

Countryside Consultative Panel

7:00pm-9:00pm Tuesday 10th October 2023

Committee Rooms, Bromley Civic Centre, Stockwell Close, BR1 3UH

Chair: Cllr Adam Grant (Shortlands & Park Langley)

Minutes		
Item	Details	Action
1.	Welcome and introductions; Present & Apologies	
1.1.	Present: Jonathan Lynch (RSPB/idverde), Susan Holland (idverde), Judith John (Orpington Field Club), Carol Gould (Bromley Biodiversity Partnership Habitats and Species Sub-group), Chantal Lane (Bromley Bridleway Access Group), Richard Barnes (London Wildlife Trust), Peter Woodward (Chislehurst & St Paul's Cray Commons), Parisa Wright (Greener & Cleaner Bromley), Cllr Chris Price (St Paul's Cray), Cllr Adam Grant (Shortlands & Park Langley), Hannah Jackson (London Borough of Bromley), Hugh Chapman (London Borough of Bromley), Cllr Alexa Michael (Hayes & Coney Hall)	
1.2.	Apologies: Cllr Jonathan Andrews, Paul Mellor, Cllr Will Rowlands, Matthew Frith	
2.	Appointment of a new Chair and Vice Chair for the coming year	
2.1.	Cllr Adam Grant nominated as Chair as only member of Environment and Community PDS Committee present. Vote unanimous.	
2.2.	Cllr Will Rowlands nominated for Vice Chair. Not voted on given his absence.	
3.	Review of Terms of Reference	
3.1.	Only change to be made – Chair/Vice Chair must be on Environment and Community PDS Committee; JL will distribute amended Terms of Reference among members.	JL
4.	Minutes of the last meeting a) Accuracy b) Matters arising	
4.1.	PW raised that previous item 8.11 incorrectly stated that Chislehurst Common was incorporated in 1898 when it was in fact incorporated in 1888.	
4.2.	AM raised that previous item 8.1. incorrectly referred to aftercare as "after car".	
4.3.	JJ raised previous item 4.3. ("idverde consultation on planning applications which affect SINC's they manage. PM confirmed SL [Steven Lofting] had been added to consult list") and asked who is to replace SL on biodiversity planning concerns as he has now left. JL confirmed that he would be the best person to contact and would seek to be added to the list. Aired general concern about PM leaving and need for someone with biodiversity knowledge in planning. JJ also informed members of the <i>Wildlife and Countryside Link</i> piece on the Retained EU Law Bill which is available online (wcl.org.uk/the-retained-eu-law-bill-should-be-withdrawn.asp).	JL

4.4.		
5.	<p>Planning matters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PM update • Major applications in rural areas 	
5.1.	PM absent – no update.	
5.2.	HJ raised that support for local authorities regarding Biodiversity Net Gain implementation is due in November and BNG itself will become mandatory in January 2024.	
6.	<p>LBB general update</p> <p>LBB project update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree pits • Tree Planting • Nature friendly verges 	
6.1.	(HJ) Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund: accelerating Open Space Strategy goals. Jane Askew (Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund Officer) is now in post. Current projects include playground improvements, biodiversity gains and a community garden in Kelsey Park. A further 11 applications worth £192k have been made; two projects are in the shaping phase. Every ward in Bromley has now put in at least one application. Delivery of works is complete at four sites, with a further eight to be completed by the end of the year. Link to PJPF report: Report No (bromley.gov.uk) (full link in Appendix)	
6.2.	(HJ) Nature Friendly Verges: hay cut complete in September; public response (with 440 responses) has revealed 73% support, 20% opposed and 7% unsure. Support strongly depends on location; the closer a wild verge is to property, the lower the support for it. Verges close to houses have 62% support for example (11% lower than average).	
6.3.	(HJ) Sustainable planting trial: 10 sites selected, Paul Meek (idverde) has put together planting list, Community Managers to engage with stakeholders in advance of planting. Communications being put together to publicise and explain the project. Planting is due in November.	
6.4.	(HJ) Park user satisfaction survey: 399 responses received via postal survey, 1,024 responses via online survey. Response is generally positive regarding woodland and grassland management; dissatisfaction is higher with facilities/cleanliness issues, but a slight improvement on the previous survey.	
6.5.	(HJ) Crystal Palace Park Trust took over management of Crystal Palace on September 15 th ; a 125 year lease with LBB has been agreed, with LBB continuing to provide financial support. Link to press release: Crystal Palace Park set to thrive following historic handover – London Borough of Bromley (full link in Appendix)	
6.6.	(HJ) Croydon Rd bandstand works ongoing with the next step being sand blasting of ironworks for repainting.	
6.7.	(HJ) Desilting of the lake at Kelsey Park: preparatory work has commenced with ecologists and surveyors on site until next year;	

	contract for the desilting work will go out to tender next year and will be run by a dedicated project manager; this work will take until the end of 2024 at earliest. Link to report on Kelsey desilting: Report No (bromley.gov.uk) (full link in Appendix)	
6.8.	RB asked if there is sufficient concern for ecological impact of desilting works. HJ responded that she is confident work will be completed carefully and at a reasonable pace with presence of ecologists.	
6.9.	(HJ) Work with Thames21 as part of the Ravensbourne Catchment Improvement Group continues, particularly at Glassmill Pond and elsewhere on the Ravensbourne catchment.	
6.10.	(HJ) Trees: survival rates among street trees are high for this summer; a QR code system is being implemented to report stressed trees and request watering (system has some bugs); trees for coming planting season have been purchased. HC to give more comprehensive update. Link to Glendale Arboricultural Services contract performance report: Report No (bromley.gov.uk) (full link in Appendix)	
6.11.	(HJ) Green Flag awards announcement; thanks to idverde and Friends groups for their work.	
6.12.	(HJ) Staffing update: James Hilsden has left LBB and his role will be advertised soon. HJ has asked for support in the interim in the form of a 12-month fixed term contract role which is approved and being advertised. LBB still has a vacancy for a tree officer. Karin Grey is now in post as the Carbon Programme Manager and Jane Askew has increased her hours to support with some of the Net Zero projects around tree establishment.	
6.13.	(HJ) Monitoring of idverde contract is being improved so that LBB have greater visibility over operations.	
6.14.	JJ asked members to consider an offer to run events on Nature Friendly Verges to educate residents about what is growing on their patch; tentative offer dependent on response.	All
6.15.	PWr asked HJ what public engagement has been attempted with the Nature Friendly Verges trial.	
6.16.	HJ responded that residents were informed of the trial with letters; Q&As were run; botanical surveys are ongoing with idverde; a tool is being developed for residents to report wildlife on their local verges; SH added that a Biodiversity Workshop was offered by idverde but uptake was poor, although there is still a possibility that local schools may be engaged with this trial.	
6.17.	(HC) The Borough's Tremendous tree planting project is in its third year; LBB are looking to replace trees felled in the last annum. 1,500 trees planted this year, plus 25 sponsored by members of the public. 50 different species have been planted. This level of diversity ought to increase pest/disease resilience. Link to Tremendous tree planting report: Report No (bromley.gov.uk) (full link in Appendix)	
6.18.	(HC) QR code system mentioned by HJ to be implemented by November 20 th – well in advance of tree watering season next summer. Additionally, "Please water me" cards to be affixed to saplings to encourage local residents to water trees.	

6.19.	(HC) LBB working with local scout troupes; the aim is to have each troupe in Bromley plant at least one tree in their local area and help out with watering.	
6.20.	(HC) Comment on tree pits: each pit is worth £100, the contract for these is limited as tree pits can fail readily for a number of reasons.	
6.21.	AM commented that there are numerous dead trees in her ward (Hayes & Coney Hall), requested that watering of trees be an idverde obligation where residents are unable.	
6.22.	HC responded that tree mortality within the Treemendous project is 10% for year one and 1% for year two, against a national mortality rate average of 30% (per the Forestry Commission); watering is already contracted out; last year was a tough year for all trees due to drought, but every effort was made to avert mortalities (watering was at 50l/week for 19 weeks in 2022).	
6.23.	AG asked HC if climate change is a consideration with tree planting, e.g. are more resilient species being selected?	
6.24.	HC responded that UK nurseries are behind in stocking appropriate trees with consideration for climate change; Treemendous project has allowed us to put together orders a year in advance and plan planting season ahead of time, with the warming climate as a high point of focus.	
7.	Reports from member organisations (including LBB departments and idverde)	
7.1.	(SH) idverde update (education at BEECHE): new environmental courses introduced this year which are proving popular, a new instructor has started (Ellie Denniss, a.k.a. Spider); insect tanks introduced to BEECHE to help children and adults overcome phobia of insects; today was the first school trip with an insect focus and response was positive. Major issue is that schools have funding issues and school trips are becoming prohibitively expensive; idverde are piloting an outreach programme to partner with schools and run sessions locally to hopefully make these sessions more accessible. Overall, event attendance at BEECHE has doubled against last year. Halloween events are proving equally popular.	
7.2.	(SH) HJ is in contact with Veolia to partner on education outreach regarding the importance of recycling.	
7.3.	(SH) Staffing update: Irena Bennet has been promoted from GMO to Conservation Ranger; her previous position has been replaced with an Assistant Ranger position which has been filled by Alanna Earring.	
7.4.	(SH) Winter woodland work and Countryside Stewardship work commencing, bids put in for contract work already; idverde manage about 40 woodlands and SSSIs and, whilst SSSIs necessarily take priority, grant money and Countryside Stewardships allow us to focus on small sites.	
7.5.	(SH) Invasive and Non-Native Species (INNS) eradication (mainly rhododendron and cherry laurel, as well as Japanese knotweed which is treated by licensed operatives) ongoing.	

7.6.	(SH) Thanks to all Friends groups for working hard in all seasons (and past retirement) doing important conservation work; the Bromley Friends Forum have worked with idverde delivering training over summer on INNS, leading volunteer groups and wildlife surveying.	
7.7.	(JL) RSPB/idverde partnership update: idverde continuing to tap into the expertise of the RSPB and making use of our close partnership; this was recently celebrated on September 29 th when all advisers and senior management from both organisations met at The Lodge in Sandy, Bedfordshire, to discuss future plans and ambitions. idverde will soon be recruiting for a Partnership Manager to help deliver our goals in the coming years.	
7.8.	(PW) Asked SH if there is still an idverde “community fund” which schools can tap into for biodiversity projects? Also, is fleet/tool use moving from petrol/diesel to electric?	
7.9.	SH replied that she will ask Angela Wood (idverde Community Development and Fundraising Manager) re PW’s first question. Tool use is switching to electric (e.g. with chainsaws) but idverde’s vehicle fleet is currently diesel. JL will ask Mark Garthwaite (idverde Operations Manager) for full response.	SH, JL
7.10.	CP asked SH for her thoughts on recruiting younger volunteers.	
7.11.	SH replied that many younger volunteers start out on work experience which the Countryside Team engage in frequently; use of social media and simply persevering with advertising and promotion can prove useful; it is also worth communicating that volunteering is not necessarily arduous and can involve surveying and event running as much as it involves physical work. JL relayed his experience starting out as a volunteer aged 15; the social aspect and the valuable skills learned were what drew him.	
7.12.	PW added that Chislehurst Common has a similar issue – social issues/habitat issues are so well-known, but recruiting younger volunteers is incredibly hard. A common concern is with succession (within committee and general membership). The commons are also running low on areas to “blitz” (i.e. cut back hard in winter) which is a favoured task among volunteers.	
8.	Any Other Business	
8.1.	(CL, Bromley Bridleway Access Group) BBAG Coronation Ride was very successful, although the saddle marking was not as big a success as expected; some people brought multiple saddles for marking (marking is used as a theft deterrent, as the owner of saddle’s name and address are physically imprinted onto the saddle) so it was a busy day nonetheless. Some bridleways are getting cut back by BBAG due to vegetation encroachment. Last week was the group’s annual fundraising quiz event and £300 was raised.	
8.2.	(JJ, Orpington Field Club) Introduced Carol Gould (Chair of the Species and Habitats Sub-Group of the Bromley Biodiversity Partnership). JJ is now focusing on the Orpington Field Club.	
8.3.	(JJ) Recent BBP work has involved updating the ancient woodland inventory this spring, with 50+ woodlands surveyed; mostly	

	woodlands of 2ha or less; hopefully this surveying will result in Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory being updated to reflect the value of these smaller sites.	
8.4.	(JJ) SINC review: proposed new SINC's being dealt with between the Bromley Biodiversity Partnership Species & Habitats Sub-group, PM and idverde. Keston Churchyard has been added after originally being omitted.	
8.5.	(JJ) Renewed call for LBB to hire an Ecologist as a member of Planning team. A letter on this subject authored by the Bromley Biodiversity Partnership (sent to all Councillors and CCP members) is reproduced in full in the Appendix.	
8.6.	(JJ) Flagged relatively recent INNS called three-cornered garlic (<i>Allium triquetrum</i> , a Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Schedule 9 species) which is outcompeting ancient woodland indicator plants including wood anemone and bluebells; JJ also highlighted continuing problem of cherry laurel and asked if the Panel can request that LBB Planning team ban cherry laurel from new developments. AG asked for this action to be assigned to him.	AG
8.7.	(CG, Bromley Biodiversity Partnership Habitats and Species Sub-group) BBP is being contacted on planning issues near SINC's and bat data is also being reflected in planning decisions, both good to see.	
8.8.	(CG) Priority butterfly species are currently the white admiral (recorded this year), purple emperor (no records this year) and brown hairstreak (popping up more commonly in Bromley). Images of these three species included in Appendix. Butterfly diversity is dependent on projects like NFVs/butterfly scrapes; CG commended the decision within TFL to turn A21 grass verges into wildflower verges.	
8.9.	(RB, London Wildlife Trust) In response to JJ's point described in item 8.5., RB noted that Matthew Frith is speaking with multiple London boroughs about the need for ecologists within local authorities. He could perhaps get in contact with Bromley.	RB
8.10.	(RB) Survey data for 2023: glow worm records from High Elms were the best in London; Bromley seems to be a bit of a stronghold for glow worms. Annual stag beetle numbers are very good in South London. LWT are trying to create map of deer populations in London given their adverse impacts on ancient woodlands. Hutchinsons Bank (Croydon) is very good for small blues and there is hope for them entering Bromley in good numbers. A recent black-veined white butterfly record was very unusual (the species has been absent for 70 years) and could have been a release but this is currently unknown.	
8.11.	(PW, Chislehurst & St Paul's Cray Commons) PW is aiming to centralise survey data and pass records onto GiGL more efficiently; iRecord is helping achieve this as recordkeeping has been less organised in previous years.	
8.12.	PW would like to start educating visitors on wildlife-friendly gardening, open request for resources/advice from Panel members.	All

8.13.	(PWr, Greener & Cleaner Bromley) Greener & Cleaner have delivered 182 workshops for 2,000 members of the public this year; 550 items have been borrowed from the “Library of Things” (lockers where you can borrow gardening equipment and other bits you may not own/be able to afford) which is a good uptake.	
8.14.	(PWr) New community allotment/garden in Bickley aims to get people gardening in a more wildlife-friendly way and is within walking distance of multiple schools. G&C are applying for funding from LBB and recently secured £5,000 from Lush.	
8.15.	(PWr) G&C’s Bromley Environment Network (BEN) is up to 56 members, all community groups (e.g. PTAs, residents’ associations, faith groups, sports groups, etc.)	
8.16.	(PWr) G&C’s Christmas Fair is coming up on November 18 th and 19 th at The Hub in the Glades, Bromley.	
8.17.	JJ thanked recent leavers Paul Mellor, James Hilsden and Steven Lofting for their work in Bromley.	
9.	Date of next meeting(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next formal meeting – Tuesday 23rd April 2024 • Summer meeting and location – July 2024, TBC by JL 	JL

Appendices:

1. Full links to reports and digital updates provided in Section 6:

- Update on PJPF to June committee:

<https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/documents/s50105632/PLATINUM%20JUBILEE%20PARKS%20FUND%20UPDATE.pdf>

- Link to press release on the transfer of Crystal Palace Park:

<https://www.bromley.gov.uk/news/article/570/crystal-palace-park-set-to-thrive-following-historic-handover>

- Approval to proceed with Kelsey Lakes project:

<https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/documents/s50105760/Kelsey%20Park%20Lakes.pdf>

- Tremendous year 2 update:

<https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/documents/s50108552/Tremendous%20Year%202%20Update.pdf>

- Glendale annual performance report:

<https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/documents/s50108547/Glendale%20APR.pdf>

2. Judith John’s email to councillors regarding need for an Ecologist position within LBB.

Dear Councillor,

I am writing to you on behalf of Bromley Biodiversity Partnership. The Partnership consists of representatives from local groups, key organisations and individuals with specific expertise who are committed to understanding, protecting, enhancing and celebrating biodiversity within the London Borough of Bromley.

Amongst many other things, we comment on planning applications regarding biodiversity issues when made aware of them. Some members survey plants and animals within the borough and report to Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL) or appropriate societies eg Kent Reptile and Amphibian group (KRAG), London Bat Group, British Lichen Society, The Botanical Society for the British Isles (BSBI), Butterfly Conservation, Peoples Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) etc. We have been asking for some time that LBB employ an ecologist for the following reasons:

Now that the Environment Bill has passed into law, we believe LBB will require the skills of an ecologist to:

- deliver LBB's contribution to the London Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and Nature Recovery Networks (NRNs) working in partnership with the GLA, Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL), Kent, Surrey and Inner London Boroughs.
- To access funding streams available to help implement London Nature Recovery Strategy and NRNs
- RE LNRS to report what LBB is doing to maintain & enhance biodiversity and report progress as required to GLA or whoever is appropriate.
- Look at LBB's landholdings other than land managed by idverde (eg farms) and link in to Nature Recovery Networks and tree planting, rewilding projects etc.
- Engage with the owners of LBB SINC's in private ownership to encourage and advise re maintenance & enhancement for biodiversity including offering advice re stewardship and Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes which may be available and necessary for successful implementation of NRNs.
- Survey and assess areas suggested for rewilding and tree planting to ensure that existing UK priority habitats within LBB are not lost.
- oversee the satisfactory delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Urban Greening Factor (UGF) including through on site checking that biodiversity/landscape conditions associated with Planning Applications are appropriate for biodiversity and BNG or UGF, and that conditions are carried out satisfactorily.
- Ensure that the ecological information submitted with planning applications is site sensitive and appropriate, following guidance set out in Bromley Biodiversity Plan Section 6, 'Best Practice Guidelines for Planners and Developers'.

This matter is of great concern to us as without the requisite expertise within the Council and the Planning Dept the statutory obligations regarding the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Nature Recovery Networks, Biodiversity Net Gain and Urban Greening Factor will be difficult if not impossible to fulfil. An ecologist with the ability to look at and advise on these matters over the whole borough is therefore essential.

Thank you for your attention in this matter, Judith John on behalf of Bromley Biodiversity Partnership.

Dr J. John, Bromley Biodiversity Partnership Species & Habitats Sub-group & Orpington Field Club

3. Images of white admiral, purple emperor and brown hairstreak butterflies.



Often seen in woodland/scrub flying high up in trees from July-Oct.

Males dull brown, females have an orange mark on the forewing.

Note the small orange "tail" on both sexes.

Overwinters as an egg, usually on blackthorn.



Flies high in treetops but descends to drink from puddles and carrion. Jun-Aug.

Female lacks purple sheen of male.

Overwinters as a small caterpillar.



Flies gracefully, often in woodland glades consuming honeysuckle. Jun-Aug.

Overwinters as a small caterpillar.