat the early spring regrowth) will help weaken the bramble.
- Throughout the grazing process and scrub bashing, care would be taken to minimise disturbance to skylark nesting and organised to fit in with the Friends of Beacon Hill (FoBH) sessions.

4. Friends of Beacon Hill plans for 25/26. Russ Greenwood provided the following update.

- Scrub Bashing was underway along with bramble clearing near the allotments.
- Hoary cress would be cleared in the spring and a ragwort clearance undertaken in July.
- During spring all the pathways would be cleared including the path down to Greenways. The area round the notice boards would also be cleared twice during the year.
- Extra raking sessions were planned and FoBH would keep an eye on the entrances to the reserve to ensure they remained clear.

The following points were made in discussion

- Andrew Wilson said he was concerned about the hedge at the border the St Dunstan's that needed to be cut back on the reserve side. He asked if any discussions had taken place with developers. Non had but the Parish Council and FoBH would monitor the situation and if necessary, talk to the developer or tenants association when it was formed.
- Bernadette Skinner asked what was planned for the picnic benches that were in a poor condition and little used. It was agreed that if they were to be retained, a plan to maintain them would be needed. In the meantime, Neil Doyle agreed to have a look at the condition of the benches and make them safe. FoBH agreed to inspect the benches and decide on their future.

5. Autumn/Spring Communication plan. The group agreed the following

- The usual notices should be placed around the reserve to publicise the grazing plans
- Signage asking dog owners to keep the pets under control during skylarks season would be developed, along with leaflets and messages in social media.
- The concern about the falling population of skylarks would also feature in the Nature Report.

6. Beacon Hub update and Plans. Atlanta Cook provided the following update.

- Bernard Turnbull had stood down from the Group and Atlanta had

taken over the role of Chair and Treasurer. Kim Turnbull stepped down as Secretary.

- Two new Trustees, had since been recruited Elizabeth Broadley, a teacher at OLOL, and Sara de Marco, and employee within BHCC's architectural department
 - The CIO's main focus has been to update and finalise the maintenance schedule, clean and organise the entire building, and reinstall all necessary paperwork and signage for the Café Kiosk in preparation for its re-inspection and reopening in 2026.
 - This aim over the next year would be to start the design phase a fresh with the new Trustees to seek an affordable solution to our needs and draw up a new fund-raising target and strategy. Sara De Marco would be working on the building design, planning considerations, a fundraising strategy and a regular education programme.
 - As part of the maintenance schedule the Hub intended to replace the broken car park entrance swing gate and reopen the car park with a workable paid system that compensates the charity adequately and takes all potential users into consideration. The car park would be opened and closed each day the Hub was open to avoid unauthorised vehicular access to the reserve.
7. Annual report finalisation and timing. The Clerk agreed to coordinate the 2025 Nature Report and requested contributions by 30th of November at the latest to enable publication by the end of the calendar year.
8. Date of Next Annual Meeting. The Clerk to propose a date sometime in late October 2026

Parish Clerk

November 2025