Countryside Consultative Panel

7:00pm-9:00pm Tuesday 14th April 2026

Bromley Civic Centre, Churchill Court, 2 Westmoreland Rd, Bromley BR1 1AS

Chairman: Cllr Alexa Michael

Invitees		
Present: Cllr Will Rowlands (Mottingham) (WR) Cllr Chris Price (St Paul's Cray) (CP) Cllr Alexa Michael (Hayes and Coney Hall) (Chairman) Cllr Kate Lymer (Bickley and Sundridge) (KL) Hannah Jackson (London Borough of Bromley) (HJ) David Braybrook (London Borough of Bromley) (DB) Mollie Lyon (London Borough of Bromley) (ML) Hugh Chapman (London Borough of Bromley) (HC) Luke Blanchard (RSPB/*i*dverde) (LB) Ben Jarvis (*i*dverde) (BJ) Mark Garthwaite (*i*dverde) (MG) Carol Gould (Bromley Biodiversity Partnership) (CG) Chantal Lane (Bromley Bridleway Access Group) (CL) Richard Barnes (London Wildlife Trust) (RB) Peter Woodward (Chislehurst Commons) (PW) Tanya Scott (Greener and Cleaner Bromley) (TS) Larry Herbert (Bromley Friends Forum) (LH)		
Apologies: Sue Holland, Debra van Jaarsveldt, Alison Ruyter, Kathy Tormann, Parisa Wright, Jamie Fletcher, Gemma Turrell, Simon Fawthrop.		
Agenda		
1.	Welcome and introductions; Present & Apologies	**ACTIONS**
2.	Minutes of the last meeting a) Accuracy b) Matters arising	
2.1	Introductions.	
2.2	Minutes accepted.	
2.3	Matters arising: Distribution of site responsibilities list soon, pending one site. (LB action).	**LB**
3.	LBB general update LBB Project Update	
3.1	(HJ) LBB general update. [See attachment 14.04.26 Countryside Consultative Panel - LBB Update – Arb] WEIF Keston ponds. Micro-forests. Enhanced biodiversity duty report, released last September.	
3.2	(ML) Kelsey park bridge, Mayor attended the opening. [See LBB update attached.]	

	Scadbury, soft market engagement. Valuable feedback for works tender. Releasing the tender hopefully this week. Great crested newt specialist has been appointed to oversee the works. Closed the work tender. Three bids. Submitting an application to the National Lottery Communities' Fund. Keston ponds: completed our next round of surveys. Crofton and Sparrow Woods project. Pollution discharge from the outfall. Feedback from recent technical reports. A meeting with Thames Water this week coming. Scadbury, potential improvements to the Moat.	
3.4	(DB) LBB idverde partnership update. [See LBB update attached.]	
3.5	(Chairman) Any questions? (PW) You've provided us with excellent updates, but in detail. Will this be in the minutes? LB: Yes. (Chairman) Regarding trees that are removed for safety reasons. Will they always be replaced? HC: Yes, but not always in the exact same space. We avoid net loss of trees.	
3.6	RB: Hannah mentioned the enhanced biodiversity duty. In the absence of a Planner, we have no update on Planning for this meeting. Will BNG (Biodiversity Net Gain) be included? HJ: I know Carol had raised concerns last time. CG: In the public domain, but it was an unhelpful response from the Planning team. RB: Could I request the Cllrs to press for more information from the Planning side in these meetings.	
3.7	KL: There is a Slow for Ducks sign at Chislehurst Commons pond. Would we as a Council do this elsewhere? PW: There has been enormous concern about the loss of Egyptian geese and goslings by cars when crossing the road. We were happy for a sign to be put up, but it came from the community. The purpose is informative. Crowdfunded by the residents. We quite enjoyed that the community wanted to engage in this and improve the situation. KL: For example, I saw three squashed ducks in Fishponds Road (Keston Common). Would we have similar signs elsewhere in the borough, such as Keston? HJ: This is something that we could look into. TS: Greener and Cleaner Bromley support bringing the community together and can help with gathering support for concerns such as this.	
4.	*i*dverde update	

	[See *i*dverde general update attached.]	
5.	*i*dverde biodiversity update and RSPB update	
5.1	(Luke Blanchard) <u>Idverde and RSPB Biodiversity Update</u> New bat boxes have been installed across the Borough: 2 bat boxes at Keston (32 total). 5 bat boxes at Darrick 4 bat boxes at Hobblingwell (9 total) Also, 8 bat boxes have been installed in the coppice area in Sparrow Wood, and have been mapped for regular inspection by licenced staff members. Each winter, idverde undertake hibernation surveys in deneholes (former chalk mines) and an ice well in Bromley. The following bats were recorded in the hibernation surveys: Natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*), Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*), brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*), and Whiskered/Brandt's/Alcathoe bat (*Myotis mystacinus/brandtii/alcathoe* sp.). Natterers bat and Whiskered/Brandt's/Alcathoe remained the same as last year, while the numbers of Daubenton's and Brown long-eared bats recorded underground were fewer in 2026 compared to 2025. This could be owed to the false spring early in the year, which may have made some bats more active and therefore less likely to appear in hibernation surveys. It may also be owed to natural fluctuations in population. 2 tawny owl boxes to go up in High Elms, made by the BCV. In Crofton Woods, 2 new tawny owl boxes have been installed, bringing the total number of tawny owl boxes in the woodland to 5. This is the maximum that the woodland could host without overlapping territories too much. There is a new butterfly surveyor for the Hayes Common transect. This transect has not been walked since the early 2000s and we now have a regular surveyor for the site again. Amphibian surveys have been conducted by idverde across Jubilee Country Park, Scadbury Park, High Elms and Darrick Woods. High counts for the three native species of newt in Bromley (smooth newt, palmate newt and great crested newt) compared to last year. Overall, great crested newt numbers were twice what they were last year, suggesting improving aquatic vegetation structure, water quality, lower turbidity, suitable refuges and terrestrial foraging zones. Common frog and toad populations were slightly lower than last year. This may be due to the "false spring" early in 2026 which was followed by cold snaps. While the newt results were good this year, there were poor GCN results for one historically good pond for GCNs in Jubilee Park, called Ray's Pond. This is due to an infestation of Crassula and due to a degrading pond liner. This pond has been identified for works to improve the habitat condition for this more specialist species of newt.	

Thinning/invasive species control has been taking places in woodlands across Bromley, including in Keston Common, Darrick, Elmfield, Elmstead, Crofton Woods, and High Elms, fulfilling agreements with the Forestry Commission.

0.8ha of hazel coppicing has been completed in Sparrow Wood. This is crucial for maintaining the dappled light conditions that enable woodland flowers to bloom, and later for tall bramble scrub to establish and flower during the successional process, which is highly valuable for small mammal cover, for tawny owls hunting grounds, for bats feeding on the invertebrates supported by bramble, and for the white admiral butterfly to feed on bramble nectar during the adult stage. White admiral is sighted yearly in this part of the woodland.

0.5ha of mature holly has been felled and treated by contractors in Gumping Common.

In South Hill Wood, a 1200m2 area (40m x 30m) cleared of cherry laurel and rhododendron stumps by winching and use of mattocks. 2000m2 of cherry laurel and rhododendron remains in this area and days have been scheduled to remove these too. Bike ramps damaging the habitat have been levelled.

Heathland restoration has been taking place at Keston and Hayes Commons. Tree stumps and gorse stumps have been extracted by winch or by use of mattocks. Bare ground has been created in this process, promoting heather growth and also providing habitat for mining bees.
At Hayes Common, Bob Harrop has continued his monitoring programme of the adder population. This spring, he has identified a number of new individuals based on head scales, and multiple subadult adders. Indicates successful breeding activity last season. Idverde will continue to work alongside Bob for the monitoring and habitat management requirements needed onsite.

We're just about to start our monitoring programmes on the NFVs (Nature Friendly Verges), Brilliant Butterfly Banks, and sustainable planting beds. The meadow condition assessments will take place this season, covering all of the Council-owned meadows in the Borough. Brown hairstreak egg counts took place at Jubilee, Darrick, Elmfield, Richmal Crompton Fields. These surveys were a huge success, as egg counts were higher than previous years, evidencing positive site management that should be continued.

At High Elms, ink traps have recently been set up near BEECHE to monitor hazel dormouse activity. So far only mouse and voles have been recorded but monitoring of the traps is ongoing. Dormice are recorded each year at Blacklands Wood, further out in High Elms, so this monitoring will help to assess if other parts of the site are being used.

In Harvington Wood, the WEIF (Water Environment Improvement Fund) tree planting areas that were planted a year ago have been restocked. Survival rate in these areas was good, and it was mostly

	hawthorn and blackthorn that struggled, and these have been replaced and will be monitored. Overall, these plantings are well on course to establish, suppressing any resurgence in invasive species and providing scrubland habitat that will eventually be managed on a coppice regime. This week the final area of invasive species in the western half of Harvington Wood is expected to be cleared of invasives, so half of Harvington Wood will then have been fully restored from invasive encroachment, in a woodland that, two years ago, was overrun by invasives. This is the culmination of two years of work, assisted by the WEIF, and by RSPB led volunteer days with the BCV and work experience. The eastern half of Harvington Wood across the river will be next in the sights.	
5.2	CP: St Pauls Cray Meadow. Volunteer day last year. Will anything be continuing this year? BJ: We are aware that there is not a site manager for this site. Owing to the challenges of managing this site, we are still working out an overall strategic direction. CP: Wildfowl catapults. Does this affect population numbers? BJ: Not a localised problem and has been occurring across the country. Members of the public are advised to report any incidents to the Police in order to help inform resource allocation.	
5.3	 PW: who does the woodland works and winching? BJ: Staff, supervised volunteer groups such as the Bromley Countryside Volunteers (BCV). Felling can also be done by contractors. RB: Will more glow worm surveys be taking place at High Elms? BJ: Yes they will.	
5.4	KL: I have volunteered to be a swift spotter. Not too late for others to sign up. I have heard that there is a proposal to reintroduce beavers in Crofton? LB: Long term possibility, not short term, due to need for deep water in the initial establishment to provide refuge from dogs.	
5.5	Chairman: Phases of the Keston Project? BJ: Network of reedbeds to prevent runoff into the ponds. Phase one, capturing the water runoff from the car park. Woodland scrapes to capture and filter the pollutants there. A big part would also be desilting the first pond, and using them on the margins, much as at Kelsey Park. Planting these silt margins to create habitat. Phase two, improving public experience through footpaths, improving quality of the water for fishing. Phase three. This phase isn't finalised, but there is potential for creating a wetland feature or expanding the existing features. Final phase is to improve the wetland/woodland area at Padmall Wood. Already wetland features—high flow and low flow channels. Works on the small pond (Bonham-Carter House Pond). Replacing the board walk.	

	ML: We're applying to different funding opportunities for the later phases. KL: I used to see kingfishers regularly at the Bonham-Carter pond, now it looks a bit sad. BJ: Ecologically it came out as the lowest quality in the surveys which this project is hoping to reverse.	
5.6	RB: Hydrology for Keston bog. Any change? BJ: It shouldn't change. RB: Any opportunity to improve? BJ: Looking at funding opportunities. A scrape we created should remove the Molinia *(Molinia caerulea*, purple moor-grass, an aggressive native species in acid bogs).	
6.	Reports from member organisations.	
6.1	CL, Bromley Bridleways Access Group update. Green Belt Action Group to object to the building of 650 homes, a community centre and a care home which has been proposed. Their chief concern from the point of view of riders is development of Strawberry Fields, which is one of the last places in the Borough where riders can enjoy a faster ride in a traffic-free environment. We met with the Cllr who supported this objection. We organised a protest. Assuming the developer decides to go ahead and make a formal application. Possibly forcibly removing an illegal gate on byway 240. A new landowner installed a new gate there, blocking this byway illegally. We have also be liaising with Cllr Andrews to do improvement works to the surface of Mace Lane. Looking at work on Old Harrow Lane also, but this is a funding issue; the work is necessary but it's a question of whether LBB will fund the work. We have spoken to Paddy Collyer about a dangerous crossing. A Definitive Map Modification Order was submitted for Bogey Lane. This was rejected by LBB but we are appealing the objection. We are trying to explain to dog walkers at High Elms the hazards when these dogs are off the lead and harassing horses. On bridleways, we appeal that dog walkers should keep dogs on leads where horses are likely to be encountered.	
6.2	TS, Greener and Cleaner Bromley update. Between 5 and 7pm there are regular sessions at the Community Garden. Sunday 26th April Blackheath Marathon. If anyone wants to sponsor Kevin who is running for us, please do.	
6.3	RB: London LNRS (Local Nature Recovery Strategy). New resource hub for Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, also published in March. West Kent Golf Course Nature Reserve, we are preparing for grazing there. I have a question: how many swift boxes have been installed in new developments? CG: I saw a development which had one swift brick on the south side of the building. I gave feedback that it is better to have two on the north side, where it is shaded.	

	RB: Could the minutes of this meeting go on the Council website? Chairman: thank you, I will check. (**Action Chairman.)**	
6.4	PW: We have worked with the Council to survey Prickend Pond, which had dried up last summer. Debra van Jaarsveldt said it would take a long time to go through the action points. We know there's water when it rains, and it can set and flood up by the war memorial, but it doesn't reach Prickend Pond now. We know we have drains running through. We are identifying the manhole covers. We believe some of the gullies might be blocked, reducing water entering the pond. We know we have to do work on the Commons side, but we are also working in conjunction with the Council to see how it can assist on the Highways side. Since 2018, with the help of the Council and idverde, we are one of your Green Flag award holders. Yesterday we had an inspection, and it was the best we have had. If the judge comes from a local authority background, it helps. Results pending but we are hopeful. One judge came from Lambeth, another from Richmond Park, but they couldn't understand how we operated and fit in with the Council, and how we managed it all with volunteers (120 acres, employing just two people). They couldn't believe all that had been achieved with this. Our financial income/outgoings are stable. We can't achieve this without out partnership with the Council. Linked with the Grade 1 Metropolitan SINC. Related to catapults, motor scooters. We talk to Luke Underwood at National Trust Hawkwood, and police caught the two children with catapults at Rush Pond, and police visited their homes and spoke to their families. Hopefully this stops this activity.	
6.5	CG: Most of the aspect that the Habitats and Species Subgroup work on have already been mentioned. Recording for bees and wasps in the Borough. Buzzing In the East End (BEE) project is continuing to capture data on bees in Bromley. A lot of planning applications coming through which are of great interest to the Subgroup. When the environmental studies come through, we can comment on whether they are accurate. Members are concerned about Derry Downs, Hayes Farm, and Biggin Hill. Generally, the Planning team are good at declining things that are detrimental to the Green Belt, but many go to appeal. The Mayor of London and / or Secretary of State can also become involved in appeal decisions which override the Borough's concerns. The Council should have their own ecologist to give their own report on such developments, as the lack of this has made it harder to make a case to prevent appeals. LH: Any update on the Hayes Farm application? Chairman: Expected in May after the elections. EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) has been completed.	
6.6	LH: Friends Forum update. We had our AGM (Annual General Meeting) in September, which was well attended. Every two months we have a members meeting.	

	We have our quarterly partnership meeting with idverde and the Council. Our partnership has improved greatly over the last few years, the partnership is blossoming and we feel we have more of a voice. We invited idverde to show us about the interview process for the new Community Managers. We met with all five candidates, and from our point of view Vicy and Katie were the best candidates. At the moment, I've been in discussion with idverde about the five annual training courses.. One discussed was a reptile and amphibian course for the end of April which is fast approaching. Another was a bioblitz course, another was a tree survey course. We have started to offer weekend courses to attempt to drive up attendance by the Friends Group, and that now we are offering weekends it should improve. The last quarter we had 20 respondents to the Bromley Friends Forum survey. We want to make sure we are capturing unsupervised volunteer hours to capture the full scale of the work the Friends groups are putting into the Borough. London-wide Friends Forum. We had a meeting last week with the CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England). Funding from CPRE no longer available, which limits their capabilities. Potentially restructuring as a charity. LH: Hillview Hollow Friends Group joined Bromley Friends Forum recently. BFF (Bromley Friends Forum) reviewed the insurance arrangement for the groups, and we are satisfied that this is the best.	
6.7	LH: Will MG give any news on the grounds maintenance? MG: The majority of Grounds Maintenance updates were provided by DB, but can report that for the moment things are going well. We started grass cutting in March. We have regular catch-up meetings for staff and machinery to keep things running. CL: Is this grass verges? MG: Verges, parks, PROWs (Public Rights of Way) and other Council maintained assets. Note that certain trunkways through the Borough that are managed by TfL (Transport for London), in particular the red routes.	
7.	Any Other Business	
8.	Date of next meeting(s) • Summer site visit – Tuesday 14th July 2026 7pm. Keston Common, meeting at Westerham Rd car park, BR2 6HA. Ward members to be invited. (**Action BJ)** • Next formal meeting – Wednesday 14th October 2026 7pm. Meeting closed at 8:45PM.	**Action BJ**