

Stanmer Woodland Management Plan – Appendix 9b – report on consultation undertaken.

Consultation Stanmer Woodland Management Plan draft

Introduction

The draft Management Plan proposes how the woodland can be managed over the next ten years to meet the UK Forestry Standard.

The aims of the plan include:

- Building resilience against Ash Dieback and other diseases to ensure existing woodland cover is maintained.
- Protecting historical, archaeological, and environmental elements on the estate.
- Maintaining and preserving open access.
- Increasing biodiversity and protecting nationally and locally rare flora and fauna.
- Producing semi commercial timber extraction of coppice products, wood fuel and timber.
- Supporting the HLF Conservation Management which describes the woodland in the most part as of considerable significance and describes using the woodlands to provide related activities such as rural skills, forest schools and wood based produce.
- Increasing the city's offer for volunteering work such as coppicing, pollarding, scrub clearing and general woodland management experiences.

The draft Woodland Management Plan has been produced by an independent forestry consultant on behalf of the parks Projects Team. Before submitting plans to the Forest Commission, the council has sought the views of all interested parties, including park users and residents.

Engagement

Early comments were sought on the draft plan during the period May to September 2017 and responses were made by Cityparks, Forestry Commission and South Downs National Park Authority.

A presentation was made to the Local Access Forum with representatives interested in Access on 11th January.

Meetings and phone calls to support the awareness for the plan were made with Cllr Mitchell, Cllr Janio and Cllr Littman – Jan 18

A meeting with Alex Proud, Stanmer House, to inform of the draft plan on 5th Feb 18

Posters were put up in Stanmer Park car parks and the village notice board and Stanmer tearooms and at this time informal conversations were held with the Permaculture Trust, Wildlife Trust and Stanmer Organics – Jan 16th 2018

Online through the councils consultation portal the consultation was live to organisations from 21st December and advertised to residents between the 12th Jan – 12th Feb 2018.

Information sessions were held at Stanmer Tea rooms on Thursday 1st Feb and Saturday 3rd Feb with Julian Miller.

Posters were put up in public libraries; Jubilee, Saltdean, Rottingdean, Portslade, Moulsecoomb, Mile Oak, Hove, Hangleton, Coldean. 1st Feb onwards

A Press Release was made to the Argus, the BHCC website and a blog spot, spotlight on Living Coast Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere website. The posters advertised the opportunity to view the plan by calling ahead to Hollingdean Depot and Stanmer Nursery.

Results of Consultation

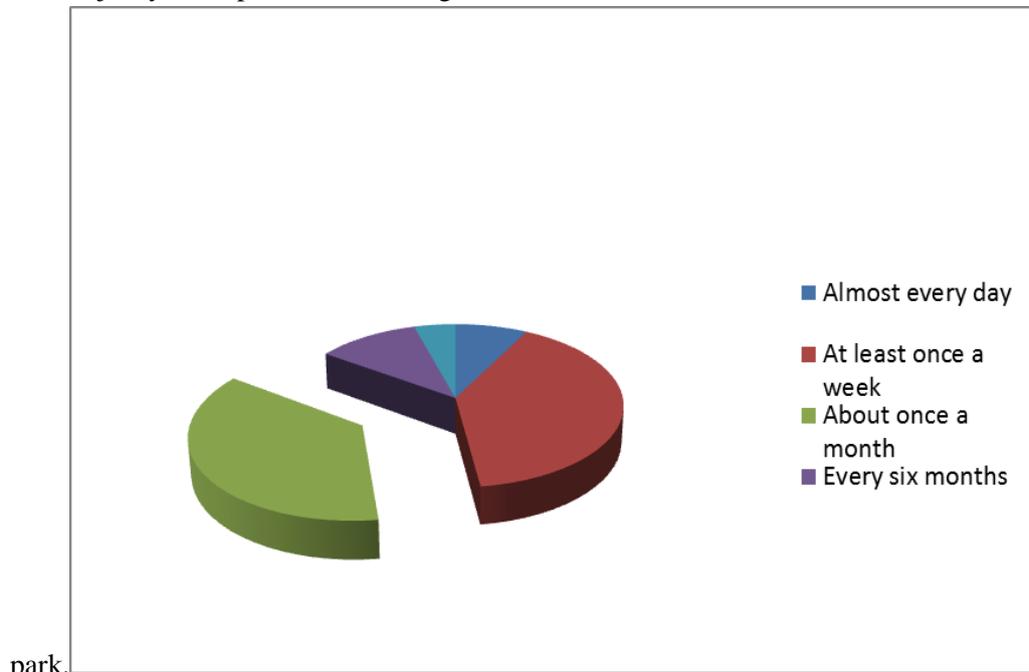
The report is made up of 16 responses collated on the two information sessions held at Stanmer Tearooms and 74 responses made online.

A total of 90 responses were received.

Responses were received from representatives of the following organisations: B&H Local Access Forum, South Downs Society, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Brighton MTB, Brighton Permaculture Trust, Brighton & Hove Environmental Action Group, Association of Cycle Traders, VC Jubilee Cycling club, Healthwalks, Woodland Trust/ SDNPA, Biosphere programme, TWEAK, Historic England, Brighton & Hove Way Association, Stanmer Organics - Breathing Space, CPRE, South Downs volunteers, Brighton and Hove Wildlife Forum, Rangers volunteer.

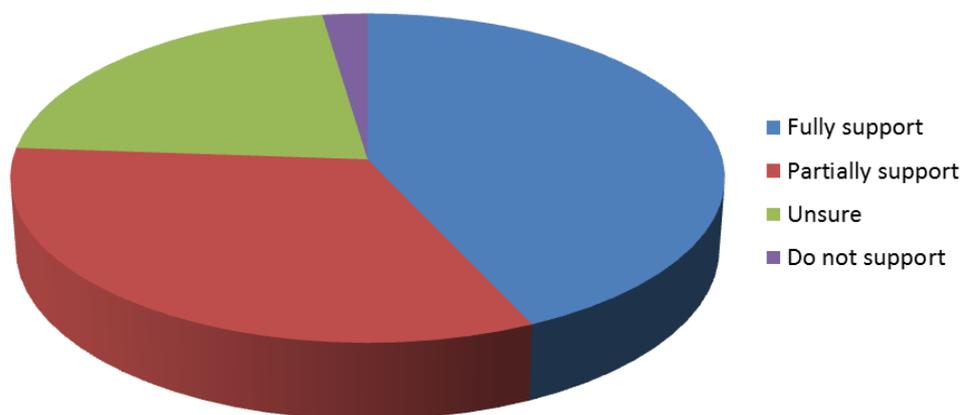
In depth comments were received from a number of organisations and residents.

The majority of respondents were regular visitors to the



In Section 2 the plan was available in full for respondents to consider. Respondents were then asked whether they supported the draft plan and to provide comment.

Section 3 - Your comments



Of the 87 that responded to this question 38 respondents fully supported the draft woodland management plan for Stanmer and 29 partially supported it.

19 respondents were unsure and 2 did not support the plan.

Comments from organisations

Brighton & Hove Local Access Forum – Partially Support

I Support the Vision, particularly "to provide a peaceful and pleasant setting for quiet informal recreational activities." It is strong on 'Forestry aspects' but weak on 'Maintaining public access.' The lack of detail and firm proposals to the 'The general statements on page 34' do not give hope that long standing issues such as the control of parking, control of anti-social behaviour and provision of toilet adequate facilities will be dealt with any time soon. Please do not let this (another) management plan just gather dust. Stanmer Park rightly needs to be properly managed for the benefit of all. Please focus on and identify key achievable and realistic objectives over the short, medium and long term within the plan.

South Downs Society – Fully support

The South Downs Society is the national park society Friends group for the South Downs National Park. It has in excess of 2,000 members and its focus is fund raising and campaigning for the conservation and enhancement of the landscape of the national park and its quiet enjoyment. Our comments below reflect this. Within the National Park the Woodland Management Plan must comply to the two statutory purposes for national parks in England and Wales: Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage; Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks by the public. When carrying out the works the

National Park Authority also have the duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the national parks. In the context of the above, the Society welcomes the vision for the woodland at Stanmer Park to be brought back into active economic management with the aim of sustainable production of timber and woodfuel. We believe that bringing more woodland back into active management will improve its biodiversity and ensure its future contribution to the National Parks landscape. We support a management plan that aims to ensure that the nature conservation, landscape and historic environment features of the woodland are protected and where practical enhanced. The Society acknowledges that public access provision will be maintained and the woodland will continue to provide a peaceful and pleasant setting for quiet informal recreational activities. Provided the Plan is compliant with the South Downs National Parks' Forestry and Woodland Policies as set out in the Partnership Management Plan we advocate its approval.

Brighton MTB – Fully Support

The plan fails to recognise that Stanmer Park is one of the few places in Sussex where there are dedicated mountain bike trails and attracts mountain bikers from across the region. In particular, it does not acknowledge the excellent network of single track trails and technical features that have been constructed by the mtb community over the last 20 years. The Forestry Commission has a long history of working positively with the mtb community to develop mountain biking centres of excellence around the country. QECP, and Bedgebury being good examples of this locally where they attract people from around the region and contribute to the outdoors & rural economy. However, this expertise is not reflected in these proposals and the plan as it currently stands, is a missed opportunity to develop the mountain biking infrastructure.

Brighton Permaculture Trust – Fully support

I have not studied the plan in great detail, however we are supportive of the overall approach. My comments relate to the areas that impact upon the sites we lease/manage. 5a We very much welcome the proposal to coppice the area to the South of the Old Orchard (to the south of the walled garden) which we manage. However we would request that this area is coppiced on a much shorter cycle (8-12 years?) to prevent shading of the orchard.

Map 5 In the interest of accuracy, not that it affects this plan, I believe that areas marked as access land may be incorrect. Part of the Home Farm Orchard & the Old Orchard. We lease both sites & have not been made aware of the designation. In relation to the Home Farm Orchard we have provided access for the public but it was not physically accessible before we took on the site.

Brighton & Hove Environmental Action Group – fully support

I am horrified by the neglect of Great Wood and the associated woodland over the past two decades and have separately resubmitted my personal PowerPoint presentation and pdf document regarding my concerns as early as 2003. Sadly, they fell on deaf ears.

Association of Cycle Traders – unsure

Nothing in this consultation specifically mentions what recreational activities will be allowed access and where. Such as ramblers, mountain bikers scout troops, etc. There is also no mention of the menace of dog walkers leaving their poo bags everywhere and letting multiple dogs, sometimes more than a dozen for every one walker, all off their leads at once frankly causing havoc for other park users?

If visitor numbers are to increase in a managed way, then any plans for Stanmer Park must include either maintained mountain bike trails, a designated area, or codified acceptance of mountain bike club or enthusiast-built areas.

As a regular park user, I would estimate that one-third of the people in the park are there to enjoy mountain biking. The park has its own event (a highlight in the mountain biking calendar) and the sport is enjoyed by young and old. In terms of demographics, mountain bikers tend to be civic-minded, wealthier (mountain bikes are famously expensive) and respectful of the environment and other trail/area users.

Currently the woodland management lumps mountain bike use in with "antisocial behaviour"

There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that mountain biking is in any way antisocial. As an olympic sport, it receives huge recognition from fans and sport-loving viewers around the world. It has revived the tourism industry of south wales, and brings in millions of visitors to the dedicated trail centres of England, Ireland, and in particular, Scotland and Wales.

There are huge numbers of enthusiasts and clubs in every town in the UK, and in Brighton alone, there are several cycling shops that thrive because of the huge interest and economic activity that mountain biking supports. There are several examples where the council and local riders have created lasting and well-meaning partnerships. Cannock Chase for example revived its local parkland in conjunction with mountain bikers. The Forestry Commission has created hundreds of kilometers of dedicated mountain bike trails in the UK, which has seen visitor numbers boom. As a way of introducing children to nature, mountain biking has proven to be one of the most engaging, with programmes around the country nurturing both young talent, as well as instilling a general love of our countries woodland to a generation otherwise lost to TV or computer screens.

It may surprise those in Brighton council to know that many of mountain biking's top competitors are from the UK, and this is solely down to the vision and foresight of councils and commissions in other parts of the country who took the wise decision to work with local clubs many years ago.

I would like to know where the idea that mountain biking is antisocial has come from? A quick search of the local news reports (via the Argus, for example) reveals zero instances of mountain bikers either causing a nuisance, or creating a disturbance (ie: crashing into dog walkers) in the past decade. Similarly, according to the many private facebook or social media groups, there is no anecdotal evidence of any incident where a mountain biker has caused any issue with either parkland authorities or the parks users. In fact, such user-groups are filled with updates on the parks well-being (ie: news of the new parking regulations) and recent park conditions such as how muddy certain areas are, or whether there's been an outbreak of a certain viral disease (dog walkers and dogs are not the only people who accidentally ingest some of the soil or organic matter from the park). Indeed, there have also been instances where mountain bikers have organised clear ups, and litter collection days, much like the surfing community has instigated in their beach clear-ups. Many mountain bikers are also surfers in this town.

Lastly, in terms of anti-social behaviour, the only instances that can be found online, are where people opposed to mountain biking have deliberately set out to harm, maim and potentially even kill cyclists in the park. This has been in the form of deliberate movement of logs to harm riders, the concealment of sharp objects to potentially damage cyclists wheels and in some instances, barbed wire hung between trees. The latter being subject to a police investigation in 2015. If Stanmer's consultation is to be serious, and to address the needs of the current - and future - park users, it has to include mountain

biking in its plans. At the very least there should be a dedicated mountain biking area, but long-term, there should be direct line from the park management to the Brighton mountain biking community, so that we can work together to make something that is better for the whole city.

VC Jubilee Cycling club – Unsure/Partially support

I am a member of VC Jubilee which leads children age 8 to 18 on guided mountain bike rides at Stanmer. Stanmer park has been had a mountain biking trail network for as long as I have been in Brighton (>12 years). It is the main woodland area near Brighton that provides this. The rides at Stanmer give the children in the club a way of getting out into the countryside, doing something active and learning new skills. I am concerned that with these proposals that mountain biking will be banned outright or seriously curtailed. At a time when children and adults need to be more active this would be a terrible outcome.

As a keen cyclist I am concerned that management objective 5 May have a negative impact on public use of Stanmer Park for recreational mountain biking if excessive restrictions are put on access. I have ridden in Stanmer Park since 1994 when I moved to Brighton, both my children learned to ride there, and my teenage son now visits the park with his friends. In my long experience I have experienced no conflict with other park users, generally we are all there to enjoy the outdoors. I am disappointed to see that construction of jumps has been listed in the plan as antisocial behaviour. I would have thought that mountain biking should be considered a healthy pursuit for young people? I am otherwise supportive of the goals of the plan, and I accept that Stanmer Park needs good management to ensure its future for generations to come.

Biosphere programme – Fully/partially support

I support the reintroduction of wider woodland management to Stanmer for multiple benefits, including economic wood products as long as the environmental and social objectives and values are prioritised as the primary ones - to allow for nature conservation and sustainable recreation activity. And that public communication about the nature and rationale for woodland management activities is maintained over time to engage and educate the public about it. As a technical point, the inclusion of contiguous areas where possible of minimum intervention management blocks is desirable on both sides of the A27 bypass as wildlife refugia and build up of dead wood habitat.

TWEAK – fully support

Historic England – fully support

Thank you for consulting Historic England on this Woodland Management Plan. Stanmer Registered Park and Garden is on the At Risk Register and Historic England have been actively engaging with BHCC with the recent HLF bid. Historic England welcome the reintroduction of active sustainable woodland management to the Stanmer Estate and a commitment to maintaining the visual affect of the woodland. The woodland management plan principles supports general principles of woodland management and maintenance of historic parks and gardens , however a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) has recently been prepared for this estate and this Woodland Plan forms an important part of that overall conservation management document. Information about the significance of the estate through its aesthetic, historical or evidential value is contained within the CMP which can inform and guide this plan and those who implement it. We would advise that reference to the CMP, including the assessment of historical significance should be made more widely throughout the woodland plan, and management objectives should be made in context to the historic landscape character of the park to ensure that adverse effects to the park's significance are not forthcoming. Stanmer contains many

historic parkland features including a variety of clumps and roundels designed primarily to enhance visual satisfaction and these important design and visual affects should be understood within any management objectives. The estate also contains a number of large specimen conifers, as well as the legacy of veteran and ancient trees listed. All legal health and safety obligations must be complied with however for important veteran and specimen trees alternatives to surgery or removal such as fencing off, re-routing of paths etc. should be considered. We welcome the presumption against clear felling and adoption of continuous cover in all ASNW and PAWS areas and appreciate the need to address the percentage of sycamore regrowth since the Great Storm. We would welcome more certainty about the percentage of tree species, including the dominant wood species structure, in order to retain continuity of structure with the historical landscape design. Large areas of management change ie. re-introduction of coppicing rotation should explained and explored with regards to the park's character areas and important views and vistas to ensure no undue adverse visual affects on the designed landscape or Visitor access, woodland track maintenance, anti-social behaviour by mountain bikers and visitor facilities and interpretation: access by walkers and cyclists is an opportunity to restore the hierarchy of carriage drives and paths across the estate. Carrying capacity issues within the park and car parking capacity should be identified and we would welcome more information on how these proposals fit in with the recent CMP. In most cases, new routes in open parkland are visually intrusive and the design of the path and any visitor facilities and furniture (info boards, banners, fencing, parking etc) should fit in with the historic estates style. Engaging mountain bikers in the significance of the estate and its woodland may encourage some positive behaviour change with regards to unauthorised use in the future.

Brighton & Hove Way Association – fully support

Brighton & Hove Way Association has been founded to promote establishment of a recognised named pathway that arcs through our local downland around the city from Saltdean to Portslade. The candidate route is that developed for the mayoral walk 2017 as mapped by BHCC Conservation Manager and Rights of Way Officer. The route uses existing public rights of way and access land and passes through Stanmer (around the back of the University of Sussex, across the lawn in front of Stanmer House, then around the back of the House and up through the woods to Upper Lodges). The aims of the Association are to way mark the route and introduce and improve interpretation. To encourage use, especially by under represented groups. Encourage responsible access. To help organise care work for example litter picks. These aims also apply to access routes to the urban areas of the city, so for example paths through Coldean Woods. We very much welcome the plans to improve the woodland management of the Stanmer Estate. This we hope will enhance the experience and appreciation of people visiting Stanmer as well as the integrity and sustainability of the wood itself. We would be keen to see that interpretation and maintenance work is co-ordinated with the work we are doing as an association, and that the accessibility of B&H Way and that of access routes to it are improved. We hope that management of the woodland will not be allowed to adversely impact on those routes and their availability for use. Given the relatively short timescale of this consultation, this response is a provisional view of the B&HWA offered by myself as Chair of the association. I will forward any further comments from our committee members may wish to offer. Pete West Chair, Brighton & Hove Way Association brightonandhoveway@gmail.com

Stanmer Organics - Breathing Space – fully support

Sussex Wildlife Trust – Partially Support

Thank you for consulting the Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) on this matter. SWT is extremely supportive of Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) desire to bring Stanmer Wood back into active management and in the most part support the specific management proposed in this plan.

However we are disappointed to see that the council are again adopting an isolated approach to the restoration of the Park by consulting on a woodland management plan that does not relate to the wider management of Stanmer Park.

Stanmer Park is a Historic Park and a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) that sits within a National Park. It is also a very popular and accessible country park for local people and visitors. The conservation and good ecological management of the park should be a priority for BHCC and whilst we understand that planning permission has been granted for the restoration of a small proportion of the park, there still appears to be no management plan or overarching strategy for the entire site. A Park-wide, long-term management plan is critical to ensuring the ecological integrity of the site and the environmental, social and economic improvements desired by BHCC.

The management of Stanmer Wood certainly plays a part in this, but it is premature to set management of one area of the park without having an overall vision for the site. The Sussex Wildlife Trust would have hoped to see a more holistic approach to the restoration and management of Stanmer Park.

Vision The management plan vision (section 2.1) does not reflect the ecological importance of the wood within the context of it being a LNR, instead it is primarily focused on the economic drivers for managing the woodland. BHCC needs to have a more balanced view of the long-term benefits of bringing the wood back into active management. Whilst we support the ambition for any management to be economically viable, there must be greater recognition that given the site's location, history and statutory designations, management must ensure environmental and social benefits. We particularly object to the caveat of "where possible" when it comes to environmental enhancements. The woodland has been undermanaged for many years as demonstrated by issues such as invasive species. It is therefore inconceivable that bringing the woodland into active management, especially in the manner described in the draft plan, would not produce ecological enhancements. In view of BHCC's duty under the NERC Act, the status of the B&H Action Plan and the Parks location within an international Biosphere Reserve we believe the vision should be amended as follows: **"The vision is to maintain a balanced woodland ecosystem, within the designated historic park, which is capable of the sustainable delivery of a wide range of public benefits in perpetuity, ensures that the nature conservation, landscape and historic environment are protected and enhanced across the park and maintains and enhances quality public access to provide a peaceful and pleasant setting for quiet informal recreational activities as befitting a public park. To achieve this, the woodland at Stanmer Park will be brought back into active economic management with the aim of sustainable production of timber and wood fuel through the application of sound silvicultural principles"**.

Objectives Similarly we object to the caveat of where possible in Objective 3. Given that the list of management activities, if properly implemented, will enhance the wood for wildlife, we cannot see why this qualification is needed. Stanmer Park is a LNR that sits within a National Park and a Biosphere, BHCC should be aiming for net gains to biodiversity. We also object to its use in Objective 5. As a public park, good access should be paramount to the management of the area. We

note that the prescriptions within this objective are very focussed on access within the woodland, rather than connections to the wider park. It must be recognised that the importance of the woodland is as part of the historic park, therefore we would welcome prescriptions about linking access in and out of the wood into the wider access network. We acknowledge that a lot of the context of the woodland is described in Section 4; however this does not seem to have been fed cohesively into the objectives or management strategy. For example it is noted that bats are likely to be within the woodland, but there is no consideration of flight lines out of the wood or how the proposed management may impact on these. If BHCC want to “protect and enhance biodiversity” there should be better integration of this plan into the management of the whole site. Similarly bringing the wood back into active management is an opportunity to address antisocial behaviour issues by formalising and more overtly managing areas such as mountain bike trails and other “woodland adventure” type projects. We note that this is mentioned in section 6, but again in a very isolated, limited manner. Overall SWT is concerned that because this plan does not fit within a wider strategy, it is not ambitious in its aims and will not maximise possible benefits. Please do not hesitate to contact me regarding any of the above points.

CPRE – Fully support

Brighton & Hove Wildlife Forum – Unsure Full comments available on request

Woodland Trust/ SDNPA – Fully support

Approve- but note that there are areas that we would like to see more info, and would welcome opportunities to work with the owner/manager.

This format of management plan provides a good summary, but leaves some areas lacking detail which would enable a more thorough assessment of the impacts of the management prescriptions. The UK Forestry Standard provides more detailed guidance on best practice and legal requirements and should be consulted for more information, not only for management planning guidance, but also for operational best practice too. Examples of the additional info that we would recommend producing would include:

- * **A fire plan** (produced in consultation with the Fire and Rescue Service)
- * **An integrated pest management plan**- which is kept under regular review to account for new pests and disease threats
- * **Historic Features plan**- which provides more detail on the cultural heritage features in the forest management unit, and more detail on any management prescriptions for them
- * **Landscape strategy**- which reviews any landscape sensitivity features and outlines management principles to ensure minimisation of landscape impact
- * **Water plan**- Which shows how forests and water guidelines, and ultimately the EU Water Framework Directive, will be met in regards to forest management planning, and during operations
- * **Longer term plan of operations**- while the plan of operations is useful for the short term, we would also recommend producing an outline 20 year plan, which would show more clearly how the vision would be met, and also how aspects such as climate change resilience or restructuring would actually work

Stanmer Preservation Society – Fully Support

I'm attaching the views of the SPS Committee here and hope you will include them in your considerations. We support the plan as a whole, with the addition of the following points:

Cyclists- As well as restricting cyclists to specific areas, we would like to see a ban on night-time cycling. This practice is really compromising wildlife - it is when nocturnal animals would be using the tracks. We also feel there needs to be active education of cyclists, so they understand not just where they can go but why.

Wildlife - The wildlife records state there are no amphibians but there are definitely frogs and toads in Stanmer. We would like to see specific areas set aside in order to give some species a chance to recover their numbers.

Protection of old trees - There is a horseshoe shaped planting of extremely old trees opposite the stable block up the steps to Plumpton - these need protecting.

Memorial trees by Old Lodge Clump -Please be aware that there are memorial trees planted here by SPS members - we can provide more details.

Dog walkers - We know of professional dog walkers who come to Stanmer with as many as ten dogs at a time. There needs to be a limit for the number of dogs any one professional walker can have.

We also believe there should be spot fines for any dog walkers dropping plastic poo bags or hanging them in trees.

Rubbish - We would like to see plans for managing litter in the woods.

Warden enforcement - We note that the success of much of the plan will depend on having a warden with resources to enforce it.

Further Comments

39 specific comments were received of which:

15 comments related to mountain biking and support for trails (4 of these were cut and pasted response so perhaps a concerted campaign), more support from council, single track routes and/or trails

7 comments were specifically relating to being positive about woodland management in general and the biodiversity gains from it.

4 comments related to the need for better management of access for all.

4 comments related to the problem of dog poo and the need for more dog bins and facilities.

3 comments were in support of segregation of mountain bike users to limited areas of the park.

2 Comments related to the need for better traffic management and car parking.

What happens next?

The Parks Projects Team and Miller Land Management will work to respond to comments made that can be incorporated into the plan before submitting it to the Forestry Commission for approval.

The amended document will be uploaded in the next week.

The comments made relating specifically to access and way finding have been addressed to a small extent here but will be submitted to the Stanmer Access and Movement Plan.