

Wilder Horsham Workshop Briefing Note

Item 6.5

This briefing note compiled and supplied by Roger Brown, in liaison with Cllr Richard Bell – This is for your information and to discuss and raise ideas or issues related to the topics discussed please {I haven't received a full meeting report or minutes as yet from the event providers, but I suspect Roger has kindly covered most of it for us}

Richard and I attended the *Wilder Horsham Parish Councils Meeting/Workshop session on 9th Feb at Ashington Community Centre.

*(*Wilder Horsham is a 5yr partnership between HDC and Sussex Wildlife Trust to develop and deliver Nature Recovery Networks across the district. Awards of up to £5,000 are available to support local projects)*

A full digital pack including presentations and outcomes will be sent to the Clerk by SWT in March. So this is our interim report and summary of the meeting.

It was attended by approx. 40 representatives from around 20 local Parish Councils with 12 presenters/facilitators from HDC and Sussex Wildlife Trust. This was the second time this workshop had run, with the previous one for the 'northern' parishes held last week. The day was divided into 7 presentations and 3 workshops.

The presentations covered :-

- the 'Wilder Horsham' initiative and progress so far, following Prof Lawton's 'making space for nature' report principles of Bigger, Better, More Joined Up approach for enhancing ecological networks.
- the Weald to Waves project linking habitats from Ashdown Forest down to the sea at Climping (including a link down the Adur to Shoreham);
- the Sussex Nature Partnership;
- the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre at Woods Mill ;
- a case report from 'Wild About Warnham' describing a community-led biodiversity recovery initiative;
- Tony Whitbread describing how fortunate we are in the south of the county to have so many habitat types including, heathland, river valleys, ancient woodland, chalk streams and grassland, and coastal habitats;
- natural processes in the Parish and Rewilding public spaces.

The Workshops were facilitator-led wide ranging discussions around these 3 topics

- 1. Actions.** What actions have you taken so far to promote biodiversity? What worked, what didn't?
- 2. Evidence.** What, how, when to collect data to support conservation activities/ survey methods/
- 3. People.** How to engage and retain volunteers/ communicate with residents/ recruit new Cllrs!

More may emerge once we see the full outcomes from the meeting, but here our initial thoughts/proposals to SPC.

There are so many initiatives and projects either already in progress, or about to be launched, that it is easy to feel overwhelmed. But it was emphasised many times during the day, that anything individuals or groups can do to improve or create habitats is good regardless of size. Anything from a window box to a whole village green is worth doing.

Once we see the full meeting report and outcomes document, we will hopefully have further discussions, but here are some initial ideas that SPC might want to discuss:-

1. To have an 'Environment' agenda item at every full Council Meeting. (We heard of many other Councils who have done this in response to the Climate Emergency pledge, and the biodiversity crisis)
2. To join with other local Parish Councils to hear and learn from their experiences of 'wilding' their areas.
3. Support joining up the green spaces in Steyning to create wildlife highways through the town.
4. SPC provide a venue and support for groups in Steyning to coordinate environmental activities eg, Greening Steyning, Steyning in Bloom, Trees for Steyning, Steyning Community Orchard, Steyning Horticultural Society, Steyning Allotments Association, St Andrew's Church Eco Group, Steyning Downland Scheme, Abbey Rd Conservation Volunteers, etc

This would help coordinate planning for tree/hedge planting, verge planting, wildflower borders/planters, etc. If all these groups were working together towards addressing climate/biodiversity concerns, what a force for good that would be! With the PC at the hub, it would help the PC to raise its profile in the community, celebrate achievements, and you never know, attract more people to want to become Parish Councillors if they can see real progress in areas that matter to them.

Projects/initiatives mentioned during the day:-

- Nature Recovery Fund (for farmers)
- Ancient and Veteran Tree Survey <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/51153/ancient-and-veteran-trees-an-assessment-guide.pdf>
- Adur River Recovery project <https://www.horsham.gov.uk/news/2022/10/funding-secured-to-deliver-vital-landscape-recovery-for-river-adur>
- Weald to Waves project <https://www.wealdtowaves.co.uk/>
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nature-recovery-network/nature-recovery-network>
- Biodiversity Net Gain. Planning requirements https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/183/2022/04/BNG-Brochure_Final_Compressed-002.pdf
- Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) (Local Wildlife Sites) <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/protected-areas>

Parish Councils represented at the meeting included;
Steyning, Bramber, Upper Beeding, Wiston, Washington, Ashington, Henfield, Thakeham, Pulborough, Rusper, Woodmancote, Storrington, Warnham, Shipley,

Roger Brown and Cllr Richard Bell.