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NATURE CONSERVATION NEWS

Chichester Harbour News

Sponsored cycle ride to Wittering

A sponsored charity fun ride is being organised to celebrate the opening of the Salterns Way cycle route. The ride will be held on Sunday 28 May to raise funds for St Wilfrid's Hospice and Macmillan Cancer Relief.

The Salterns Way is a 10-mile route from Chichester to West Wittering using cycle paths and quiet country lanes. The final section, now being constructed is a new cycle path, on the eastern side of Apuldram Lane on the inside of the hedges, will take cyclists right off the busy road. The new section will be finished in time for the charity ride.

250 cyclists are invited to register to take part in this celebratory ride. The route is mainly flat, so anyone with a reasonable level of fitness and a roadworthy bike will be able to take part. All cyclists will be asked to raise funds – through sponsorship – for the two local charities. As an added incentive, prizes will be awarded to those who raise the most funds, the top prize being a Focus Arriba bicycle worth over £300 donated by www.wiggle.co.uk.

Application forms are available from local libraries, tourist offices and other outlets, or can be downloaded from the homepage of the Conservancy's website www.conservancy.co.uk. There is a £5 registration fee per cyclist.

Further details are available from the Harbour Office on 01243 512301.

Bus service closed

The Harbour Bus – Service 57 – will not be running this summer. Low passenger figures mean that it is not viable to subsidise the route again this year.

Harbour Walks Festival

Festival of Harbour Walks takes place 16-20 May and includes walks in Chichester, Pagham, Langstone and Portsmouth harbours. See Website for details.

Brook Meadow 'Scoop Your Dog's Poop' poster competition

Jennifer Rye

There have been a few problems with dog mess incidents in Brook Meadow over the last year. This is particularly upsetting when it has been children using the meadow as their 'outdoor classroom' to study nature who have been affected. So the Brook Meadow Conservation Group invited local schools to enter a poster competition, promoting responsible action by dog owners.

St James' Primary School pupils have already responded magnificently, with over 100 entries, which reach a very high standard. The media used are almost as varied as the number of entries: hand-drawn, coloured, computer-generated, felt-tip penned, crayoned, you name it, they've used it. The styles range from pleading to exhortation, from instruction to desperation. The one thing they all have in common is the message: "If you are taking your dog through the meadow, please clear up after it, and use the dog bins provided".

The entries have been judged and four 1st prizes (one for each of the 4 years) plus 26 other prize winners will be awarded at St James' School on 20 March. First prizes go to Callum Johnson (Year 3), Ciera Little (Year 4), Ben Jardine (Year 5) and Hannah Smith (Year 6).

Best of all, a selection of winning designs will be on display at the three entrances to Brook Meadow throughout the coming year.

Let's hope 'pupil power' will prevail where other methods have not, and we'll have a cleaner, pleasanter meadow for all to enjoy.



Ciera Little's winning entry (Year 4)

Environment Agency Coastal Defence Strategy Exhibition

Cath Sly

(project manager at National Capital Programme Management Service)

The Portchester to Emsworth Coastal Defence Strategy is being developed by the Environment Agency to address flood risk to residential properties and businesses along this coastline. A public consultation exhibition was held in Portchester and Emsworth in February which attracted a huge response from the public. Many of the comments received from local residents have been invaluable and will be incorporated into the strategy document.

Our consultants Halcrow are currently working on hydraulic and hydrological modelling and economic appraisal of possible schemes to come out of the strategy. The strategy will be subject to internal and external stakeholder review this summer and is expected to be made available to the public for comment in September 2006. Following this the strategy will be put forward for Defra (Government Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) for their approval. This process can often take some time and for that reason we expect schemes to be developed and approved for construction in 2008/2009. Before this there will be further detailed and extensive public consultation for each of the proposed schemes.

If you missed out on the exhibitions and would like a copy of our public consultation brochure for the strategy, then please contact Mark Smith at the Environment Agency on 01903 832166 or email mark.smith@environment-agency.gov.uk.

May Day in Brook Meadow

Frances Jannaway

This year's annual Wildlife Funday in Brook Meadow will be held on 1 May, bank holiday Monday from 11am to 5pm. *May Day in Brook Meadow* will be a traditional event to celebrate the return of summer. A varied programme of events and activities has been organised for all the family to enjoy. This May Day event is being organised by the Brook Meadow Conservation Group with the help and support of local community organisations, such as Emsworth Residents' Association, Emsworth Business Association, Emsworth Horticultural Society, Havant Rotary.

The May Day celebrations include, Willow Weaving and May Crown workshops, which run throughout the day and can be booked on the day so book early to avoid disappointment. Other all-day activities include, Nature Hunt and Trail, Wishing Tree, Wildlife Information and Displays, Sow-a-seed, Wood Carving demonstrations. Light refreshments will also be available.

An interesting entertainment programme has also been organised for the afternoon starting with Morris dancing by Wickham Morris and a group of Breton dancers (12.30-1.30pm), Storytelling, Maypole Dancing, Circle Dancing and a Youth Percussion Band. Entrance to this event is free but there will be a small charge for the workshops.

Look out for posters, leaflets and other publicity material nearer the time for more details of these and the other activities and facilities we are hoping to provide.

Please come along and support *May Day in Brook Meadow* - a community event to celebrate the return of summer.

Tree cutting in Brook Meadow

Frances Jannaway

If you have been in Brook Meadow recently, you will have noticed that some of the trees have been pollarded or coppiced and some cut down. Most of this tree management work has been carried out by Havant Borough Council (the landowners) or their contractors as part of the annual work programme.

A number of the large Crack Willow trees along the River Ems have been pollarded because the trees were becoming unsafe and might have fallen onto the footpath. The ivy around the base of these trees has been removed so that the arborist at HBC can carry out a thorough health check on these trees. The line of Crack Willows across the meadow has also been thinned out.

A number of dead Elms have been cut down in the Lumley area just north of Peter Pond. The first stage of this tree cutting was done illegally by a member of the public. At the same time, most of the undergrowth in this very sensitive habitat around the Lumley Stream was also removed so that this whole area which was once a valuable wildlife habitat is now exposed and completely opened up. Although this area is in West Sussex, it is in fact also owned by Havant Borough Council. HBC contractors removed the rest of the dead Elms to avoid the danger of them falling onto the footpath. The Brook Meadow Conservation Group (BMCG), who manages Brook Meadow on HBC's behalf, has asked HBC to put up a fence round this area to allow the vegetation to recover and possibly to plant some young trees in the area.

BMCG has a policy of recycling as many of the products of the tree management work as possible. The brushwood is used to create dead hedges or if chipped it is used as either a mulch around young trees or as a path material on the woodland path. The larger branches cut up into logs are left to rot down in the undergrowth to provide a habitat for insects and other invertebrates. So if you see cut logs lying around please do not remove them.

BMCG therefore does not have bonfires and the bonfires that were lit to get rid of the brushwood were the result of a misunderstanding. Brook Meadow is managed as a nature conservation area and BMCG has applied for it to be designated as a Local Nature Reserve.



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