



## The Lynchmere Society



*This beautiful photograph by Peter Searight of spring sunshine on Lynchmere Common would not have been possible twenty years ago before our programme of heathland restoration.*

### **Environmental Funding**

**Mark Allery**

The Lynchmere Commons is one of the largest remaining lowland heath sites in Sussex – a habitat that has largely been lost over the last 50 years, and the Ridgecap fields, being traditional flower meadows and pastures, are an equally rare and important natural resource – particularly for wild flowers and the pollinators that feed upon them. Unfortunately the funding to maintain these sites does not grow upon trees – if it did we would have no shortage of funds!

Almost all of the Society's continuing maintenance and restoration of the Lynchmere Commons and Ridgecap meadows and fields is paid for by DEFRA and Natural England with funding from the EU. As you might imagine, there is currently much uncertainty and confusion over how long the current EU funding for the upkeep of the Commons and fields will remain in place. There is an equal level of uncertainty over how such programmes will be delivered in future, and the level of funding that will be



available. The only thing of which I am quite certain is that it will change – and it's not very likely to rise! All of which makes it increasingly hard to predict the level of income for the Society's environmental management work.

For the last ten years the Society has held a Higher Level Environmental Stewardship grant, administered by Natural England, which has funded most of the scrub and tree management, habitat management and scrapes and other environmental features on the Commons. These Stewardship grants are not made based upon the amount of land owned – but are awarded strictly on tight environmental criteria and require a lot of work to meet all the desired environmental outcomes which are monitored by Natural England advisors.

The grant was due to run out in January but with no replacement programme available DEFRA have decided to offer extensions for Sites that meet the criteria. The Society has been awarded an extension of up to 4 years - (if the funding remains available) – which is subject to us carrying out the tree, scrub and bracken work specified by Natural England and will allow us to continue the work of maintaining and restoring the heathland areas of the Commons.

### **Bracken Control**

**Judy Rous**

These pictures taken in the last week of April show two open areas where the bracken has been completely cleared during the past three years with the help of our excellent volunteers. Some people feel that this is not really helping to "restore the heathland" - said to be "rarer than rainforest". Looking closely at the cleared ground, among the grasses and moss, already the three different species of heather plants are re-appearing - bell heather, crossed-leaved heath and ling - as well as the large gorse, which is too keen to take over, and the small gorse, which is less invasive and less common, but fairly plentiful here. There are also other heathland plants such as heath bedstraw and cinquefoil. So the work brings results! Anyone who wants to join in this summer, please do get in touch.



*Views of the Little Common showing how some areas are now bracken-free, thanks to some marvellous Volunteers!*