

THE NATURE RESERVE WORKING GROUP (NRWG)

REPORT FOR BORDEN PARISH COUNCIL - AUGUST 2025

The NRWG met on 7th August 2025: In attendance were: Cllr Boland and Cllr Butlin

The following matters were discussed:

1. Nature Reserve security bollards

At their meeting on 17th July 25 (item 71bii), the parish council agreed to write to KCC as the Nature Reserve landowner, requesting that they supply and install telescopic bollards at the Cryalls Lane main entrance to deter unauthorised vehicles, as they may also have the option of using the s.106 funding that is allocated to them, and trusted contractors that could carry out the installation. As requested, the Clerk sent the information on the telescopic bollards researched already.

Since the NRWG meeting on 12th August 25, KCC responded to confirm that they have an agreement to get a quote for the purchase and installation of 3 drop-down security posts inside the gate of the Nature reserve, which they will be looking to get this week.

2. Friends of Borden Nature Reserve (FoBNR)

FoBNR in an email received on 15th July 2025, suggested that they transfer £2000 (SBC grant funding) to the parish council for the Nature Reserve byelaw signs.

The Clerk responded to advise that they would need to follow the grant's T&C's, as it is normally the grant recipient who is responsible for grant reporting, and SBC would be best placed to give advice on this.

3. KCC tree survey of the Nature Reserve

The tree survey includes an estimate for remedial work of £8545, for Ash and Small Leaf Lime trees (for references see Appx 1), but it is unclear if this is something that KCC will look to pay or is expected of the parish council.

These key observations were noted in the report (for references see Appx 1):

- Tree failure risk is low overall, except for G001 (due to historic management).
- G001 and G002 require pollarding every 5–6 years to prevent failure.
- Adjacent site development could increase risk, depending on use and footfall.
- Woodland regeneration dominated by Ash and Sycamore; natural competition means some trees will not survive.
- Disease risks: Ash Dieback and Sooty Bark Disease – potentially costly to manage.
- KCC Recommendation: The lease will require a management plan, including a ride network to improve access for works and inspections, and to enhance biodiversity (habitat for ground-nesting birds).
- Funding support may be available through Countryside Stewardship grants; specialist advice is recommended.

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The inspector's comments were reviewed, and the following observations were noted:

➤ **Adjacent development:**

The inspector noted that changes to access caused by the development on the adjacent site (Rugby pitch) could increase risk to the tree line. The extent of this risk will depend on how the land within two tree lengths of the row will be used and the level of footfall. Further clarification is needed on what these access changes will look like and how they might impact the site's risk.

➤ **Funding Concerns:**

The Parish Council has consistently stated that there are insufficient funds to implement a management plan without placing an unsustainable burden on future budgets and increasing the precept. The following figures illustrate the scale of cost pressures:

- **Woodland remedial works (current per report):** £8,545 – around 10% of the total annual budget.
- **Tree pollarding (2023/24):** £8,800, with some quotes reaching nearly £20,000.
- **Bollards** – Costs to be met by KCC.
- **Byelaw signs** – Additional costs to be met.
- **Fencing costs** (A SBC grant of £9546.75 was secured towards these costs):
 - £7,196 spent in 2022.
 - £4,493 quoted for fencing along the Borden Lane side (still uncompleted, with current costs likely to have increased).
- **Other general maintenance** – ongoing.
- **Legal costs for lease renewal** – Additional cost to be met as stipulated in the council's risk register.

- Does the parish council consider that KCC's management plan is suitable to maintain and develop wildlife habitat on the site?
- How will those responsible for management do so within the management plan, given the likely increased use and type of use as a result of development?
- What would working with potential partners look like? There is uncertainty as to what a satisfactory partnership would be.

4. To summarise:

The challenge in the long run is:

Does the parish council have the appetite, financial resources and capacity, even if working with Kent Trust or another partner, to commit to the lease renewal for the next 20 years? and is the parish council the best organisation to manage a KCC owned Nature reserve?

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5. Options for consideration:

So that a response can be given to KCC, the parish council is asked to consider the following options at their August 2025 meeting:

- 1) Confirm to KCC that the parish council want to preserve the Nature Reserve but would struggle to do so and suggest a contribution towards its preservation, but that KCC find another partner to work with in continuing the Nature Reserve as an open space.
- 2) Explore what the real cost would be over x amount of years, including the legal costs of renewing the lease, as stipulated in the council risk register.
- 3) Explore the possibility of working with KCC and Kent Trust for Nature Conservation or another suitable partner to carry out their management plan.
- 4) Withdraw from the Nature Reserve, and do not renew the lease agreement.
- 5) Confirm that a representation from the NRWG can meet face-to-face with KCC (at their request). This is likely to be Monday and Tuesday mornings from 13th October 25

Appx 1

