

## Throop and Holdenhurst Village Parish Council

### Update Report to Parish Council Members

#### The SANG/Stour Valley water meadows

THVC working group had a meeting with BCP Parks on 2nd May with Martin Whitchurch, Katie Azulay and Ciara to update on progress of the SANG, attended by Clerk, Chair, Cllr Julie Anne and naturalists Nick Dobbs and Guy Finucane.

The SANG is divided into four identifiable compartments:

- 1. The car park.** Vehicular entry to the SANG is via Taylor Drive with 20 car parking spaces and EV charging points. Pedestrian access into the woodland path. The distance between the carpark and the main dog exercising area in the water meadows is approximately 400 – 500m. This is indirect conflict with the Heathland mitigation requirement that a dog should be able to roam free from the carpark, but this SANG was deemed an 'exceptional circumstance amongst many exceptional circumstances' in the planning application. Security: front gates locked nightly. No work started
- 2. The linear woodland footpath** is parallel to a Taylor Drive and has access from the car park. The path exits from its northly entrance onto Taylor Drive. Security : none, access 24/7. No work started
- 3. Crossing public Highways** Visitors and dogs cross Taylor Drive at this point which has limited visual ability to access the pavement on the opposite side of the road, proceed north to Throop Road and then a pavement to the entry to the water meadows section. Security: none, access 24/7. No work started. Required liaison BCP with Highways for road markings and pedestrian arrangements.
- 4. The water meadows** are accessed by a footpath from Throop Road. The main water meadow area is the largest section of the SANG for recreational and dog walking purposes. RDAA (Ringwood and District Angling Association) own the Riparian rights to the river and 8m of riverbank. There is no public or dog access to this area. Security: none. Access 24/7 Unaddressed dangers of anti-social behaviour/ litter/ dog poo etc . Hard surface paths progressing

THVC is delighted that BCP have agreed that the SANG will be called Stour Valley water meadows which will from now on be adopted for all purposes, including noticeboards, all publicity and advertng both printed and electronic.

It was noted that an additional £280,000 had been allocated by Executive Order for the Development of the SANG bringing the total CIL funding to £900K. This was necessitated after the withdrawal of the strategic cycle highway which had been financial supported through the Transforming Cities fund.

#### Security issues

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THVC expressed great concern about security issues with only the car park being locked , and the sections of the woodland walk and water meadows have completely unfettered access 24/7 which will bring security issues / increase in anti-social behaviour, litter, dog poo etc These issues need addressing urgently.

### **Construction Works progress**

The contractors have started on the pathways on the water meadows. From the previous joint meeting the contractors anticipated that there would be no more than 30 HGV movements over the 2-month construction period, This was reached within the first couple of days of the contract with numerous heavy vehicles rumbling through the Conservation area. The path was contracted to be extended by rolling over the newly laid structure. However, due to supply chain issues of the contractor, this hasn't happened, and all the heavy machinery has been using Throop Road instead shaking several listed building to their foundations. We are not sure whether the gas leak reported has been aggravated by this constant heavy-duty machinery, but this has caused considerable upset and inconvenience to the residents .

The next phase is the car park construction and BCP said they would be in touch with the immediate neighbours ahead of time, but with work starting shortly, contact has yet to be made.

BCP has suggested a soft opening 'we will open the gates and see what happens' of the water meadows part of the sang at the beginning of June. THVC stated that this was totally unacceptable. The planning application had the opening in August. The Clerk has written to the planning authorities asking that BCP stick to the legal opening schedule.

### **Ecological survey**

The lack of progress of the promised ecological baseline testing was most disappointing. There is a real danger of this work not being done at all. This is a local tragedy. A Freedom of Information request has been made for the financials of the project - there is still good funds available for ecological surveying since 9th March 2022, but so far BCP has chosen not to spend it. As time passes the seasonal surveying is lost forever. If dogs have access onto the water meadows from the proposed early opening of the water meadows on 1st June, then it will be the widespread destruction of wildlife, probably leading to local extinctions. This is very regrettable especially as of the 500 objections to the SANG many expressed concerns about the wildlife and loss of habitat, but BCP appear to be ignoring these legitimate concerns expressed through the planning application.