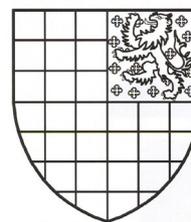


Town Hall
High Street
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 2QS

☎ 01273 471469 Fax: 01273 480919

✉ info@lewes-tc.gov.uk

🌐 www.lewes-tc.gov.uk



**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

of the meeting of the **Landport Bottom Management Committee**, held on **Tuesday 7th July 2020**, online via Zoom Meetings at 7:00pm.

PRESENT Cllrs Bird; Burrows; Handy and Sains.

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*); B Courage (*Town Ranger*); Ms T Outram (*Lewes District Council Special Adviser; Downland & Reserves*)

LBMC2020/01 **ELECTION of CHAIRMAN:** Cllr Bird was elected to chair the committee for the 2020/21 year.

LBMC2020/02 **QUESTIONS:** There were none Two members of the Friends of Landport Bottom were present.

LBMC2020/03 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Apologies had been received from Cllr Vernon, who was working. No message had been received from Cllrs Henman or O’Keeffe (belated apologies were received from Cllr O’Keeffe – who had been unable to connect).

LBMC2020/04 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** Cllrs Bird and Handy declared that they live adjacent to Landport Bottom.

LBMC2020/05 **MINUTES: it was resolved that**

LBMC2020/05.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 25th September 2019 are received and signed as an accurate record.

LBMC2020/06 **REPORT on SITE MANAGEMENT**

Members received a brief update report on operational matters from Ms Outram, which covered:

Grazing: Southdown sheep had been introduced, with young lambs, as lockdown started. There had been sheep-worrying incidents and one lamb death - the shepherd considered this was due to stress. More strongly-worded notices were posted. The Southdown breed lambs were very popular. They had been weaned and replaced by Tegs (a non Southdowns breed, in their second year). A second sheep death (a Teg) due to a dog attack had occurred on 25/26 June. Plumpton College had been reimbursed for the cost of the sheep. It was acknowledged that there had been an unusually short lead time between posting of warning notices this year and the arrival of the lambs – this would be prioritized for future occasions. The sheep had grazed the pond field and the tumuli field over the spring and summer. The orchids had flowered in the pond field, and all fields looked attractive and floristically diverse.

Infrastructure: The water supply had failed temporarily due to nearby work by Southern Water. Supply had been reinstated with a new meter. New signs to inform the public of the presence of sheep in each field had replaced those broken some months ago. Fence repairs had taken place where needed.

Community Engagement: There had been no walks or community wildlife events over the spring and summer so far, and none were planned. There had been some conflict observed between the dog walking community and those keen to allow the skylarks space to nest undisturbed. Members of the public had added their own signs to those erected by the ranger. These were left in place due to the special circumstances of Covid-19 but would be removed shortly.

“Changing Chalk project”: A consultant has been appointed by Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council, for development work on this project, and it was

hoped that there would be funding for a community ranger to develop community nature engagement across the Downs; based on Lewes and Eastbourne councils sites. This would include Landport Bottom and hopefully include some work on responsible dog ownership. If the final bid is successful, a 4-year post should be in place at the beginning of 2022.

Lewes District Council Staff: One of the two Specialist Advisor for Downland and Reserves (SADR) had left the LDC and is not to be replaced. Thyone Outram (SADR) remained and anticipated an increased work load, but would continue to spend the time contracted with LTC on Landport Bottom work. This may mean a slight reduction in work around volunteering or community engagement since SADR work tended to exceed the agreed monthly hours.

Stewardship agreement extension: The Rural Payments agency has advised that extensions to Higher Level Stewardship agreements were usually not offered until two or three months before the end of the agreement (current agreement ends April 2021). Government consultation on changes to the programme had been halted due to Covid-19 and, although pilot studies were in place around the country, it was thought unlikely that the scheme would change before 2024. It was also unlikely that current agreements would be extended for that long. It may be possible to apply for Countryside Stewardship (a newer scheme). Applications for Countryside Stewardship 2021 open in February so this would be reviewed at the turn of the year to establish the situation.

Woodland: The woodland at the lower part of the slope beside the Nevill Road was mostly felled due to ash dieback. There was dying ash remaining in the upper part of the woodland. A risk assessment was needed to establish how much of this part of the woodland may need to be felled.

Members thanked Ms Outram for her helpful and informative report.

LBMC2020/07

UPDATE to SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The committee considered a discussion draft of an update to the Site Management Plan, which would represent the third major revision since the original Plan was adopted and was designed to cover a five-year period.

There followed a lengthy discussion on various points of detail, and submissions were noted for a second draft, which would be prepared for review in Mid-September. Members asked if the meeting to conduct that review could be preceded by an escorted site visit, and it was agreed that this would be arranged.

There was a brief discussion on the proposed treatment of Ragwort, and Ms Outram advised that it was recommended good management to remove this, particularly when growing close to areas frequented by horses and other animals vulnerable to its toxic effect.

LBMC2020/08

BENCH SEAT

Members considered a request to install a bench seat, proposed to benefit a nonagenarian who regularly walks on the land. The applicant had been advised that as a general principle, man-made structures were only installed at Landport Bottom if essential to the management of the land *eg.* water troughs for livestock. Such things as bench seats and litter bins were not considered in-keeping with the land's natural state and its management within environmentally-sensitive land programmes. It had been agreed that the Management Committee would consider the request, nonetheless, as it may be felt appropriate to allow a suitably natural-looking bench at a particular location where the impact was minimal. Councillors discussed these principles at length and agreed that a clear policy statement might helpfully be included in the revised Site Management Plan. The immediate request was refused, for the reasons stated, although there was interest in the possibility of an 'invisible' structure such as a stone-filled and grassed gabion which could be constructed so as to blend with natural contours of the land. This would be investigated for discussion at the next meeting.

LBMC2020/09

HISTORIC RACECOURSE SIGN

Permission had previously been agreed for the Lewes Racecourse History Group to site a commemorative wrought-iron sign on Council land. There had recently been some contention in social media as to the ownership of the sign, but TC advised that he had been provided with sufficient detail of the history of its origination that he was satisfied it was the Group’s property. The sign was understood to be awaiting some re-finishing and delivery of a new mounting post; and could then be placed as agreed with the Group.

LBMC2020/10

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed, and thanked everyone for their attendance. *The meeting closed at 8:45pm.*

Signed date

Draft