



Spring Newsletter - May 2023

Brighton and Hove Green Spaces Forum (BHGSF) is a volunteer organisation providing an independent voice and communication hub for volunteer groups working with Brighton & Hove's parks and open spaces.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter. Since our last Newsletter members have twice had the opportunity to meet and ask questions of CityParks senior managers. We held our AGM on 15th February and have been busy planning our next Spring Seminar event on 8th June. Please read on to find out more..

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARIES – THURSDAY 8th JUNE - 2023 SPRING SEMINAR

Our 2023 Spring Seminar will take place from **5pm on Thursday 8th June** at Friends Meeting House in Ship Street, Brighton.

Following the success of previous Spring Seminars, we are delighted this year to have secured two great guest presenters. The theme for the event will be *'Keeping our spaces green - water conservation and sustainable planting for a changing climate'*.

AIMEE FELUS - Programme Delivery Manager at The Aquifer Partnership (TAP)

The Aquifer Partnership (or TAP) has the objective of protecting our chalk downland aquifer. This is being used as the primary water source for our area. TAP has 3 main goals (1) improving the quality and quantity of water going into the ground (2) increasing biodiversity by using plants and designs that regenerate spaces for nature and (3) Creating Communities around their solutions and projects.

Aimee manages a number of TAP's projects. Her background is in water quality protection and community engagement. In recent years she has worked on creating many rain-scapes. Aimee will be telling us about TAP, rainwater capture, dealing with drought and TAP's flagship project, the Wild Park rain-scape. For more information on the Aquifer Partnership please see the link at <https://wearetap.org.uk/>

JASON SAUL - Assistant Head Gardener and Nursery Manager – Sussex Prairie Garden

Jason holds the prestigious RHS Garden Wisley Diploma and was voted RHS garden Wisley Top Student in 2021. He has won awards for his outstanding commitment to both practical and theoretical horticulture.

We are aware that many member groups struggle with summer drought. Jason will be sharing his experience, including hints and tips on sustainable gardening and drought friendly planting.

For more information on Jason and Sussex Prairie Garden, please see the link at <https://www.sussexprairies.co.uk/>

The event will take place from 5pm on Thursday 8th June in the main auditorium at Friends Meeting House, Ship Street, Brighton, BN1 1AF. Light refreshments and drinks will be provided, we aim to end at 7.15pm.

Our Spring Seminar is free and open to all members and friends. To help us cater appropriately, please could you let us know you are coming by emailing your names to bhgsforum@gmail.com (please include the name of your group).

We look forward to seeing you there.

HELP THE FORUM TO HELP YOUR GROUP

The Forum is engaged in a number of activities with both the City Council and other organisations. To assist us with these we would like to get a view of how many volunteer hours are given by member groups to the upkeep of green spaces. Please could member groups complete the following Google Form to help us collect this information? Its only 3 questions and shouldn't take more than a minute to complete. Many thanks!

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdlcO51Wb2iU2U4rGJprewan7NjYOS0vyKClkbLqsFbGFBgHA/viewform>

FORUM ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Forum's Annual General Meeting was held at 6pm on 15th February 2023. The Minutes from the meeting can be seen at the following link <https://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/BHGSSF2022AGMMinutesFeb2023.docx.pdf>

MEMBER UPDATE/Q&A MEETINGS WITH CITY PARKS.

The last member update / Q&A meeting with CityParks took place on 4th April with around 20 groups represented.

A recording of the meeting can be seen at

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/2W6U1wkVhQbqHvCEFOjOGDMCuCohb1kumAl8XOPjfN3LctgPxSAkGGccD1SVa8QD.c0y9HHoj3O-Ouvoi?startTime=1680628076000> (use passcode **u..6z*At**)

These meetings reflect the healthy partnership between CityParks and the green space volunteer community. They give an opportunity for all members to hear the latest updates from CityParks and to ask questions.



**BRIGHTON & HOVE
GREEN SPACES FORUM**

THE GILDED ELM – TWINS REUNITED

Preservation work of the iconic Preston Park Twin, is complete, transforming the trunk into a sculptural celebration of these ancient elms.

When one of the 420 year-old ‘Preston Twins’ (thought to be the oldest and the largest English elm trees in the world) finally succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease, it had to be removed in order to protect its survivor. But it’s now been resurrected as ‘The Gilded Elm’ and returned to its original location adjacent to its twin at the north end of Preston Park. The remains of the tree have been de-barked to remove all traces of the disease, its surface is protected with black preservatives and its hollowed-out interior is gilded with Dutch metal, catching the light, to be enjoyed by the many people who visit the park throughout the year.

The trees may be lost, but they need to live in our memory, knowledge, and experience. ‘The Gilded Elm’ now stands as a monument to commemorate, and indeed celebrate, these rare and beautiful trees. Brighton’s National Elm Collection and of course the remaining oldest English elm tree in the world.

The Gilded Elm is now permanently sited on its original location in front of the Walled Garden to the left of the main north entrance to the park.



BRIGHTON & HOVE WILDLIFE FORUM



Complementing the Green Spaces Forum, the BHWF meets every couple of months and works with its partners for the benefit of the city's wildlife. Anyone can join BHWF. What we all have in common is an enthusiasm for wildlife and shared concerns for its future.

Our members include people from local wildlife groups, Friends Groups, and local experts in their field, such as volunteers from Butterfly Conservation and other organisations, naturalists, students and professional environmental consultants. Through our members, we can offer advice on wildlife and ecological matters where appropriate throughout the city.

Now an annual event, the City Nature Challenge 2023 occurred between 28th April & 1st May - see at <https://uk.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2023-brighton-eastern-downs> It is an international bioblitz, where cities and regions compete against one another to record as many different species as possible in a weekend. Brighton and the eastern Downs has finished top in the UK two years running. I am pleased to report that Brighton and Hove finished top for the third year running!

The Wilder Verges project, which we have referred to before, has now produced a very positive report at <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-01/Wilder%20Verges%20Project%20Report.pdf> showing how small changes can benefit wildlife. We are looking to work with the City Council to build on it further this year. Apparently a combination of this initiative and banning Glyphosate has increased pollinators in the city by some 70%.

We have previously referred to our work with the Council at Black Rock. The boardwalk through the newly created vegetated shingle area is well worth a visit. The BHWF has provided input into the City Downland Estate Plan which has now been approved by both the City Council and the South Downs National Park.

We are being asked to look out for amphibians in the city, see here <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2023/look-out-local-amphibians> Many of our green spaces have suitable habitat for them and we can all help to maintain the city's populations of amphibians.

The local elections were on May 4th, and the BHWF asked its members to discuss commitment to nature when prospective councillors came knocking on their doors or contacting them in other ways. With a new Labour administration with an overall majority, our members will be trying to speak up for nature at every opportunity.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are a new mandatory system of spatial strategies for nature established by the Environment Act 2021. They are designed as tools to encourage more coordinated practical and focused action and investment in nature. There will be a public consultation soon. BHWF are liaising with consultants who are steering the process.

With concerns over the management of hedgerows and trees in the city, the BHWF would like to raise the profile of hedgerows as important features for people and wildlife.

A reminder that our website is at www.bhwf.org.uk

James Newmarch

PRESTON PARK WILDLIFE POND – A GREAT COLLABORATION!

The Preston Park wildlife pond sits at the north end of the park right next to St Peter’s churchyard. It is set in a wildlife area that has been adopted by the St Peters Churchyard Volunteers. The pond had a leak for some years which got progressively worse, to the point where it dried out each year before its inhabitants could complete their lifecycles.

After over two years of hard work by CityParks and multiple volunteer groups, the new wildlife pond with its woven Hazel fence was completed earlier this year. Here follows a very brief overview of how this was done:

Summer 2021 – Community Payback team dig out the old leaky concrete liner.

September 2021 – CityParks agree to supply ballast and cement for new liner.

October 2021 – Friends of Preston Park agree to supply edging rocks and sealant.

February 2022 – New granite pond edging laid by St Peters Churchyard Volunteers.

October 2022 – Corporate volunteers from Responsible Travel and CityParks Ranger volunteers lay the new concrete base. Sealed later that month by Preston Park and St Peter’s Churchyard volunteers.

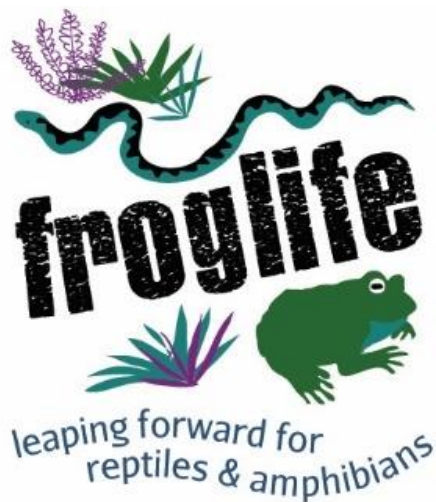
November 2022 – CityParks Ranger volunteers spend several volunteer days in Stanmer woods harvesting Sweet Chestnut and Hazel with which to build the new pond fence.

December 2022 – CityParks Ranger volunteers construct the new woven Hazel fence.

Planting has commenced and we hope some new residents will be moving in very soon. A big thank you to all those who helped bring our pond back for wildlife!



FROGLIFE - DISCOVERING DEWPONDS PROJECT



Froglife's Discovering Dewponds Project is creating and restoring habitat for amphibians and reptiles in the project's Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridor areas of Moulsecomb & Bevendean, Coldean and Hollingbury & Hollingdean.

These habitats can include ponds, hibernacula, wildflower meadows, bug hotels and more. If your group works on a greenspace within these areas and would be interested in our help creating or restoring wildlife habitats here, please

The project's dewpond restoration work is now well-underway with 10 now completed at Stanmer Park, Newtimber Hill, Devil's Dyke and the Ouse Estuary Nature Reserve. We've held volunteer sessions at restored ponds at Stanmer Park over the autumn and winter, creating terrestrial habitat for amphibians and reptiles, such as hibernacula. We're looking forward to holding more volunteer sessions over the next months at restored ponds to create additional hibernacula and plant aquatic plants, both as standalone sessions and as part of two-day amphibian habitat management workshops.



Finally, we can offer talks to groups on the Discovering Dewponds Project, amphibian and reptile ID and habitat management – please do get in touch if this would interest to your group.

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

MAXIMISE THE EXPOSURE OF YOUR EVENTS AND NEWS ITEMS!

It is very easy for any green space group 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'.

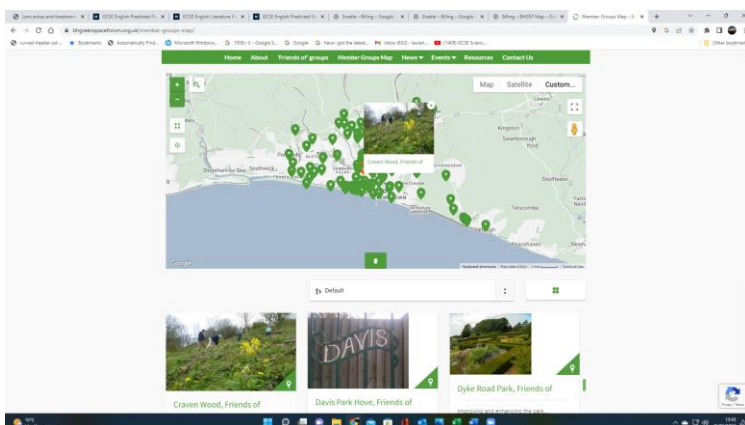
To use this facility you will need to register on the website, but only once. Then it's just a case of logging in after clicking the submit event or news buttons. If you are not registered already, the site will prompt you on what steps to take.

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



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

MEMBER GROUPS MAP



Our Member Groups Map can be seen at <https://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk/member-groups-map/> We are hoping it will help identify member groups by location and potentially connect them with new volunteers. Please have a look for your group and email us at bhgsforum@gmail.com if anything needs updating?

MEMBER GROUP UPDATES

Many thanks to the member groups that sent in the following updates. Members have fed back that they love to hear what other groups have been up to. To find the contact details for all our member groups, visit <http://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk/friends-of-groups/> or see our member group map at <https://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk/member-groups-map/>

CITY PARKS RANGER VOLUNTEERS

CityParks Ranger Volunteers do conservation work in parks and nature reserves all over the city.

Volunteering with the CityParks Rangers can be a great way to see new places, learn new skills and meet new people. The volunteers can also assist Forum member groups with any tasks they have but can't easily manage themselves.

They meet every Wednesday and Friday at 10am. If you'd like to get involved, or need help, please email cityparks.volunteers@brighton-hove.gov.uk



CityParks Ranger volunteers taking a well-earned break on a recent conservation task at The Chattri memorial in Patcham

FRIENDS OF ST ANN'S WELL GARDENS

Friends of St Ann's Well Gardens' have just unveiled 'Dovecote' a kinetic sculpture by Jon Mills. This exciting new Sculpture is part of the 'Sensory Garden for the Future' project which The Friends hope will be enjoyed for many years to come by our diverse and friendly park users.

We were lucky to find an outstanding local artist and metal worker Jon Mills who as soon as he saw this old dove cote pillar knew he wanted to bring it back to life. The volunteers of the Friends of St Ann's Well Gardens are very grateful to the Rampion Fund, Sussex Community Foundation for financially supporting our vision back in 2018.

We are thrilled that this vision to update our 1960's sensory gardens is now coming into fruition and will be a beautiful space for nature and the gardens' users.



Friends of St Ann's Well Gardens' unveiling the 'Dovecote' kinetic sculpture by Jon Mills
13th May 2023

MOULSECOOMBE ALLOTMENTS NATURE SITE

“The Moulsecoomb allotment nature site acts as an important part of the “green corridor” linking the wild areas that run down from the hills above Bevendean and Whitehawk. This allows wildlife to move around in search of shelter, breeding and food relatively easily within the urban environment. The site offers excellent habitat for a wide range of creatures in an increasingly busy city.”

Huw Morgan. (Sussex Wildlife Trust, Brighton & Hove Project)



History: The Nature Site started in 2015, with the permission of the Allotment Officer. A small group of allotmenters cleared huge, very old brambles from a steep, north facing bank at the back of the Allotment site. No allotments had been on this patch for at least 20 years.

Now 9 years later we’ve expanded the area, created paths, built and maintained countless steps. With collected local seed we’ve sown wildflower banks. We’ve installed benches, dug and planted 2 wildlife ponds and planted over 150 native trees. We’ve built a rain-collecting roof with pipework to fill the large pond.

The nature site is part of ‘city’s green infrastructure’ and fits the Council strategy to encourage biodiversity.

The work group: Over the 9 years the regular work group has included 11 plot holders and around 17 people who don’t have plots. People change but we maintain a regular monthly group of around 9 people.

So, what’s the point? Nature is currently struggling and species are becoming extinct at an alarming rate. As gardeners, we know how important wild creatures are for crop production, not just pollinating insects, but soil creatures and microbes, insects in our compost bins, and up the food chain to birds to eat the aphids. We have created on the nature Site a wide range of habitats to support the maximum number of ‘creatures’. We also hope it will be beautiful and welcome all plot holders to visit and spend time on it. To measure if we are achieving our aims, we count all the species of plant, bird and butterfly we see and can identify each year.

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Plant species	64	134	157	175	210	205	210	211
Butterflies & moths	16	15	15	25	21	23	21	20
Bees & other insects			11	15	29	23	30	26
Birds			14	21	23	29	16	19

You can see a full list of these on the Nature Site web page at <https://moulsecoomballotments.wordpress.com/nature-site/> . The group’s full year report is at <https://moulsecoomballotments.files.wordpress.com/2023/04/nature-site-report-agm-2023-v2.pdf>

Liz Yeats

BENFIELD HILL LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

From the Chair:

We have had a really busy winter. The scrub bashing has gone really well. We have been joined once a month by the Brighton Conservation Volunteers who have made a real impact, so thanks to them. They have made 2 broad paths through the scrubby woodland at the very north end on the reserve heading up from “The Dell” and helped with other clearance work. We had another Saturday volunteer day on the 4th March with 20 people attending, which is fantastic. By working together, we have made a phenomenal difference to the reserve this year and cleared an amazing amount of invading scrub. My thanks go to all the volunteers, new and established, who have helped to achieve so much. The wild flowers, including our lovely orchids, will now be able to breathe and thrive, bringing the butterflies, moths, bugs and bees to feed and breed, in, or on them.



Before



And After:



I have managed to recruit 4 new volunteers, through the Community Works Website who are joining us on a Tuesday as and when they can and many more through the Saturday scrub bash sessions. Two of our team have eradicated an area of dog wood and hawthorn on the south side of the hill. It will be interesting to see what colonises this patch.

The conservation grazing by the sheep has also been successful. The grass sward is now very low, which will be great for all our wildflowers.

I am awaiting to hear if the grant applications (3 so far) I have made have been successful and if they are we will be commissioning two new interpretation boards to be erected on site showing the walking trails and what to see. These will complement the one we have at the junction with the footbridge. In addition, we will be holding some celebratory events to commemorate our 30th year as a designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR) using some of the grant money. The Hill was the very first LNR in Brighton and Hove. I will let you know when I hear if we have the money and when the events are taking place.

We are already working on an events calendar for this summer and some key dates have already been set so see a list of these later in this newsletter. These will all be part of our celebration of 30 years as an LNR.

Best wishes and enjoy Spring on the Hillside.

Sally Hubbard
Chair
07941 288625

Up-coming events on the Hill...

Saturday 10th June – 10am to 1pm Volunteer Saturday on site
Sunday 18th June - Wildflower identification walk meet at 2pm on the footbridge from Benfield Valley

Saturday 1st July - Glow-worm walk – meet at Hangleton Manor at 9.15pm bring a torch and wear stout footwear.

Saturday 29th July - Benfield Nature Day in partnership with the Benfield Valley Project details to be confirmed.

STANFORD & CLEVELAND COMMUNITY GARDEN

Stanford and Cleveland Community Garden was created in 2012 following local consultation on a road narrowing scheme resulting in a large area of tarmac. In response to this consultation the Council created an irregular shaped raised bed, approximately 50m², which has been the mainstay of the community garden for the last 10 years. However, time has taken its toll and the softwood surround decayed significantly making it unsafe to continue using and the council were unable to fund any repairs.

To secure the future of our well-loved and award-winning garden the volunteers decided to act. In March we employed a local contractor to build us a new bed surround from oak sleepers (expected lifetime is over 20 years) and this is what you will see today.



We are now busy replanting to bring the garden back to its former glory! We saved as many of the plants as we could for replanting, so we won't need to buy new plants. We also propagate our own plants from cuttings, divide plants and grow from seed. Everything is organically grown in peat free compost, and we reuse/recycle all our pots.

So far, we have raised £3,000 towards the construction cost from a grant (Pride Social Impact Fund) and from our own fund-raising activities. This leaves us with a total of just over £2,500 to find to pay back the short-term loan we have in place – this is our JustGiving target which we launched at the end of May. If anyone can donate even a small amount it will make a difference; and we will be very grateful. Use the link to go to our JustGiving page.

https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/sandc-community-garden?utm_id=1&utm_term=xMBp3nVdV

Latest News!

We had a glorious sunny day for our Plant Sale on Saturday 13th May and raised £1,080.60 towards the cost of our new raised bed. We are lucky to be part of such a wonderful supportive community and to have such dedicated, hardworking volunteers. Many thanks to all our supporters.

Debbie Pryer



SHOREHAM PORT CONSERVATION CORRIDOR

Shoreham Port's Conservation Corridor (SPCC) is an exciting terrestrial restoration project managed by Sussex Dolphin Project and owned by Shoreham Port. It is a fairly large, but thin section of land (~350m long) located next to Shoreham Port and A259 (Albion Street). The aim is to make this section of land as biodiverse and species-rich as possible by managing it using research-led conservation techniques.



Figure 1: SPCC in bloom.



Figure 2: A Clouded Yellow butterfly on the SPCC.

Indeed, the site already boasts an impressive number of species. At our last species identification session (Bioblitz), we had over 180 species of plant and animal recorded on our site, including the rare migrant butterfly, the Clouded Yellow, harvest mice, and common lizards which indicates the maintenance work is having a real positive impact on biodiversity.

It takes a lot of time and resources to manage this area and so, we would love to invite interested local people to join to help manage this site, so it can become a community space for nature and local residents. Our hope is to arrange weekend sessions where a group of interested people can help us complete tasks on the corridor (scalloping, litter picking, garden waste removal etc.)

If you are interested in signing up, please send an email to James Milton, Project Support Officer at Sussex Dolphin Project, at james.milton@sussexdolphinproject.org

We are looking forward to hearing from you.