

WoW NoW

Newsletter of World of Widewater
Winter 2019



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...breaking news...breaking news...breaking news...

As we go to press we have wonderful news! WoW has been working with Lancing Parish Council on exciting plans to replace the kiosk and the existing booth with a new Visitor/Information centre incorporating a cafe style area. WoW hopes to use this facility to organise Nature Events at Widewater and much more! The project has just received a boost from LPC who have ear marked substantial funds supporting the project. WoW will be working hard in the future to continue to raise funds.

Welcome to WoW

Whether this is the first WoW newsletter you have received or you are already a member of our group, welcome. In various guises and formats we have been producing newsletters and updates for members for over 10 years and our group continues to flourish and play its part in helping maintain our wonderful local nature reserve.

As this newsletter reports, the last year has been an exciting and important one for Widewater Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and the next few years are looking even more full of promise with the developments mentioned elsewhere in this update. Our website and Facebook page are important sources of information and media for dialogue between members and between members and the committee

2020 vision

In this sense, the newsletter in its present form can only repeat or summarise what you may learn through other media. So with your help, we are proposing to revamp and relaunch the newsletter in 2020. We will continue to cover the highlights and events, we will flag up important developments. We will raise issues of interest and concern to members.

But we want to do more than that.

We would like the newsletter to be more interactive and to promote engagement between members. Between us, our group has a great deal of knowledge and experience of the Widewater and we feel sure that as newer members join us, they will be interested in the history of the Widewater and how it has developed into the beautiful LNR we all know and love today.

You may have a long knowledge of the Widewater – we would love to hear what it may have been like in years gone by.



Day fades to night Widewater Sept 2019

You may have been inspired to poetry or prose by living here or visiting the Widewater; share your words with us. Ted Walker, a renowned local author, was inspired by life on the Widewater to write *The High Path* a wonderful celebration of his boyhood years here.

You may have painted pictures or taken stunning photographs; share them with your fellow members and we will also add them to our growing gallery on the website.

You may have stories of unusual or funny experiences; let us know about them. Remember the skeleton in the boat earlier this year?

You may have worries or concerns that might be of interest to other members – again share them; part of our role is to help conserve what we have. We would like the newsletter to become more of a forum for members rather than simply a recycling of stuff on the website.

But we can only do that with your help and support.

Please let me or other committee members know if you have ideas to contribute. We will still publish a minimum of twice a year and our hope would be to use the revamped newsletter to bring our LNR to a wider audience.

Your community group needs you.

Frank Fletcher –newsletter compiler
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What is happening – this year and next?

2019 WOW Events

2019 began with a wonderful Bird Walk around Widewater and along the beach led by Tim Holter and Tony Benton of SDOS (Shoreham District Ornithological Society). Over 60 people joined in to observe and learn about the diverse bird life to be found here.

Litter Picks took place in April, July and September and were also very well attended. There were prizes for the most unusual objects found and badges for the children who helped with

their parents. Thanks to Ian Brereton for kindly organising the equipment for us. It was great to see so many mums, dads and children helping out.

Our AGM was held at Sussex Yacht Club this year and was very well attended. Speakers from West Sussex County Council presented plans for the new footbridge with improved access for all. The plans were welcomed but unfortunately the September start date this year has been postponed. We await further news. Helen Plant, Clerk of Lancing Parish Council updated us about the current plans to manage the ecology of the lagoon now that our Countryside Ranger Service has been withdrawn. Tasks such as monitoring salinity levels and water levels and controlling invasive species will be undertaken by LPC, WOW members (thanks to Professor David Jones and Mikey Unsted) and volunteer groups.

Mitigation Pipe. This year extensive works were undertaken by the Environment Agency to clear and unblock the Mitigation pipe to improve water levels in the lagoon. Plans for preventing the blockages in the future are being considered.

In June, Marion Wood led another successful Widewater Flower Walk. An extensive list of species was identified including the rare Starry clover found for the first time at Widewater. The Sussex Botanical Recording Society also visited the lagoon this year. The list of species recorded can be found on our website. Both events were open for all to join in.

Brighton College students came to Widewater in September to help clear invasive species as part of the school's Make a Difference Day scheme. 10 huge bags of Ivy were cleared from the bank by the bridge! This work really does make a difference as invasive species need to be kept under control or they will take over the space needed for native species.

Swan Update. In May, our resident territorial Mute Swan pair had 2 cygnets hatching from 8 eggs laid. Unfortunately one cygnet was lost but the remaining one has thrived and is now flying well and showing some white plumage. It will probably stay until March when the parents will chase it away, as they always do, and it will fly to the river Adur to join the flock of young Swans there. Visiting swans have come and gone being chased away by the Widewater pair! Sometimes they are allowed to stay at the far west end of the lagoon but usually they are eventually driven off.

Forthcoming events

The first events for the New Year have already been slotted into the calendar but we expect much more activity as the year progresses. Until the spring edition of WoW NoW, check FB and the website for the latest news as well as the flyers placed around the lagoon.

New Year Bird Walk

Sat 11th Jan 2020 10.00am - 12 noon (we may stay longer depending on the birds visiting on the day). Tim and Jenny Holter from SDOS (Shoreham and District Ornithological Society) will lead this fascinating walk around Widewater and on the coast discovering the wide variety of bird life here.

Enjoy fabulous views of the birds through their spotting scopes.

Bring binoculars if you have them and wear warm clothes.

Please meet at the information booth by the car park entrance.

Spring litter pick

Help make Widewater beautiful for the new season

All welcome. Sat 4th April 2020 11.00 am - 12.30

Please meet at the Information booth by the car park entrance.

All equipment provided. Prize for the most unusual item of litter found!

Information Project update October 2019

We are still progressing with building an information Centre at Widewater. We have currently downsized the building and have had new plans drawn by Kingwell Building Ltd. However these plans need further investigation, and are being discussed with Lancing Parish Council.

The committee is setting up an events calendar to be able to raise funds towards building the Information Centre and also we are setting up a Space Hive grant bid, we will provide more information once this is up and running.

See breaking news at the start of this newsletter.

New Bridge and Disabled Access



The end of the old footbridge? Not quite yet

As many of you will be aware, West Sussex County Council agreed plans to replace the old pedestrian bridge across the Widewater lagoon. At our Annual General Meeting in May the Project Engineers gave a presentation on the work and plans were displayed. Work was scheduled to begin in the Autumn 2019 but unfortunately due to funding problems, it has now been delayed to begin in the 2020/21 financial year. The new bridge will be upgraded to 2 metres wide and the gradient reduced to enable disabled access. We will keep you informed once we have an idea when work will commence.

Mitigation Pipe

We are very pleased to report that, since the Environment Agency cleared the mitigation pipe of sand and debris, the water levels in the Widewater lagoon have been at a healthy level all year. The levels do vary according to the tides and rainfall but we are lucky to have a local resident, Mikey Unsted, who has volunteered to monitor the inlet and outlet pipe to make sure that water passes freely through these.

We were very sorry to be told earlier this year, that we can no longer have the services of the West Sussex Ranger, who used to regularly monitor the salinity levels of the lagoon. However, under the jurisdiction of Lancing Parish Council, Professor David Jones, a local resident and marine biologist has now volunteered to undertake this task and we are very grateful to have his help and expertise.

Swan Feeding – some suggestions

Feeding the swans can be quite therapeutic and the swans with their ready appetite, rather like it too. However, there is much debate about feeding Swans and wildfowl.

Here is some advice endorsed by the Swan Sanctuary with particular reference to the Widewater swans.

Swans' natural diet is weed growing in rivers, lakes and ponds. The Widewater has plentiful amounts particularly in the summer.

On the whole, feeding Swans and birds other foods can be a helpful and enjoyable activity particularly in winter when natural food is less abundant.

- Grain such as whole wheat, swan and duck pellets and greens such as lettuce are best.
- Bread which is not mouldy can be given *in small amounts*, it is not harmful and it does not cause Angel wing (a genetic condition)
- Food must always be fed in water as dry food can cause choking.

Swans should not be encouraged out of the water as they are at risk of dangers such as dog attacks.

Putting out a container of fresh clean water is also very helpful particularly as the Widewater is saline.

The resident Widewater, territorial breeding pair are well fed probably by many residents so please only give small amounts so that they don't become overweight!

Visiting Swans will be chased off by the territorial pair and risk attack if they are encouraged to stay by feeding them.

You can help other Swans in the wild by taking food to rivers and lakes if you go out walking.

Thank you for caring for the Swans.

www.theswansanctuary.org.uk

Flora of Widewater Lagoon – a Colour Picture

Our Widewater Flora are still flourishing. We had a very successful Flower Walk in June and it was lovely to have so many people turn up from various places outside Lancing and Shoreham.

As I pen this in late September I have seen so much still bravely hanging on despite some of our latest vicious winds. I have spotted the delicate pink of the Field Bindweed, the lovely blue of a few remaining Vipers Bugloss, the whiteness of Wild Carrot and Yarrow flowers and the daisy like flowers of the Sea Mayweed. There are still a few purple Mallow flowers and the emerging Michaelmas Daisies are now blooming. The orange and yellow brigade consists of the tenacious Bristly Ox Tongue and the common yellow Toadflax.

There are the red stalks of the remaining Sea Beet plants and the orange and brown of the previous green Sea Heath that still harbour a few of their tiny pale flowers. The Rock Samphire now display their autumn seeds very prominently and there are still a few remaining very black seeds of the Alexanders. At the western end of the Lagoon there are the blood red hips of Dog Rose and a few lingering Honeysuckle flowers.

Do come and visit for yourselves.

World of Widewater Committee

How we operate....

.....The WOW committee is going from strength to strength. We work in a constructive and positive way with local organisations for example, Friends of Shoreham Beach and the Shoreham and District Ornithological Society.

We meet in Lancing on an average every 6-8 weeks. The meetings are always friendly and well managed following an agenda which is produced with each member's contribution. Full comprehensive notes are taken.

We also have project groups, for example for the New Visitors Centre, each project group reports to the general committee.

Two Lancing Parish Councillors attend each meeting. They bring expertise and information about the priorities of LPC that enable the committee to plan and maximise the support from LPC.

The committee has a greater role in the management of the Widewater now due to the decision of West Sussex County Council not to provide a Ranger to manage the area. This challenge has been met with energy and a collaborative manner by the committee. We work alongside, as appropriate, the Environment Agency, WSCC, Adur District Council and LPC.

Two WOW members have recently joined the committee and are coming forward with new ideas and a fresh approach, which is always very welcome.

Sometimes a WOW member decides not to be a committee member but comes forward with an idea which they organise and take the lead on, for example

- taking the salinity measurements of the lagoon,
- providing expert advice on the quality of the lagoon's environmental health,
- managing the regular clean ups or
- having an interest in perhaps running a fund raising event each year.

We are respectful of everyone's different styles. There are laughs along the way and the meetings are never dull.

if you would like to have a chat about joining the committee or supporting our work in some way or taking on a task, we would truly love to hear from you.

We particularly would be very interested in talking with people who have ideas or experience in how to increase our membership.

Merry Christmas and a prosperous new year to all from the committee