



## MINUTES

**MEETING NAME: Bracknell Forest Nature Partnership**

**DATE AND TIME: 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2024 10:00 – 12:00 Time Square**

### PRESENT:

Rosie Lear (chair)	Bracknell Forest Council Biodiversity Officer	RL
Charlie McNish	Bracknell Forest Council Lead Ranger	CM
Michael Norton	Bracknell Conservation Volunteers (BCVs)	MN
Malcolm Hawkes	Wildlife in Ascot	MH
Sheila Collings	Warfield Environment Group, Climate Change & Biodiversity Working Group	SC
Michael Brossard	Sandhurst Town Councillor	MB
Gill Cheetham	Bracknell Forest Natural History Society	GC
Mike Coker	Binfield Environment Group, Survey sub-group, Binfield Churches Eco-church project	MC
Purveen Hira	Binfield Parish Council	PH
Diane Collins	Easthampstead Living Churchyard	DC
Caroline Pragnell	Involve Green & Active	CP

### APOLOGIES:

Chris Kersley	Hedge and Woodland Conservationists
Ian Evans	Bracknell Town Council
Holly Gray	BBOWT
Paul Adkins	Wild Bracknell, Climate Change & Biodiversity Working Group
Cllr Guy Gillbe	Bracknell Forest Council Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Countryside

### MINUTES:

<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome and introductions</b>	
	<p>The meeting was chaired by Rosie Lear, Biodiversity Officer, Bracknell Forest Council. The minutes for the meeting will go on BFC website with names and organisations of attendees and apologies – if any issues please let RL know.</p> <p>RL taking minutes this time too. MN requested that a separate minute-taker is included in future meetings, and that discussions are captured more fully in minutes.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> RL to organise minute-taker to re-join for future meetings.</p>	

<b>2.</b>	<b>Actions from minutes of the last meeting</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RL to finish collating BAP 2018-2023 progress – complete – discussed in next section</li> <li>• Ongoing actions regarding letting Rangers know about owl boxes, opportunities to have group information on local site notice boards, and availability of SANG leaflets – still ongoing, get in touch with RL if needed, but will remove from action list now.</li> <li>• RL to share BAP consultation link – complete – thank you to all who contributed. To be discussed further in next section.</li> <li>• RL to share draft update template – complete, no further feedback. Now updated to align with new targets. To be discussed further in next section.</li> <li>• Set up surveying sub-group – complete, to be discussed later in the meeting.</li> <li>• RL to discuss green infrastructure plans with planning policy team – included as a target in BAP to review, bring together and improve plans. New Green Infrastructure Manager has just started, to be invited to next meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MH raised the importance of green corridors, and queried why this has been lost from the BAP.</li> <li>- RL - It will be considered under the target to review and bring together green infrastructure plans.</li> <li>- MN questioned the wording 'Green infrastructure' and what was meant by it.</li> <li>- It is a phrase used to describe all the green spaces and green features which provide benefits for people - <a href="https://www.tcpa.org.uk/what-is-green-infrastructure/">What is Green Infrastructure? - Town and Country Planning Association (tcpa.org.uk)</a>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>All</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Biodiversity Action Plan</b>	<b>RL/ All</b>
	<p><b>a) Final update on progress against previous plan</b></p> <p>Interim figures were shown and discussed at the BAP workshop this time last year. Since been gathering final updates and putting into a document similar to the mid-term review. This will be shared with the minutes of the meeting. Thank you to everyone for all your work and for providing figures. An overall summary graph was shown – some progress on over 80% of targets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MH noted that the number achieved is only a third and there are a number that have been dropped or not achieved.</li> <li>- Group discussion - this is recognised and will be reflected on, but also that there were a number of targets which were difficult to make progress on. Previously targets were allocated specifically to partners, so some partners only worked on the ones with their name next to. The new version has more flexibility in suggesting partners more broadly to contribute to targets. GC reflected as could be good or bad, as people can decide to opt in or out to various targets. Further discussion on planning work and tracking action in next section.</li> <li>- MN raised concerns that BCV's work often does not have enough of a biodiversity focus, and about the use of pond liners and tree guards. Would like to do more work like the creation of dams to create wetland areas as this has been very successful. The BCVs have had a meeting with Alan Wilson (Green Infrastructure Delivery Manager) and CM noted the concerns raised. The refreshed Biodiversity Action Plan should help provide a steer for work.</li> </ul>	

	<p><b>b) Next steps for BAP document</b></p> <p>RL updated group on design work – it is recognised that this was important from consultation feedback, but it was simpler to get approval on text only, so now the next step is to work on design. The aim is to have some printed copies available. Please use following links to see the documents for now as these have the finalised wording for the targets:  <a href="#">BAP 2024-2029 Full Plan.pdf (bracknell-forest.gov.uk)</a>  <a href="#">BAP 2024-2029 Summary.pdf (bracknell-forest.gov.uk)</a></p> <p><b>c) Discussion – suggestions for improving how we plan action and track progress against targets</b></p> <p><i>Tracking updates</i></p> <p>RL shared proposed update template on screen. See attached with minutes.  <b>Action:</b> RL will share with minutes, <b>all partners</b> to please complete for Jan – Oct 2024. Going forwards it will typically be 6 monthly updates in line with these meetings. Request to partners to please give figures whenever possible, though please do include written descriptions too, as needed, to describe the work undertaken. Within the ‘other’ box partners are welcome to include works which don’t neatly fit with targets, so we can share knowledge and achievements. MN requested that bogs/wetlands be added to examples of habitat improvement work  <b>Action:</b> RL to amend before sending out. This has already been actioned, with wetlands added to the examples under the habitat work section.</p> <p>RL showed spreadsheet she will be using to track updates against targets. Updates will be transferred into spreadsheet and will allow running totals to be calculated for relevant targets. The spreadsheet will allow RL to pull out all the figures for an organisation so we can more easily check them when we come to mid-term and end-of-term review. The spreadsheet will also be used to keep a rough track of planned upcoming work.</p> <p><i>Planning</i></p> <p>MC – BEG has a yearly schedule of work which tends to repeat each year. In summer focus on walks and talks, in winter on habitat works (other groups agreed they have a similar approach). Feel they would benefit from feedback from the council and other groups on how they can better support BAP targets and identify opportunities to link across with the work of other groups and across parish boundaries. Discussion about how it would be useful to share information and knowledge eg. best sources of seeds or trees, or tips on how to grow from local seed sources.</p> <p>MN – BCVs are keen to trial ‘tiny forests’. Suggest that they could deliver the installation work to keep the cost down. A few years ago there was discussion about creating a tiny forest at Cabbage Hill – CM will look into further. CP suggested it may be similar to Hügelkultur which is another technique for growing in small areas with increased water retention.</p> <p>MC – BEG considering getting a bowser to help with watering trees, and considering options for local people to adopt trees</p> <p>CM – Bracknell Forest Council are planning to join a scheme called Trees for Streets (formal decision to take place later this month). This will allow sponsorship of tree planting, with option for residents/groups involved to water trees themselves or pay for the council to water.</p> <p>PH – maintenance is always the challenge with tree planting, and making sure the right tree is planted for the conditions such as the soil type.</p>	
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	<p>MN – BCVs built a cage around the Wollemi Pine at Lily Hill Park and it is doing really well, could we do something similar again? GC – there is a plan to do further work at the top of Lily Hill Park. Would be working to take it back to similar to original planting so may not be able to plant Wollemi Pine. The Natural History Society is offering to help but timescales are not yet known.</p> <p>Overall view regarding planning for BAP activity is that groups would like some direction, particularly from the council, and then opportunities to discuss and share knowledge.</p> <p>This was followed by a discussion about the capability spreadsheet which was compiled a few years ago. This is a way to share information about different groups skills, equipment etc. Challenge is how to share and keep it up-to-date as council systems do not readily allow sharing with a wide group. Compromise agreed for now is RL will keep a central version up-to-date, and will include it as an attachment on communications around each these 6-monthly meetings, partners can add/edit and send back and RL to update the central version.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> RL to keep central version up-to-date, <b>all partners</b> to send back any updates. Finally, RL apologised for not sending advanced notice a month ahead for this meeting but will do as usual in future. At this point, if partners have suggestions for things they would like to discuss then please do ask for them to be added to the agenda.</p>	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Presentation from surveying sub-group</b>	<b>MK</b>
	<p>Group formed since last meeting. Has met 3 times, combination of in person and online.</p> <p>MC presented an update from the sub-group. See attached slides, and as a summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sub-group created to assist with goal 2 of the Climate and Biodiversity Working Group - <i>to monitor biodiversity and ecology over time to measure the effects of climate change and our interventions</i></li> <li>• So far group has: promoted iRecord, promoted BFC's wildlife surveying pages <a href="https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/parks-and-countryside/wildlife-and-biodiversity/wildlife-surveying">https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/parks-and-countryside/wildlife-and-biodiversity/wildlife-surveying</a>, drafted a calendar of citizen science projects to promote, supported new BAP by identifying data sources that can be used for monitoring BAP species</li> <li>• Findings so far include: TVERC data good quality but subject to delays due to validation processes; data from other organisations may be more complete but methodologies vary; transect surveys produce good data but may not have complete geographical coverage and can be difficult to access; National Biodiversity Network covers all species groups and contains historical data, but latest data is typically two years or more old; iRecord is easy to use, has good geographical coverage, but can contain dubious data.</li> <li>• Recommendations so far are: to get people involved in surveying by promoting citizen science projects, iRecord and BFC pages; to encourage those who want to do more to get involved in the appropriate surveying for their favourite BAP priority species</li> <li>• Now starting to look in more detail at the data for specific BAP species (starting with Silver-studded Blue butterflies – gathering information from people with local knowledge and different data sources)</li> <li>• Appendix 1 of slides shows proposed calendar of citizen science projects through the year. <b>Action:</b> RL to get this added to BFC surveying pages before new year, <b>other groups</b> to promote where appropriate to their work.</li> </ul>	

	<p>Question raised - Why is there a delay within the TVERC data? MC – due to the verification process they go through and the volume of data and data sources they deal with.</p> <p>MN - Are there any fungi surveys going on? MC – TVERC does take fungi records. RL – there is a group going out to do surveys at two sites this autumn. MN - interesting fungi found at Wykery Copse a few years ago which was feeding on the sap from the Field Maple Trees.</p> <p>RL - There are different ways to send data to TVERC. Ad hoc records may be best via iRecord but for larger or more frequent surveys it is suggested to use their spreadsheet. Link available from BFC webpage above, or go direct to <a href="https://www.tverc.org">Share your records   Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (tverc.org)</a>. If you are sending a spreadsheet in and feel it has an important record which needs to be reviewed as a priority you can let TVERC know in the covering email.</p> <p>MN - Stag beetle loggeries – BCVs have been putting them in but do we know if they are working? Would be good to share learning on what works well. MC – have seen success at a site in Binfield. RL – stag beetle hunt is on the calendar for citizen science projects for promotion, more records in this scheme can help us understand where they are currently.</p> <p>SC - As part of the survey sub-group work, RL has started putting together a table of surveys which are known to take place, split down by the BAP habitat groupings. Could this be shared to allow all groups to add to it and also identify gaps that could be filled? <b>Action:</b> RL will look into adding this to the capabilities spreadsheet discussed earlier.</p>	
<b>5.</b>	<b>Update from Climate &amp; Biodiversity Working Group</b>	<b>PA &amp; SC</b>
	<p>Group has met 3 times. Due to meet in August but unable to go ahead.</p> <p>Survey sub-group has been a big outcome so far, with lots of work in this area.</p> <p>Group has defined goals, and is now considering projects to develop further – projects need to have both a biodiversity and climate change focus.</p> <p>Members attended the Climate Summit, with two of the group leading a session on biodiversity.</p> <p>Group plans to relaunch in October but needs volunteers to assist with running.</p>	
<b>6.</b>	<b>Updates from partners</b>	<b>All</b>
	<p><i>Note: Some partners sent updates by email, as indicated.</i></p> <p><b>Warfield Environment Group</b>  <i>Updated in person, and provided following notes by email</i>  Activity since last meeting on 28 March 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual newt survey – Newt Reserve, Warfield. Great crested newts present.</li> <li>• Litter picks with 2<sup>nd</sup> Bracknell Beavers – Whitegrove and Bullbrook.</li> <li>• Verge surveys, early (May/June) and late (July) – Harvest Ride at junctions with All Saints Rise, Jigs Lane South and Harvest Hill. Over 300 records in total which will be uploaded to TVERC database. Highlights – pyramidal orchid has appeared alongside bee orchids, BFC will now meadow-cut (i.e. once/year) the full length of eastern side of Harvest Ride between Whitegrove roundabout and Sheppee roundabout (approx. 800m).</li> <li>• Warfield Village Fete (stall) – recruited 10 new members.</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BCT bat field survey – Jealott’s Hill transect.</li> <li>• BCT bat waterways survey – Bull Brook, Warfield. Highlight – first Daubenton’s bat recorded on Bull Brook since started surveying in 2021.</li> <li>• Annual bat walk – Westmorland Park. 42 attendees.</li> </ul> <p>Events/activities for remainder of 2024 (see also <a href="http://warfieldenvgroup.wordpress.com">warfieldenvgroup.wordpress.com</a>):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sow yellow rattle on verges once cut – date(s) tbc.</li> <li>• Nest box maintenance – October, date(s) tbc.</li> <li>• Hedge planting at Larks Hill – November, date(s) tbc.</li> </ul> <p>Main update above was followed by some discussion in the meeting:  CP - Verge improvements and changes in management – could we do all over the borough? SC – there are challenges around differing opinions on mowing. However, the WEG verges have not been subject to any complaints. WEG have put up signs and the management does involve mowing a strip at the edge to provide a neater edge.  SC &amp; MC discussed swift screaming parties seen in Warfield – aim next year to work out where they are nesting.</p> <p><b><u>Wild Bracknell</u></b>  <i>Update provided by email</i></p> <p><b>General activities</b>  Our facebook group continues to grow since it was founded in February 2024 with 1433 members as of today.  The most popular activity is sharing excellent photos of wildlife. We intersperse this with advice on what to do if you find injured wildlife, projects for the garden and updates on our larger projects, which are detailed below.  The group are involved in regular litter picking in Crown Wood, Harmans Water and Priestwood.</p> <p><b>Water Quality</b>  Our main activity over the past 6 months has been watercourse pollution surveys, in partnership with the Bracknell Forest Natural History Society. 12 volunteers have been trained on the ZSL/Rivers Trust Outfall Safari and we have mapped and recorded pollution levels across two thirds of our northern watercourses – the Cut and its tributaries. We also plan to survey the Blackwater along the borough boundary and its tributaries.  We took part in the Big River Watch (2 locations) and Earthwatch Waterblitz (7 locations including 2 Sewage Treatment Works).  The WaSP continuous water quality monitoring programme is ready to start, we have obtained funding for chemical test kits for four common pollutants. Volunteers should be trained by the end of October. We will monitor at selected locations on a monthly basis matching Environment Agency (EA) methodology and also more frequently at hotspots.  The EA has published guidelines for Citizen Science which we are following to ensure that the data we collect is accepted as valid.  Our local MP Bracknell Peter Swallow is supporting these pollution projects and has asked for us to send him the datasets to follow up on.</p> <p><b>Biodiversity Surveys</b></p>	
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	<p>We conducted a total of 13 NBMP bat surveys in July and August within a 15 mile radius. Across the borough there were 5 field surveys and 4 waterway surveys. Two of these surveys were run with local groups in Maidenhead and Cookham to enable them to get started and take over these sites next year. Survey results in Bracknell Forest indicate that rural bat populations are stable whilst urban areas have seen a steady decline for the past two years.</p> <p><b>Climate change</b></p> <p>Some of the water quality monitoring relates to climate change due to higher rainfall leading to increased frequency of discharges of untreated sewage. This is one of our focusses.</p> <p>We are at the planning stage for projects aimed at adapting to climate change such as creating ponds and wetlands.</p> <p><b><u>Involve Green &amp; Active</u></b></p> <p><i>Updated in person</i></p> <p>Continue to support groups and will be looking at BAP and ways volunteers can support delivery.</p> <p>Volunteers will be interested in surveys so if there are surveys that could be added to the event calendar then let CP know.</p> <p>Growing numbers of corporate volunteers, working on ideas on how best to utilise these groups.</p> <p>SC - What size groups? CP - Recently had a group of 104 doing a variety of jobs at South Hill Park, sometimes 3 or 4, average numbers usually 15-20.</p> <p>Hoping to work with the Business Climate Change Working Group. It will be helpful to be able to show that the work goes towards targets such as those in the BAP.</p> <p><b><u>Wildlife in Ascot</u></b></p> <p><i>Updated in person, and provided following notes by email</i></p> <p>This is our BFC work, plus RBWM but not listed here.</p> <p>Continue our regular conservation work;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Ascot Heath junior school wildlife garden. Boosted by corporate group via Involve in July. Plan to replace perished pond liner in November.</li> <li>2) Carnation Hall pollinator patch. Autumn maintenance in October.</li> <li>3) We will have a session with Joe Lo in October at Blackmoor Pond – not done any work there for a couple of years.</li> </ol> <p>Continue our usual surveys/walks;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Trees – we upload to TVERC. Feel we have just about exhausted our patch, after nearly 10 years and of order 1,000 trees, hence we are open to other recording with guidance, especially if helps achieve some BAP targets.</li> <li>2) Water quality – Blackmoor pond.</li> <li>3) Bats – various locations</li> <li>4) Small mammals – Mill Ride golf course.</li> <li>5) Dawn chorus bird walk.</li> <li>6) Trial moth ID session, thanks to Rob Solomon.</li> </ol> <p>Attended a couple of local fetes over Summer.</p> <p>We have had good written publicity in local free magazines;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Your local “Ascot &amp; Sunninghill” issue 1 – 2 page article.</li> <li>2) Winkfield Parish Council magazine had article on Pollinator patch.</li> <li>3) Regular monthly article in Village Life - Ascot edition.</li> </ol>	
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<p><b><u>Easthampstead Living Churchyard</u></b></p> <p><i>Updated in person</i></p> <p>Yellow rattle has worked well in one patch in weakening the more dominant grasses, now working to spread it further across the wildflower area which was seeded but hasn't taken well.</p> <p>Long-term records of wildflowers in the churchyard, plan to send to TVERC.</p> <p>Held a bat survey event, identified mainly Pipistrelles and Daubenton's. Children joined the event and really enjoyed it.</p> <p>Wild Service Tree given to group but not able to find a home for it in the churchyard. DC &amp; GC to discuss, otherwise Rangers will plant in Church Hill Park.</p> <p><b><u>Bracknell Forest Natural History Society</u></b></p> <p><i>Updated in person</i></p> <p>Successful Orchid Ramble event – records will be shared with TVERC.</p> <p>50 year celebrations taking place this year, including planting a Whitebeam at South Hill Park on 23<sup>rd</sup> October.</p> <p>Heritage Lottery Fund are looking back to previous projects to celebrate achievements, BFNHS have discussed the 2007 project at Clintons Hill and hope that this will be included.</p> <p>BFNHS provided a grant for water quality measuring equipment.</p> <p>The Nature Partnership summer site visit was held at Nightingale Triangle and led by the BFNHS, this was a success.</p> <p><b><u>Binfield Environment Group</u></b></p> <p><i>Updated in person, and provided following notes by email</i></p> <p>Over the spring and summer, Binfield Environment Group have led walks, given talks, picked litter and continued to conduct surveys in six of the parish's green-spaces. Led walks included a celebration of local hedgerows and a butterfly walk which was very popular with children and families from a local nursery. Talks included an exploration of local nature in the context of local history and geography.</p> <p>Other highlights of the last six months included: working with BFC to fit a swift call generator to the Blue Mountain Community Hub building; and supporting the Binfield Churches Eco-church project. Two activities that have come out of the later collaboration are: establishing a church-yards butterfly survey (using Butterfly Conservation's methodology); and promoting simple lifestyle changes that can help address the climate and nature crises.</p> <p><b><u>Binfield Parish Council</u></b></p> <p><i>Updated in person</i></p> <p>Over summer have been maintaining the 14 fruit trees planted at allotment site, though due to weather conditions this year have not needed much watering! Hope that over the next couple of years will start to see fruit bearing trees. Also maintaining the new bee hives at this site.</p> <p>Working with BEG at Foxley Fields to look at opportunities for further tree planting and biodiversity works.</p> <p>Also undertaking regular events including guerilla gardening and litter picks.</p> <p><b><u>Bracknell Forest Council</u></b></p> <p><i>Updated in person</i></p> <p>Wildflower meadow management cuts recently completed for this year.</p>	
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<p>Wetland works recently taking place at Nine Mile Ride following rhododendron management.</p> <p>Two awards received recently:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bees Needs award from Defra for work including wildflower grassland management, bee bank creation, bee hives and community engagement</li> <li>- Buckler's Forest was named as The Land Trust's Best Nature Site.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Bracknell Town Council</u></b></p> <p><i>Update provided by email</i></p> <p><b>Veteran trees:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Veteran tree protection from compaction from mower: Creating bark mulch circles around our trees. I have been in touch with the woodland trust and they have advised to leave other veteran trees overgrown which prevents people getting near them if possible.</li> </ul> <p>We will be looking into any treatment we can give them pending budgets. Such as air and nutrient injection into the root systems.</p> <p>Also, we will have a tree survey carried out for any tree maintenance required on them.</p> <p><b>Wetland management:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wetland management at North lake is now rescheduled for 15<sup>th</sup> October using a company called Aqua science. Work planning is to the remove reeds in the lake and self-sets to prevent the balancing pond from reverting back to a copse. All green waste is going to be mulched and spread in the local woods rather than grab lorries. Which reduces cost and is used for localised mulch.</li> <li>• Phase two of these works has just been agreed pending purchase orders and weather conditions. This is to use machinery to clear and thin out the woods surrounding the wetland, which has become congested with self-sets. We plan on removing the root systems as well which will all be mulched with large machinery and used locally as a mulch around some veteran oaks and in the local woods, which have an abundant of invasives such as laurel and Rhodos. Which pending budget I am hoping will be phase three of the works in the area.</li> </ul> <p><b>Re-wilding: (Locations yet to be agreed)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have agreed to trial some of our park's grass cutting differently in line with no mow may. The permitter grass will be cut differently in 2025 and leave any grass to grow long around the edges of any woodland in 3 stages.</li> </ul> <p>Which would include re-wilding in the woodland and left to grow for the season. We have to manage this each winter to retain safety of our woods for residents.</p> <p>Along the edges of the woodland for one-two metres will be left long which will give hedgehogs and smaller mammals some safe highways to travel through.</p> <p>We have signed up to support the hedgehog society and have placed stickers on some of our power equipment warning the team to check long grass before they trim and cut. We hope that leaving some perimeter grass long we will give them some cover and also give some long grass areas for insects but also recognise that we cannot not cut our amenity grass parks due to not being practical and unsightly.</p>	
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	We have had a biodiversity report completed on some of our sites which we have been advised on future beneficial works which I will update you on when we have organised this into planning stage.	
<b>7.</b>	<b>Any other business</b>	
<b>8.</b>	<b>Plans for next meeting</b>	<b>RL</b>
	<p>Next meeting dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 27<sup>th</sup> March 2025, 10am – midday, Function Room at Time Square</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2025, 10am – midday, Function Room at Time Square</li> </ul>	