



Winter Newsletter – November 2023

Editorial

Welcome to the first Newsletter written by and for members of both the Brighton & Hove Green Spaces AND Wildlife Forums. Below you will see intros from both Forums, followed by a mix of articles from members of each.

Whilst the Forums have different, albeit related agendas, the underlying themes are that both are trying to do their bit for green spaces and nature in and around the city; and both depend entirely on volunteers for their success. A key challenge for both organisations is the recruitment and retention of volunteers, by working together we hope to publicise the variety of opportunities our members can offer.

We feel that this collaboration will widen our audiences and better connect our member organisations, green spaces and the urban wildlife that depends on them; so further raising public awareness of the importance of nature in our city

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and would welcome any feedback or ideas you might have? Please do email these to either bhgsforum@gmail.com or btnhovewildlife@gmail.com

Brighton and Hove Wildlife Forum (BHWF)

BHWF members are drawn from across our city, and include representatives from local wildlife groups, Friends Groups, and local experts in their field; volunteers from conservation organisations; naturalists, students, artists and a number of professional environmental consultants. Anyone can join BHWF. What we all have in common is an enthusiasm for wildlife and the same concerns for its future.

For the past 30 years BHWF (and its predecessor Brighton Urban Wildlife Group) has been coordinating efforts to conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity across the city, and works to increase residents' understanding and love for the natural world. We also respond to planning proposals, advise BHCC on policy and support a number of biodiversity projects in the city.


BHWF currently:

- sits on the Downland Advisory Panel, inputting into the formation and implementation of the Downland Estate Plan.
- provides advice, surveying and community engagement for BHCC's Wilder Verges project.
- sits on the Black Rock/Eastern seafront Biodiversity Advisory committee and the Kingsway to the Sea project.
- sits on the Wilding Waterhall steering committee, providing surveying, advice and community engagement.
- supports the Brighton and Hove Sparrow Project and Save Our Starlings.

We meet every two months and run regular wildlife walks and talks for our members and the community. Please get in contact should you need any advice or wish to be on our mailing list to be kept up to date on biodiversity matters across the city and our events.

Our e-mail address is btnhovewildlife@gmail.com

Our website is <https://www.bhwf.org.uk/>

James Newmarch 

Brighton & Hove Green Spaces Forum (BHGSF)

The BHGSF is a volunteer organisation providing an independent voice and communication hub for volunteer groups working with Brighton and Hove's parks and open spaces. We run events, facilitate contact, produce Newsletters and assist groups with queries. The Forum has around 90 member groups.

Our website can be seen at <https://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk/>

This provides contact details and overview of all our member groups. There is also a map facility enabling the locations of groups to be easily identified. The site also includes an events calendar, news items and a Resources page.

Our Email address is bhgsforum@gmail.com

Cliff Munn



Wildflower Conservation Society (WFCS)

The Wild Flower Conservation Society are based in a poly tunnel north of the One Garden. Here CityParks Ranger Sally Macleod and volunteers grow wild flowers from locally sourced seed. We specialise in chalk grassland plants to support pollinators, butterflies, moths etc on the Southdowns. The plants are sold to 'Friends of' groups, schools, BHCC, SDNCP, community groups, members of the public for their gardens etc. We often support events such as Changing Chalk and BHGSF Seminars by selling plants to publicise their and our activities. We keep links with the Millenium Seed Bank at Wakehurst Place and have attended seed saving workshops with them. This summer we've joined in with surveying areas on the Southdowns at Fulking Scarp and Castle Hill to assess the health of the wild flower population.

The Wild Flower Guardians are a group linked to WFCS that was inspired by Sally Macleod. They do work such as gathering seeds, scything, caring for the bee and butterfly banks around the city. They also work on making wild flower meadows. At the moment they are helping out the Stanmer Preservation Society (SPS) at the Donkey Well Meadow in Stanmer Park.

For more information on WFCS visit their website at <https://www.wildflowerconservationsociety.com/>

Lindy Brooke-Tweed



Regency Square Gardening group

We work in the Regency Square garden every week throughout spring and summer, weather permitting. This year we've been transplanting offshoots of Yucca and continuing to add wildflowers to the borders. Those bought from the Wildflower Conservation group at Stanmer do really well, especially Mullein and Valerian, although protecting young plants from dogs is near impossible. Nature provided some spectacular freebies this year when a couple of Hemlocks self-seeded in the borders.

Lampranthus cuttings that the Rangers' volunteers helped plant in 2021 have successfully colonised most of one border and finally started to flower this year (1st photo). But the garden generally lacks colour in high summer so, on advice from our Cityparks gardener, we're experimenting with a small number of Agapanthus (2nd photo).

A small number because they are expensive and because, while Agapanthus does very well in other seafront gardens, Regency Square is a law unto itself and we're wary of spending significant amounts of (community raised) cash on anything till we've tested it.

The number of active volunteers continues to be too small to carry out and maintain any large-scale renovations. However, in August, one of our volunteers leaflet dropped every residence in Regency Square. It straight away netted us one new recruit and hopefully raised awareness among those who may be able to come and help in the future.

Our group can be contacted at rsasgardening@gmail.com



Gill Wales - RSC gardening volunteer lead

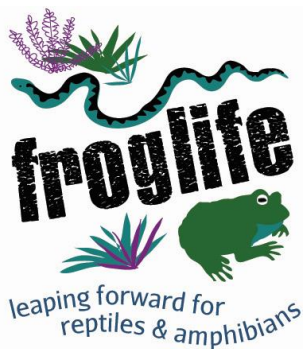
Froglife

Froglife's 'Discovering Dewpond's' Project is working to restore aquatic & terrestrial habitats for amphibians and reptiles across Brighton & Hove and the surrounding area, and to engage local communities with these species and their habitats. As we enter the final year of the project, we look forward to a winter of restoring and creating a network of habitats in the project's Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridor areas of Moulsecomb & Bevendean, Coldean and Hollingbury & Hollingdean. We've started digging a pond with volunteers at Balfour Primary School (pictured) & are planning a series of habitats in Hollingdean with Growing Hollingdean. If your group works on a greenspace within the Wildlife Corridor areas and would be interested in our help (funding, planning and volunteer support) creating or restoring a habitat here, please do get in touch - contact details are below.

We can also offer free amphibian and reptile survey and habitat management two-day training workshops to local groups. These consist of a theory session, with information on amphibian and reptile ID and habitat management or survey techniques, followed by a practical session. In September, we were delighted to hold a reptile survey workshop with members of the Benfield Wildlife and Conservation Group (pictured – Neil Jenkins).

Two further dewpond restorations have now been completed at National Trust site Pond Brow, adjacent to Devil's Dyke Golf Club. We're excited to return to all the project's restored dewponds with volunteers next spring to survey for amphibians.

Find more information on our website at <https://www.froglife.org/discovering-dewponds/> and contact Will on 07494 761307 or at William.johanson@froglife.org.



Friends of Brunswick Square and Terrace (FBST)

FBST started a new volunteer gardening group in the Spring. We are trying to restore the garden to the former maintained, beautiful landscape it once was. This has already benefited the volunteers that come every Saturday, in a mental, physical and social capacity. The many local residents and tourists that appreciate the Square are all recognising the efforts of the team.

Although in its infancy, the group has already delivered over 100 hours of constructive gardening. We have achieved so much already since March, and we are very proud of our efforts. With many problems that comes with living in this City, especially with drugs and homelessness, we are hoping, the nicer the Square looks, the less likely we are to have problems with the anti-social behaviour.

We are very excited about what is achievable, and the involvement of the whole community has been amazing in the last 8 months. It's been great to see the positive impact that's been made. Leaders of the volunteer force believe that there is a real opportunity to engage with City Parks and create a synergy between both.

FBST have entered South and Southeast in Bloom for several years and this year we rose 2 levels to level 4.

We have also had some big news regarding funding. We have been successful in applying for a Co-Op community fund. This is where members can choose FBST as a cause to support. We would love the support from our fellow Green Space members <https://membership.coop.co.uk/causes/83169>



Lara Brooks

FBST Secretary

Celebrating the city's trees

Brighton and Hove's first celebration of trees takes place over two weekends in May 2024. There will be lots of interesting activities – walks, talks, music, exhibition, workshops, tree trails – focused on the amazing variety of trees in our city.

Look out for the final programme in early 2024 but make a date of both weekends – May 11th and 12th and May 18th and 19th.

Highlights include:

- newly created tree trails identifying the most important trees in most of our parks
- a special music gig with songs and stories about trees
- a city-wide photo competition with cash prizes, featuring the best photos on the theme: 'I just love this tree'
- a fun activity for schools looking at how to measure the height and girth of the school's favourite tree
- a seminar with top level speakers including local Green MP, Caroline Lucas; London tree author, Paul Wood and other well known figures.

Vivienne Barton

Artwork at Stanford & Cleveland Community Garden

Following our successful crowdfunding efforts (big thanks to everyone who contributed) to pay for the replacement oak sleeper raised bed, volunteers quickly replanted the side beds with the cuttings and plants we had been keeping in pots and just look at it now! You would never know that the outside beds have only been planted since the end of March.



Having received some grant funding from The Pride Social Impact Fund we were able to meet our target of having flowers in bloom representing all the colours in the Pride flag by the time of the Pride weekend in August – it was a riot of colour.



Along with providing the local area with an ever-changing display of flowers, vegetables and fruit, a real delight of colour and fragrance, two local artists Marie Anne Ganpatsingh, a member of the Fiveways artists group, and Rex Matthews, a resident of the Fiveways area for 30 years, created a large celebratory artwork that will remain a colourful focal point throughout the whole year. The Montessori school kindly provided the wall space and initial work on the project began in June.

Marie Anne had created an initial design, but working together with Rex both artists soon discovered that just like the garden itself their own artistic creation grew slowly but surely at its own rather organic pace! “Knowing when the painted garden had reached maturity was always going to be a difficult decision” said Rex “but now we are happy that it has reached a happy conclusion.”



The artwork has already received an enthusiastic response from visitors to the garden. Children being dropped off at the Montessori school delight in spotting the insects and animals hidden amongst the flowers. “Clearly Marie Anne’s knowledge of flowers and insect life was central to the success of the project,” says Rex.

To celebrate the completion of the artwork we are planning a get-together with drinks, and nibbles on 13th December at the community garden. Rex and Marie Anne, school representatives and our regular volunteers will all be there.

As always, we are looking for new volunteers to help at the garden. We meet regularly on Thursday mornings and also at the weekend. Tools and training are provided – plus good company. If you are interested get in touch with us at: debpryer@hotmail.co.uk - Meanwhile enjoy the garden and the new mural!

Debbie Pryer

The City Downland Estate Plan (CDEP) - Maintaining our involvement

Most members will be aware of the CDEP. The plan for the future management of the 12,800 or so acres of downland that we as a city own has now been approved by the City Council and work has now started on its implementation under a new project officer. The plan document can be found at <https://democracy.brighton-hove.gov.uk/documents/s184343/City%20Downland%20Estate%20Plan%20-%20Appendix%201.pdf>

Part of the implementation process is the continued involvement of the community in decisions about the downland estate's future through the City Council's Downland Advisory Panel (DAP). The DAP's membership comprises councillors, council officers, and voluntary organisations such as the Brighton Downs Alliance (BDA) of which the BHWF is a member. The BDA's website is at <https://www.brightondownsalliance.org.uk/>

Just like our other green spaces, our downland is increasingly under threat from the impacts of council budget cutbacks, and development. Both downland and green spaces offer wide ranging benefits to our wildlife and our community and we need to coordinate efforts to preserve and enhance them for people and nature.

Through contact with your councillor, the BDA and the BHWF, there are plenty of ways to make your views known.

James Newmarch (BHWF)

Friends of St Ann’s Well Gardens

The Friends of St Ann's Well Gardens are lucky enough to have their long-time supporter Cllr Jackie O'Quinn as this year's Mayor. Jackie organised an innovative event recently to bring local developers and green spaces volunteers in her ward together to get to know one another better. There are many new big developments of flats in Hove and near St Ann's Well Gardens and it seems the companies that build these flats are interested in supporting community groups. New arrangements for the developers' contribution that replaces the Section 106 agreement makes this more direct involvement with local voluntary groups more likely in the future.

Find out more about Friends of St Ann's Well at

<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfStAnnsWellGardensHove>



Friends of Brighton Greenway

Many of you will know the Greenway. It winds down from the back of Brighton Station, past apartment and office buildings and a variety of green landscapes, to our Grade 2 listed iron bridge over New England Road atopped by Jon Mills' fine sculpture of the railway engine Jenny Lind.

It is a long-held ambition of many of us to push the Greenway north over unused and underused railway land, through a mix of industrial and former industrial landscapes (1st photo) to the top of the steps to Lover's Walk and thence to Preston Park. An alternative green route from our 'People's Park' to the main railway station and city centre.

And why stop there? A combination of woodland strips and tree-lined streets could take us to Coney Hill and Green Ridge, and under and over the by-pass to Waterhall and Sweet Hill.

We're speaking to our new and existing councillors to look for a way forward.



Meanwhile our work on the Greenway continues. We meet on the first Sunday of each month to pick litter, and prune back trees and shrubs to ensure free access for all, and importantly for this type of site, visibility through and around it. Other vegetation management is aimed at maximising biodiversity, through the seasonal cutting and clearing of mixed native grass and herbaceous areas, to the growing of food in our sleeper planters which have been very successful.

Our efforts seem to be appreciated by all who pass through, judging by the comments and conversations we have, and the number of people who join us each month! Even many of those who have previously misused the Greenway have now been persuaded to take their litter home, or at least leave it by the bins!



Future work will include trying to improve the arrival experience from New England Road, opening up views into the site from new flats to the east, and attempting once again to increase and vary the vegetation on one of the longest nettle beds in the city - the Isetta Strip! And we're in contact with one of the adjacent building owners looking at the possibility of a new artwork to help to combat the graffiti (2nd photo).

Our wildlife continues to surprise and delight us. As we took a well-earned break for coffee and chocolate biscuits last month in the sunshine, the nearby banks of flowering ivy smothering the former railway structures were alive with bees and butterflies....

James Newmarch (Friends of Brighton Greenway)

fobrightongreenway@outlook.com

St Peter's Churchyard (Preston Park) Volunteers + CityParks Ranger Volunteers!

Our wildflower bed at St Peter's Churchyard had become overgrown and swamped by plantain and other grasses. It needed a thorough dig over, with unwanted vegetation being removed. This was a very big task for our small group, so we requested help from the CityParks Ranger volunteers. The team arrived on 20th October and got stuck in, by lunchtime the bed had been completed transformed.

The CityParks Ranger volunteers are a great group to be part of, they work on different sites and tasks across the City. They can also be very helpful to site specific volunteer groups who have a large task and need the help of others.

If you are interested in joining the CityParks Ranger volunteers, or have a task that a large group of willing and able volunteers could help with, then they can be contacted at Cityparks.volunteers@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Before



and After



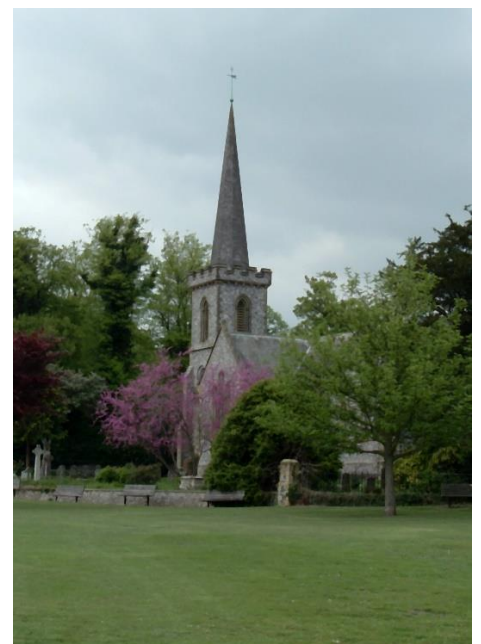
Cliff Munn
St Peter's Churchyard Volunteers

Stanmer Preservation Society (SPS)

Stanmer Preservation Society aims to support wild life in Stanmer Park and have worked with the BHCC to install bird boxes for Starlings, Sparrows, Blue tits and cups for House martins and Barn swallows near the Long Barn in Stanmer village. We monitor these and last summer we had Barn Swallows successfully raising about 6 young. The House martins were checking out the cups late in the season.

There are bats in the Long Barn and we occasionally do some bat detecting to keep a check and ask Bat-scan for advice when needed.

This year there were 3 festivals held in the nature reserve in the south end of the park. We campaign for them to be held at other venues nearby that we believe would be more suitable. We liaise with Will Furze, the ranger for Stanmer who keeps us up to date with his volunteer group activities such as hazel coppicing, tree planting, strimming wild flower areas. He lets us know when ash die back clearance is happening and about the work that Froglife are doing to renovate some ponds and dew ponds within the park.



SPS has recently acquired the Donkey Well House near the church. There is a small grassed area outside it, between the pond and Well House. A wild flower meadow is being established there with the help of Wild Flower Guardians and the Wild Flower Conservation Society.

For more information about SPS visit their Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/stanmer/?locale=en_GB

Lindy Brooke-Tweed

Green space volunteer update meetings with Brighton & Hove Council CityParks

The next volunteer Zoom meeting with CityParks will be held at **6pm on Wednesday 29th November** and be hosted by Steve Hyder - Brighton & Hove CityParks Programme & Strategy Manager. The themes will be 'managing anti-social behaviour' and 'expectations of one another'. Invitations were sent to all Green Spaces Forum members on 1st November. Please email bhgsforum@gmail.com with any questions.

State of Nature Report 2023

The 2023 State of Nature Report has been recently published by a partnership of over 60 partners including the Wildlife Trusts, the National Trust, and Natural England, see - <https://stateofnature.org.uk>

Sadly it makes stark reading. In England, wildlife has declined in abundance by 32% since 1970. 13% of species surveyed are threatened with extinction, whilst 68% of plant species surveyed have seen decreases in distribution.

Dr Pete Brotherton, Natural England's Director of Science recommends the following recipe for recovery in his blog following the report - <https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/2023/09/29/state-of-nature/>

A Recipe for Recovery

Evidence from the State of Nature report and elsewhere points to four big on-the-ground changes that we can take to accelerate nature recovery -

- Improve the quality of our protected sites on land and at sea. These places have been chosen because they are special for nature and wildlife should be thriving within them, yet too many are currently in poor condition.
- Create more, bigger and messier places for wildlife. Our wildlife needs more space, we know that many species benefit from habitats that are quick to create such as ponds, scrubby habitats and hedgerows.
- Reducing pollution on land (notably pesticides and excess fertilisers) and reducing the pressure on marine environments. This means more wildlife-friendly farming, forestry and fisheries.
- Targeted species recovery action. This can be very effective when it can be applied to a high proportion of a species' population, and is also key to bringing back lost species.

What can we do in Brighton and Hove's green spaces?

- Look at our management plans - are they aimed at maximising nature on our sites alongside our reasonable enjoyment of them?
- Are there any changes we can make in our management to improve things for nature?
- Do we have to be as tidy? As long as our sites can be used safely, can we minimise our interventions to benefit wildlife?
- Can we minimise or even eliminate our inputs in terms of fertilisers and pesticides? Although my guess in Brighton and Hove we probably already have!
- Can we consider targeting particular species native to Brighton and Hove, creating more chalk downland, putting up nestboxes for swifts, starlings and sparrows, signing up as an Elm Disease spotter to maximise opportunities for the White Letter Hairstreak butterfly?

James Newmarch (BHWF)

South & South East in Bloom – Congratulations our winners!

A huge well done to all the Brighton & Hove volunteer groups who entered into this year's RHS South & South East in Bloom (S&SEIB) competitions:

- Rottingdean in Bloom – won Gold and was overall winner in the 'Parishes in Bloom' category.
- The Grange Rottingdean – won Silver Gilt in the 'Small Park' category.
- St Margarets Church Rottingdean - won Silver Gilt in the 'Churchyard' category.
- St Wulfran's Church Ovingdean – won Silver Gilt in the 'Churchyard' category.

Local winners of S&SEIB 'Its Your Neighbourhood' (IYN) awards:

- Friends of Palmeira & Adelaide – Advancing
- Friends of Brunswick Square & Terrace – Thriving
- Norfolk Square Gardening Group – Thriving
- Friends of St Ann's Well Gardens – Outstanding
- Friends of Waterloo Street Community Garden – Outstanding
- Woodingdean Community Association – Outstanding

Congratulations to you all!

More information about South & South East in Bloom can be seen on their website at <https://www.sseib.com/>



Maximise the exposure of your Events and News items!

It is very easy for any group or organisation to upload details of Events they are holding or News items they have onto the Forum's events calendar and news board at <http://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk>

To add Events, click on 'Submit your event' and complete the form presented, you can also upload an image or poster associated with the event (must be a photo or 'jpg' type image). To add News items just click on 'Submit your news'.

To use these facilities you will need to register on the website, but only once. Then it's just a case of logging in after clicking the submit event or news buttons. If you are not registered already, the site will prompt on what steps to take.

Please do email the BHGSF at bhgsforum@gmail.com with any questions.



The BHGSF website Home page colourfully displays member group events every month.