



DRAFT MINUTES

MEETING NAME: Bracknell Forest Nature Partnership

DATE AND TIME: 23 March 2021 14:00 – 16:00 Teams Meeting

PRESENT:	Marlies Boydell	Bracknell Forest Council	MBo
	Michael Brossard	Borough Councillor for Sandhurst	MBr
	Gill Cheetham	Bracknell Horticultural Association	GC
	Mike Coker	Binfield Environment Group	MC
	Diane Collins	Easthampstead Living Churchyard	DC
	Sheila Collings	Councillor for Warfield Parish/ Warfield Environment Group	SCO
	Malcolm Hawkes	Wildlife in Ascot	MH
	Richard Elsbury	Bracknell Conservation Volunteers	R
	Purveen Hira	Binfield Parish Council	PH
	Ray Hodges	Bracknell Forest Natural History Society	RH
	Alison Love	Environment Agency	
	Andy McCoy	Binfield Badger Group	AM
	Will Oliver	Thames 21	
	Gail Robertson	Councillor for Crowthorne Parish	GR
	Claire Wallen	Warfield Environment Group	CW
	Andy McCoy	Binfield Badger Group	
	Sue Synge (minutes)	Bracknell Forest Council	SS

APOLOGIES:	John Baster	Crowthorne Village Action Group
	Louisa Medland	Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust
	Alan Moffat	Bracknell Town Council

Minutes of the Bracknell Forest Nature Partnership

1.	Introductions	
	Welcome and Introduction. The meeting was chaired by Marlies Boydell (MBo), Bracknell Forest Council.	
2.	Lower Thames Catchment Partnership	
	MBo introduced two guest speakers. Will Oliver from Thames 21 and Alison Love from the Environment Agency who explained the role of Catchment Partnerships with a focus on river water quality and the surrounding land.	

	<p>Further information can be found by following the links below:-</p> <p>Maidenhead to Teddington Catchment Partnership (arcgis.com)</p> <p>WFD River, Canal and SWT Waterbody Classifications (2019) Catchment Based Approach</p> <p>The number for the pollution hotline is 0800 807060.</p> <p>Useful videos sent by Alison Love: Outfall safari https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NcTxiEKT86w Riverfly monitoring https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GiOyhHdvG6I</p> <p>The PowerPoint presentation will be circulated with the minutes.</p>	
3.	<p>Minutes of the last meeting update</p>	
	<p>Action points from the previous meeting were discussed, and where necessary, further action points added.</p> <p>Investigating the verge outside Woodhurst Park Discussion around the issues raised by this site between MB and SCo. <u>Action:</u> SCo to send MBo a map of a new verge area so that MB can discuss the site with Environment Services. <u>Action:</u> Conversation to be continued outside of the meeting.</p> <p>Easthampstead Living Churchyard Project <u>Action:</u> DC to organise a late summer walk around Easthampstead Living Churchyard with MBo.</p> <p>Potential swift nesting sites MBr said that Sandhurst Town Council have two swift boxes at their offices and believes that there are nest sites at Sandhurst School too. <u>Action:</u> MBr to write to Sandhurst School re the swift site and possible access.</p> <p>Wildlife Corridors MB believes that there is a need to map out how to connect the various sites. Easthampstead Rotary Club have been in touch to say they would like to contribute in some way to the Green Corridor project. <u>Action:</u> MBo will set up workshops to map out Wildlife Corridors in the future, hopefully later in 2021.</p> <p>Swift surveys <u>Action:</u> MBo to send an information and survey form to MC and MBo in the next couple of weeks.</p> <p>Wildflower areas Following contact with MH, MB surveyed a few sites and believes that the Winkfield area has potential - Carnation Hall being one of them. <u>Action:</u> MBo to chase this with Winkfield Parish.</p> <p>Warfield Parish Council Action point re wildflower verge had been discussed earlier.</p> <p>Bracknell Biodiversity Action Plan – mid-term review (ideas for reporting)</p>	

	<p>The initial phase of mapping for the Nature Recovery Network is nearly ready. The record centre is using existing information to see how they might be connected through the landscape.</p> <p><u>Action:</u> MBo hopes to be able to share this with the group in the next couple of months.</p>	
4.	Bracknell Biodiversity Action Plan – mid-term review	
	<p>MBo circulated the Action Plan a few weeks ago and has received several positive comments as a result. MH sent some suggested changes which are still required.</p> <p>The BAP review will be available on the BFC website at www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/parks-and-countryside/wildlife/biodiversity-action-plan</p> <p>SCo asked if Frost Folly was to be included on the list for skylark surveying sites. MBo said that yes it was and that the Council are trying to carry out the meadow cuts as determined by the skylark nesting season.</p> <p>MC – Believes that Binfield are losing a lot of trees and hedgerows. Is there a way that we can have a measure of tree cover because we can achieve all of the things under the woodland category and yet still have net loss. MBo replied that the Thames Valley Environment Record Centre produce an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) for the Council.</p> <p>This is available on the council website here: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/monitoring/other-monitoring-and-data</p> <p>The report included the extent of habitats although mainly from a GIS approach. MBo had noticed from the previous report that we have lost woodland area and that we need to determine the cause of that loss. Hedgerows are more difficult to measure and that this ideally needs to be done by sight on the ground, we need more volunteers for this. There is a target in the plan to pay the record centre to identify the hedgerows more accurately.</p> <p>SCo asked if there is anything more that can be done to protect veteran trees in the future, given the huge task of protecting them individually by a TPO. MBo believes that identifying potential threats is one of the key ways to do this and as such would trigger a TPO.</p> <p>As all surveyed veteran trees are added to the TVERC system, SCo asked if the Council have access to those records. MBo advised that she has downloaded the information before being told that was not allowed (October 2017). MBo and GC are in discussions as to how to extract that information and request that the Council have free access to it.</p> <p>An alternative option could be the Ancient Tree Hunt website https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/</p> <p>CW expressed concern for the loss of hedgerows and asked how they can be protected. MBo stated that there is only protection for certain hedgerows under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. In theory landowners should inform the Council if they are going to remove a hedgerow and they can clear up to 20m without issue.</p> <p><u>Action:</u> MBo to send everyone a couple of PDFs produced by Defra. [Amendment: MBo to send to MC, CW and to any other partners on request.]</p> <p>Everyone voted to approve the Mid-Term Review.</p>	
5.	Themed year for 2022 – ideas and discussion	
	<p>Various suggestions were put forward, including wetlands, heathlands, greenspaces, and green corridors.</p> <p>AM asked if the theme could be based around activities such as development or education.</p>	

	<p>MB suggested the green corridors theme could address a range of habitats. MC suggested woodland but also supports the idea of tackling issues with development.</p> <p>All partners had received a word document including a table with facts about possible themed years. BBOWT had indicated they would prefer heathland based on landownership. Two other partners had suggested woodland as a preference. There was no consensus so further discussion is needed.</p> <p><u>Action:</u> MBo to start discussions via email. MBo will also look at short-term wetland projects that the group can support.</p>	
6.	<p>Any other business. Partner Updates.</p>	
	<p>NB – email updates have been added to the live updates given during the meeting.</p> <p>Marlies Boydell Environmental Record Centre Spring Recorders Conference was on 26 and 27 March 2021. A Newt Survey was undertaken at Lily Hill Park last week. 105 newts were caught in 20 traps but they weren't Great Crested. They were Palmates and a few Smooth newts. 3 further visits are planned.</p> <p>Wildlife in Ascot - MH MH – a few amendments needed to the information he sent with regard to the Biodiversity Action Plan. Would like a few answers to a few previous questions please. Action – MBo to update MH on previous enquiries via email.</p> <p>Update by email: We are;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Starting to distribute our booklets on local wildlife, through a few shops, on-line and other outlets. 2) Met up with Ascot Heath School to help reinvigorate wildlife garden – so we should start getting hands dirty soon. 3) And that is another outlet for booklets. 4) Pond-dipping starts next week at Blackmoor Pond. 5) Tree surveys started last week – in RBWM. If you can think of any areas in BFC that need recording let me know. 6) Let me know when you're ready to meet at Carnation Hall. We've tended our small wildflower patches in RBWM, so happy to create at least one in BFC. <p>Binfield Badger Group - AM Asked for an update on the programme of school visits for the Binfield Badger Group. MBo has contacted 20 or so schools but had no reply. <u>Action:</u> MBo to contact schools again re Professor Brock talks now that restrictions were being lifted.</p> <p>By email: "During 2021, we've been busy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formulating our response to the Government's badger cull consultation process; 	

- continuing the development of our education programme, 'School of Professor Brock';
- reviewing planning applications across Berkshire to seek mitigation for badgers;
- maintaining our Binfield Copse and reviewing trail cam footage to identify its composition;
- providing advice to householders who have badger-related issues;
- producing and distributing our newsletter and
- updating our website and social media.

This is a fair reflection of our usual activities. A wider review including 2020 would have seen us carrying out sett surveying when restrictions allowed, rescues of injured badgers and giving Zoom presentations to groups.”

Binfield Environment Group - CW

Two thirds of the hedge at Larks Hill have been pruned.

More people are litter picking and CW hope that this will encourage young people to value the area they live in.

Will organise a Bat Walk in September.

CW asked where the tiny forest on Cabbage Hill would be exactly. MBo said that it would be on the western boundary north of the woodland acting as a stepping-stone connecting the top of Long Copse to the north. CW hopes this will be done in the autumn of this year.

MBo has been in touch with SC re the annual newt survey at the Newt Reserve.

Easthampstead Living Churchyard - DC

DC – Will contact Kath Moss re future projects at South Hill Park. Churchyard Group are about to meet.

Bracknell Horticultural Society - GC

There are no plans to reopen the Horticultural Society but does not intend to abandon the Nature Partnership, on behalf of gardeners in Bracknell.

Binfield Parish Council - PH

PH – Will be applying for a Green Flag for Wicks Green.

The new Pocket Copse Allotments to be opened.

Managing a mature hedgerow which has some land next to it which is to be developed into an orchard.

Have 30 litter picking volunteers now and noticed more interest during lockdown including some from the DofE scheme.

A Call for Sites Plan will go live in May to identify potential new open space.

Would like to become involved in the National Trust's Blossom Watch and plant some street trees around the village.

MBo aware of a focus on street tree planting. There is a new fund on the horizon for local authorities due to open in April.

Action - MBo to look into Blossom Watch. Is keen that any new trees have pollen and nectar.

Binfield Environment Group - MC

MC – Reedbed surveys. There is a new drainage pond on the Blue Mountain site and wondered whether there was a possibility of talking to the developers and planting that up with reeds. MBo said that there have been drainage issues with the site and so we would need to look carefully at the water volumes they need to

store.

Action: MBo to talk to Graham Pockett about contacts there and liaise with the flood authority manager for more detail about the site.

By email:

“Here is the update from Binfield Parish Council and Binfield Environment Group:

- We have continued litter-picking and bird / butterfly surveying through Covid restrictions: we now have more than 30 people signed up to pick litter around the village; and surveying is now running monthly in Blue Mountain, Wicks Green and Silver Jubilee Field, Piglittle Copse and Meadow and Farley Copse
- BEG planted spring bulbs around the village over the last two years and have monitored their progress and weeded around them. We will be doing some additional pollinator-friendly planting in the next couple of months.
- BEG hung more bird and bat boxes last year and are pleased to report that some of the new boxes are already in use. We are planning to hang more boxes in Farley Copse.
- BEG have inspected the orchid patch near Pockets Copse and have already found more plants than this time last year.
- We are planning to resume BEG work parties in April (with appropriate precautions in place).
- BPC will be running a call-for-sites to see if any local landowners would be prepared to sell or lease us an area of land that we can improve for nature and/or amenity purposes.
- BPC have established a Wicks Green green-flag working party and will be developing a plan to improve the two parks (Wicks Green and Silver Jubilee Fields) for nature and people.
- A new allotment site has been opened in Amen Corner North (by the Kings Academy Oakwood primary school). One side of the site is an old hedgerow that was almost entirely blackthorn. The blackthorn has been cut back and we are hoping that other species will recover. There are also plans to plant fruit trees alongside this hedge.
- The playground next to the York Road allotments is being updated. We will take this opportunity to plant nature-friendly and child-friendly plants.
- The National Trust are running their annual Blossom Watch - <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/blossom-watch> (but seem to be having some problems with their map). They have also been in the news for their plans to plant groves of blossom trees in urban areas - <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/helping-communities-blossom>
- Our rough plan for BEG events for the rest of the year is shown below. This is subject to change:
 - April 17th – Socially distanced work-parties. There are things to do at Wicks Green, Pocket Copse (the orchid patch), and possibly surveying related to BFC BAP (e.g. hedgerows, reed-beds, etc.)
 - May 15th – Binfield Spring Clean. Note 10K moved to October.
 - June 19th – Bat walk
 - July 17th – Butterfly surveying
 - August 21st – Binfield footpath promotion
 - September 18th – World Clean-up Day
 - October 16th – Guerrilla Gardening
 - November 20th – Farley Copse (or Piglittle) work party
 - December 18th – Wicks Green work party”

Bracknell Forest Natural History Society - RH

RH – Natural History Society is still going strong and members won't be charged for their annual membership this year. A recent talk on the future of farming by Dave Hughes at Syngenta, was very well attended. A walk is planned, in groups of 6. Pleased to be gaining members. Nightingale Triangle project will be up and running again soon in accordance with current guidelines.

Action – RH to see if she can let MB look at the Future of Farming slides. Syngenta are coming back to do Neonicotinoids.

By email:

“Bracknell Forest Natural History Society Spring 2021

The Society held an online meeting during March, via Zoom. The topic for the talk was ‘Food, Foresight and the Future of Farming’, presented by Dave Hughes, Head of Technology Identification & Evaluation for Syngenta Crop Protection. This proved to be very popular, with more than 40 people attending.

Our next fixture, at the end of April, is an exclusive ‘Signs of Spring’ tour of the estate (with visitors divided into groups of five, each led by a knowledgeable guide) - by invitation of Waltham Place.

We are intending to organise another virtual meeting during May, and are looking at putting together a ‘Green Spaces in Bracknell’ walk during June, to round off our ‘Membership year’. In fact we have not charged a Membership Fee for 2020-21 – although some kind and dedicated Members have made donations anyway.

When restrictions have allowed, we have continued to attract good turnouts for maintenance and planting work at our woodland conservation project, Nightingale Triangle. Our next major task, scheduled for late Spring, will be to lay all the pathways - including some which we have created from scratch - with new chippings. As in previous years, we will then take a break to allow nature to take its course – but are planning to reassemble for our Covid-delayed Open Day in September, to which everyone will be invited.”

Warfield Parish Council - SC

Have set up an Environmental Planning Working Group to look at climate change, biodiversity and sustainability. Intending to get to net zero on Parish amenities and functioning by 2030. Discussions to take place with neighbouring parishes, Bracknell Forest Council, residents and interested parties.

By email:

“WPC update for BFNP minutes:

Unfortunately the planting of a small copse of 200 trees at Cabbage Hill to celebrate Warfield Parish Council's 125-year anniversary was postponed due to Covid and will now take place this autumn, along with the planting of a remaining length of hedge at the Quelm Allotments. The Parish Council has formed an Environmental Planning Working Group whose overall objective is for the Parish Council to achieve net zero by 2030. It will be consulting with residents, local organisations and businesses on that and other projects under the themes of climate change, biodiversity and sustainability to bring about positive change to the environment.”

Action: MBo hoping to organise a site visit in July. Open to suggestions and wonders about a river walk following on from the earlier talk. CW wondered about the Frost Folly area as by July the wild-flower meadow will be in full bloom, The Cut also runs through it.

	<p>SC – Whitegrove and Bullbrook area there is a SANG corridor being highlighted by beautiful signs. As they have always been there why has it now been allocated as SANG? MBo said this was the council’s strategic SANG and that the posts were suggesting a different and longer route</p>	
7.	<p>Date of next meeting</p>	
	<p>September 2021, tbc</p>	