


To all Members of the **ENVIRONMENT** Committee (with copies to all other Members for information).

You are summoned to attend a meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT** Committee to be held at the Town Hall, The Broadway, Crowborough on **Tuesday 31st January 2017 at 7.30 pm** when it is proposed to transact the following business:-


Andy Beams, Town Clerk
25th January 2017

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Members of the public are invited to put questions or to draw relevant matters to the Committee's attention, prior to the commencement of business. This is for a period of up to fifteen minutes and shall be limited to three minutes per person.

2. APOLOGIES

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

4. MINUTES

4.1 Minutes – 29th November 2016

5. RAILWAY REPORT

5.1 To receive the report from John Coleman (attached)

6. SOUTH EAST IN BLOOM

6.1 To receive a report from the Working Group

7. I CARE FOR CROWBOROUGH

7.1 To elect new Chairman for the project and agree future steps

8. GREAT BRITAIN SPRING CLEAN (3rd – 5th March)

8.1 To discuss the campaign and agree how the Town Council will be involved

9. PLANTERS

9.1 To receive and discuss proposals from Alderbrook Association and Jarvis Brook Residents Association

10. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

10.1 To receive the report from the Ranger (attached) and agree any actions

10.2 To review dog bin locations and agree process for future requests

11. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

10.1 To receive any ESCC updates from Cllr Richard Stogden

10.2 Dangerous parking in Mill Lane

10.3 ESCC Highways response times to damaged lights

12. FINANCE

12.1 Management Account Reports to 31st December 2016

13. URGENT MATTERS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN FOR NOTING and/or INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA

RAIL REPORT for the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING 31st JANUARY 2017

MEETINGS ATTENDED

Railway Line Parishes Committee, Meeting 11th January 2017

Southern apologised and were not able to send a representative on this occasion.

The meeting discussed at some length the current service, or rather lack of it, on our line and where relevant elsewhere.

As reported by the media and by personal experiences the current services are appalling, particularly on the ASLEF (drivers) strike days, only a very few Southern services run at all, with none on either of the via Oxted lines. On all other days, because of the overtime ban by the drivers, all services are subject to delays and cancellations, often at very short notice. The services are again worse affected when the RMT (conductor/guards -- now on-board supervisors) take industrial action.

The meeting decided that there seemed to be little that the Committee could do that would bring an improvement in the present situation which appears to result from the entrenched positions taken up by all the parties concerned about what is actually a change in working practices that has previously been agreed and operated elsewhere, and has been assessed by the ORR (the Office of Rail and Road) as safe operation: this being subject to certain conditions being implemented at stations that will in future be served.

It is all the more aggravating for our line users that there is actually no intention of adopting this method of operation on the Uckfield line in the foreseeable future.

This conflict in the rail industry appears to have got completely out of hand and be likely to become more widespread in the coming months as the changes are brought in elsewhere in the country as a whole.

The best sort of services that now can be expected on our line appears to be based largely on the Saturday timetable: hourly without the peak time extras. A possible advantage of this is that the dreadful turnarounds at Crowborough although they do still occur, seem less frequent; presumably because there are less trains. However, the delay to and from Buxted and Uckfield for passengers will now be an hour or so.

On strike days replacement buses are being provided to and from Crowborough and Uckfield to Tunbridge Wells (for Southeastern trains) and Haywards Heath (for Thameslink trains). It has been reported that there has been little use made of these services.

Along the approach to London Bridge the fourth track leading through the new South Bermondsey dive-under became operational as planned and it appears that it may have improved the percentage of on-time departures from the station.

It was reported that information and communication of sudden changes and cancellations was not of the best although this admittedly is obviously very difficult in some of the circumstances that are arising. The working staff are doing their best in very difficult situations.

The second of the additional 4-car units has been seen in traffic and this may mean that all four additional trains should be available for use. Unfortunately, not all the trains which should run with extra carriages do so as yet. The reasons for these problems seem to vary.

It has been observed that Station Hosts have appeared at Balham station indicating that the Southern pilot scheme for the other new staffing arrangement is now underway. This is not planned for the Uckfield line.

In response to our recent request to East Sussex County Council regarding the obstructive car parking at Eridge station the Committee has received a re-dated copy of the letter received over a year ago which advised that it would take no further action to improve the situation.

The London and South Coast Corridor Study has still not been published.

The Wealden Line Campaign continue to forecast a positive future for BML2 which has received expressions of interest from the City and international investors.

Sussex Community Rail Partnership Uckfield and East Grinstead Lines Steering Group Meeting 17th January 2017

The Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Group were re-elected.

Funding is in place for the this year and the CRP was determined and able to continue with its plans to help increase the use of the railways to provide more sustainable transport and enable an increased contribution to economic growth and social well-being, despite the obvious difficulties caused by the present industrial disputes.

There are currently plans for the CRP to arrange events at East Croydon, hopefully in May, and at Blackfriars on the 21st June 2017. Suitable local publicity materials for distribution at the events will be welcome, as would be any assistance on the days concerned.

The meeting reminded members that railway stations were a good place for advertising local events and that space for more can be made available if needed.

It was brought to the meeting's attention and for wider circulation that a DISABLED passenger in difficulty and requiring assistance at an un-staffed station should press the EMERGENCY button at the Help Point.

The Wealden Bus Alliance has completed a survey of potential users of commuter bus services to and from Crowborough, Buxted and Uckfield railway stations. This has resulted in a positive reaction and the Alliance is pursuing the matter with the Department for Transport. It is understood that there is money available for assisting this type of service, but of course a good case must be made. The Alliance believes that clear evidence of local support would be very helpful. Perhaps the Town Council would consider helping in this matter.

OTHER

Since these meetings the industrial dispute between GTR(Southern) and the ASLEF trades union may be about to be settled. Although nothing is certain, Southern are planning to run a "full" service from tomorrow Tuesday 24th January. This should mean a better service than usual, but the other dispute with the RMT continues and so it is unlikely to be trouble-free.

John Coleman 23rd January 2017

Rangers Update for The Environment Committee 31th January 2017

Overview

This report principally covers the key management activities in relation to The Country Park, The Ghyll and Bluebell Wood. It also covers other wildlife biodiversity/management activities relating to other areas of the town, as and when appropriate.

Wildlife Flora and Fauna Surveys

Members of the Ashdown Forest Bird Group have kindly agreed to help with some bird surveys in the Ghyll during 2017. One of their members is a Crowborough resident and is also going to undertake a monthly bird survey in the Country Park.

Invasive Species

Work continues to control and remove invasive/non-native species across the reserves. This winter the focus has been on reducing the number of larger Laurel's within the Ghyll.

1. The Ghyll

Jefferies Wood

- 1.1. Work on the two year plan to properly manage the Jefferies wood area commenced in January and will continue through to the end February. The area has not had any holly/birch control for many years. This means that the level of dereliction is high with large trees entangled and many fallen trees hanging within the canopy. Progress is therefore very time intensive and using inexperienced volunteers is not a safe option. The regular (trained) volunteer is however proving invaluable (when available).
- 1.2. This work will see a vast improvement in the quality of the woodland with between 70% and 90% more light reaching the woodland floor. This will make it safer, more attractive and a significantly better habitat for wildlife (including dormice which are the main target of the improvements).

2. Pony Meadows and Bracken/Bluebell slope

- 2.1. Crowborough Conservation have kindly agreed to start formally recording and submitting reptile data from the refugia tins (corrugated sheets) which are positioned across the area. This is helpful as it will provide a record to show whether populations are increasing or declining in line with management improvements.
- 2.2. Bracken and bramble control is also ongoing through to the end February in order to increase structure and create increasingly attractive views for walkers/picnickers.

2.3. Crushed sandstone path improvements continue. The Ghyll (wooded) stretch of the 'right of way' footpath between Palesgate Lane and the stream is due to be improved during February.

Jubilee Meadow

2.4. The plan to cut back some of the Ghyll's woodland edge in Jubilee Meadow may not be able to take place this winter due to the mild weather and ranger time constraints. If it does not take place this winter, then it will be scheduled for November 2017.

Heatherview development/Medway

2.5. Work on the new proposed drainage ditch to try and address/reduce the previously reported 'annual road surface water/ice drainage problem' has been discussed with the developers. They have proposed that the issue is a matter for ESCC Highways. A meeting with ESCC will be requested once the road surface water appears again (the winter has been mild so the problem is not evident yet).

Burdett Road Car Park

2.6. The post and rail fence along Burdett Road has now been replaced.

3. Country Park (CP)

Stream Erosion

3.1. Stream erosion control measures by the top bridge continue to be working well. Further work to strengthen the bank is still required. However, further erosion upstream (approx. 20 meters down from the streams entrance to the park) is a higher priority. Work on repairing the bank will take place during February 2017 if time permits.

Tree Works

3.2. The combination of heavy but rapidly melting snow has destabilised several large trees. Work to remove these has been taking place and will continue into February.

Ponds

3.3. As per the management plan, the two ponds require ongoing and additional management over the course of the next year. The priority this winter is to improve the bottom pond as previously reported:

- The management plan recommended the placing of large rocks to reduce water disturbance (by dogs), the introduction of more plant species and that the surrounding trees be carefully managed to allow light and low foliage. A digger will be used to move adjacent available rocks this winter and the trees will also be cut back.

Glade and path improvement

- 3.4. Work to control the central glade in the Country Park (as per the management plan) will now be taking place this February. Crowborough Conservation volunteers will be helping with this work.
- 3.5. As previously reported much work has been undertaken with the help of the regular volunteer this period. This has been focused on improving and enlarging the glades/open areas around the country park and within the Ghyll. Further similar work is planned for the next period and over the winter in all areas.
- 3.6. Bramble control along the Tollwood Rd (ancient woodland) edge has been taking place through January. This is predominantly to ensure that the Bluebells can be enjoyed to the full by walkers.

4. Bluebell Wood

- 4.1. Work continues in relation to the thinning of the holly and sycamore within the wood.
- 4.2. Where possible, saplings (Yew, Beach, Elder and Hawthorn) are being lifted from other reserves in order to gradually improve the hedging around the wood.

5. Pocket Park Nature Reserve

- 5.1. Consultation with the ecologist (Kate Ryland (Dolphin Ecology)) has highlighted that the close proximity of dormice at Pellings Shaw means that there is a reasonable likelihood that dormice may be hibernating within the site. This being the case we now need to place 'presence tubes' in order to determine the position. This affects the initial plans as we cannot commence works on the site until the survey is completed. This does however mean that we will be able to undertake a full site vegetation survey over the summer. In addition, where possible a test ditch may still be able to be dug to determine what works are needed regarding the installation of a pond.
- 5.2. The delay to major works due to surveying will not prevent the submission of grant applications for works to commence in November/December 2017. It is still also possible for some tidying up of the woodland copse area in order to make it safer.

Daniel Colborne

Ranger

Updated Proposed Ranger Projects for the period February 2017 to March 2018

This document sets out the proposed project funding required for the period February 2017 to March 2018. The proposed projects cover The Ghyll, The Country Park and Bluebell Wood.

This document has been produced following the Environment Committee meeting on the 29 November 2016.

Table of proposed project spend for period February 2017 to end March 2017:

This table reflects the projects which could be funded using the existing 2016-2017 budget allocation.

Area	Proposal	Estimated Cost
Ghyll		
1.	Continued path improvement – Path improvement work is proceeding as planned. It is proposed that a further 20 tons of crushed sandstone is purchased in order to continue improvement work on the main paths through to March 2018.	£480
2.	Kissing Gates - It is proposed that a new kissing gate be installed at Jubilee meadow (at the point where the meadow drops into the woods. This would further discourage the antisocial use of motorbikes into the Ghyll)	£260
3.	Installation of a post and rail fence with a 5 bar gate at the end of the current access track.	£500
		Total £1240
Country Park		
4.	Improve Lower Pond (as per Management Plan) – The current management plan recommends that improvements could be made to increase the aesthetic attractiveness and wildlife biodiversity of the pond (and reduce damage being done to wildlife by dogs entering the water) by moving large rocks into strategic positions. This work will require the use of a digger to move the rocks.	£500 (for digger hire with driver. This also covers the cost of 7.)
5.	Replace damaged Information Boards and install Plexi-glass screens on all reserve notice boards to prevent/reduce damage in future.	£360 for two A2 Vinyl printed notice board posters. £400 (for Plexi glass protective screens).
		Total £1260

Table of proposed project spend for period April 2017 to end March 2018:

This table reflects the proposed projects which could be funded as part of the 2017-2018 budget allocation.

Area	Proposal	Estimated Cost
Ghyll		
1.	Leaflets and Path 'way markers' – Whilst we have a leaflet/map for the Country Park, we do not have one for the Ghyll. In addition, the main routes through the Ghyll are not physically marked. This has led to feedback that users have either got lost, or have not felt confident to explore. It is therefore proposed that leaflet/maps and small 'way marker' posts should be introduced.	£400 (way markers) £800 (leaflets)
2.	New Kissing Gate where the twitten enters the wood from Green Lane (down from Poundfield Stores). Once again, this will discourage/restrict the use of motorbikes.	£260
3.	Educational information Boards – It is proposed that 2 or 3 additional small (A4) educational information boards be installed along the circular path at Jubilee Meadow. These would focus upon how the meadow is managed to encourage as much wildlife as possible and suggest specific species to look out for.	£950
		Total £2410
Country Park		
4.	<p>The continued presence of a Kingfisher at the pond means that this proposal is subject to further consideration.</p> <p>Top pond management. -The Management plan recommends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Periodic surveys of the pond to show whether the biodiversity of the habitat is improving or declining. (The presence of introduced fish is highly likely to be reducing the viability of the habitat for amphibian and Dragonfly species). b) Removal of the invasive fish (Rudd) c) Control of pond foliage. <p>It is therefore proposed that a survey be undertaken in late March 2017 in order to record the current biodiversity status of the pond, that the fish then be removed. A follow up survey would then be undertaken in either 2018 or 2019.</p>	£1500 (for survey, fish removal and foliage control (possibly using a digger))

Bluebell Wood		
5.	Improve Post and Rail fencing - The low fencing is now failing/missing in places. It is therefore proposed that the fencing be replaced and/or repaired where appropriate.	£400 (max)
6.	Remove two large Sycamore – As per the management plan and good woodland management practice; Smaller sycamores and derelict holly is currently being removed by the ranger. However, in order to improve the quality of the wood, it is important that some of the larger sycamore trees are removed, over time, before they can cause long term damage. It is therefore proposed that two of the larger trees be removed this year.	£650
		Total £1050

Schedule for Updating of Nature Reserve Management Plans and Tree Inspection Policy

This document has been produced following the Environment Committee on the 29 November 2016.

1. Nature Reserves:

Reserve/Area	Current Plan dates	New Plan commission date
Country Park	2013 - 2017	To commission Spring 2018 (to cover period 2018 – 2023)
Ghyll	2015 - 2019	To commission Spring 2020 (to cover period 2020 – 2025)
Bluebell Wood	Expired 2012	New 5 year Plan to be produced 'in-house' by Ranger during 2017.

2. Tree Inspection Policy:

Existing Policy was produced and adopted on the 20/9/11. It was reviewed on the 27/5/14. It will be reviewed again by end April 2017.