

Bramber Brooks

Bramber, West Sussex

Proposal for new Local Nature Reserve (LNR) designation

Why a new LNR is being proposed

The proposed area of the LNR has not previously been opened to the public and covers an area of approximately 15 acres which is rich in wildlife.

Sitting within the parishes of both Bramber and Steyning, part of the land is a Scheduled Ancient Monument which protects evidence of salterns and local history below ground from the Mediaeval period. However, this designation does not directly protect the wildlife living above ground, within grasses, trees, hedges and streams. The site is already part of a Site of Special Conservation Importance (SSCI) but this new LNR designation will ensure that the Bramber Brooks Nature Reserve is specifically protected, is recognised as an asset for the local community and receives the recognition it deserves as a separate site.

A map showing the location and proposed LNR boundaries

The site of the proposed LNR is within easy walking distance of a great number of residential properties within Steyning, Bramber and Upper Beeding as well as local schools, youth groups and nurseries. There is a local public car park within Bramber village which abuts the south boundary of the land.

A map is attached hereto showing the entire land at Bramber Brooks and the specific area to be designated as a new LNR.

There is a circular walk through the nature reserve, starting and ending at new entrance gates and fencing. Five timber bridges have been built over drainage ditches and these provide access over the areas of land which become wettest during the winter months. Benches have also been installed at various viewpoints around the nature reserve.

Tenure information

The freehold interest in around 40 acres of land at Bramber Brooks, including the proposed LNR area, is owned by Riversong Limited. Nick Mills is Managing Director of Riversong and has been the main driving force in the changes at Bramber Brooks since they bought the land in early 2017. Nick's house, known as The Coots, is adjacent to the entrance to Bramber Brooks, opposite St Mary's House in Bramber village.

Management Plan

A Management Plan was prepared by Dr Petra Billings of Sussex Woodlands in July 2017 on behalf of the owners, Riversong Limited. Dr Billings will remain as a Consultant and will have ongoing involvement with the Bramber Brooks Nature Reserve and the Management Plan will be updated regularly.

Nick also works closely with Bramber Parish Council and local wildlife groups and regularly discusses the ongoing management responsibilities and requirements for the land.

Arrangements for access and visitor management

Permissive access has been granted by Riversong Limited over the land forming the nature reserve and all land subject to the LNR application. Works to install information boards will be completed shortly and there are plans for signage to be improved. Bramber Brooks also now has its own Facebook page with over 200 followers.

Visitor management will be constantly monitored by Riversong Ltd. Any Health and Safety concerns are addressed properly with a Health & Safety consultant, Mr Bob Offen preparing regular risk assessment reports. Any visits from schools or nurseries are not allowed without assurance that a risk assessment will be completed. Adequate public liability insurance is in place and the insurers are aware of the nature reserve and the risks associated with increased visitor numbers.

A decision has been made not to allow dogs into the area of the nature reserve and signs have been erected to inform visitors. This arrangement has been working well over the past year or so and has not caused problems. This is now one of the very few areas in the whole of the Horsham District where the public are not allowed to bring their dogs.

Outline costs and funding arrangements

The nature reserve has been set up with the help of a grant from the Rampion Wind Farm and through works financed by Riversong.

The ongoing management costs will be paid by Riversong Limited, with grant assistance being sought where possible. It is also intended to set up the 'Friends of Bramber Brooks' which will provide a small annual income through subscriptions to go towards costs. Regular committed expenditure is not being expected from Horsham District Council as part of the agreement but assistance and support will be much appreciated when required. The main annual expenditure is on ditch clearance and tree works.

Purpose of the formal declaration as a LNR

Why was this site selected?

This site is important for wildlife, history, education and enjoyment for local people and the LNR designation will help protect the existing wildlife. If the nature reserve is designated as an LNR, it is anticipated that the additional support and advice from wildlife professionals will help the area to be managed efficiently and properly to increase biodiversity.

Why is the authority declaring this site an LNR?

The landowners have voluntarily put this site forward as a potential LNR with the full support of Bramber Parish Council.

What are the benefits of the site?

This is a quiet and self-contained site which should prove to be an asset for local residents, schools, youth groups and wildlife enthusiasts. The site is bounded by a drainage ditch on each side with access only from the eastern side, making it effectively an island site. This self-containment controls visitor access and is seen as a positive geographical feature to protect wildlife.

How will LNR designation change the site?

The LNR designation will bring the site to the attention of local people, schools and wildlife groups and enthusiasts. It will ensure that the area is properly protected well into the future and will add another important green space for the Horsham District.

Has the local community been involved in the plans for the site?

The local community have been very involved with the plans for the site. Bramber and Steyning Parish Councils have been updated regularly and the Management Plan has been widely circulated. Notices have been displayed on local footpaths over the last year or so informing visitors of plans for Bramber Brooks. The Facebook page has been updated regularly and the Bramber Parish Council website has a section dedicated to Bramber Brooks.

There has been ongoing and regular consultation and interaction with the Environment Agency, RSPB, WSCC, Parish Councils, Shoreham and District Ornithological Society, the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust and others.

What consultation have you done – or propose to do about the LNR proposals?

It is expected that the LNR proposals will be advertised in local press, shared with the Parish Councils and the organisations listed above. The public will be invited to inspect the declaration and the boundary map free of charge.

Riversong are also in negotiations with the Environment Agency for new ponds to be created within the Bramber Brooks Nature Reserve next year to mitigate wildlife habitat lost locally during recent flood defence works. If LNR designation is granted, there could be an Open Day next year to celebrate the new status and the completion of the ponds.

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