

Minutes of the Meeting of the EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 24 March 2025

PRESENT -

Councillor Steven McCormick (Chair); Simon Durrant (Epsom Downs Racecourse), Councillor Bernice Froud, Sarah Rayfield (British Horse Society), Alex Stewart (Epsom Downs Riders Protection Society) and Nigel Whybrow (Training Grounds Management Board)

In Attendance: Jim Allen (Epsom Downs Racecourse), Caroline Baldock (Epsom Equestrian Conservation Team), Jane Clarke (Woodcote Epsom Residents' Society (WERS)), Nick Lock (Epsom Civic Society), and Roger Marples (EDMAC)

Absent: Richard Balsdon (College Ward Residents' Association), Bob Eberhard (Epsom and Ewell Cycle Action Group), Nick Harrison (Tattenham & Preston Residents' Association) and James Vincenti (Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club)

Officers present: Samantha Whitehead (Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare), Sarah Clift (Senior Countryside Officer) and Phoebe Batchelor (Democratic Services Officer)

7 TRIBUTE TO PHILIPPA INGLEBY

The Chair paid tribute to Philippa Ingleby, who sadly passed away in March of this year.

The Chair expressed thanks for all the hard work Philippa did in initiating and developing the Epsom Downs Hack Riders Community Group and shared she will be greatly missed. These comments were echoed by the Committee.

The Committee observed a minute's silence in memory of Philippa.

8 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee held on 14 October 2024 were agreed as a true record and the Chair was authorised to sign them.

9 COMMITTEE ACTION TRACKER

The Committee received a report presenting an update on the Committee Action Tracker.

The following matters were discussed:

- a) **Condition of Hack Canter Ride.** The Chair explained that a site visit and meeting had taken place between relevant parties and the solution agreed upon is to move the hack canter ride. Nigel Whybrow confirmed that the work is scheduled to be done. The Chair stated that this would remain on the action tracker and be updated on at the next meeting.
- b) **Noticeboards on the Downs.** The Chair informed the Committee that he had met with the Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare in January to discuss the updates to the content proofs. The Chair explained that the final proof will be shared to Committee Members and Invited Representatives. The Chair stated that the final proof will be shared by the end of March 2025. The Chair explained once the proof is agreed, they will be sent off to print and put up on the boards as soon as possible. The EDMAC representative explained that an EDMAC noticeboard was removed last June and has only just been returned. The EDMAC representative requested that in future when the boards are moved, please can they be returned as soon as possible. The Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare noted the comment. The Epsom Civic Society representative asked if the noticeboard content would be put on the front and back of the boards or just the front. The comment was due to the back of the boards current displaying the byelaws using a sticky back plastic material, which was not working well. The Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare stated that they would look at getting the byelaws printed onto a more durable material. The WERs representative asked if volunteers were needed to help with the maintenance of the noticeboards. The Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare noted the comment and agreed to get the Downkeepers to check all the boards and clean off any graffiti.
- c) **Spoil Heaps.** The Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare explained it has been a joint effort between Operational Services and the Jockey Club to begin clearing up the spoil heaps and fly tipping, that had accumulated in the top car park. The Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare explained that it is a work in progress, but the site is becoming clearer. The Chair acknowledged Nigel Whybrow's hard work on reallocating the materials in the spoil heap. The Epsom Civic Society asked what is happening with the other spoil heaps, not in the top car park. Nigel Whybrow explained that the spoil heap on Ebbisham Lane, is a project that is currently happening, and the soil will go onto the ruts along the tree line and be used. The Chair stated an update on all spoil heaps will be provided at the next meeting.
- d) **Oak Trees.** The Chair explained that a location has been agreed, and funding has been secured for six trees. The funding is being provided by the Epsom Tree Advisory Board and the Business Improvement District. The Chair stated the trees will be ordered shortly and then planted early April. The Chair expressed thanks to Epsom TAB and BID for the funding.

- e) **Ice Cream Van.** The Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare informed the Committee that the Ice Cream Van has been resituated in the Downskeepers' Car Park as of the 24th of March. The Chair expressed thanks to The Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare and lead Downskeeper for their working on organising this.
- f) **Toilets on the Downs.** The Chair explained there is still not budget but it will be kept on the Action Tracker so an update can be provided if some funding can be identified. The EDMAC representative asked if the toilets would be permanent or temporary. The Chair stated that they would be permanent facilities if the project was to be able to be funded and move forward.
- g) **Fibre Sand Gallop.** Nigel Whybrow informed the Committee that they have done what they can. The Chair stated that this item could be closed.
- h) **Resurfacing of Hack Track.** The Chair stated that this item has been dealt with and can be closed.
- i) **Events on the Downs.** The Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare informed the Committee that the Business Support Team agreed to put up the relevant information regarding applying to hold an event on the downs, and also the table of all booked events on the downs, onto the Council's website. The Chair stated that the table of events would also be shared with the Epsom Downs Rider Facebook group.
- j) **Race Horses using Hack Tracks.** The Chair confirmed this item has been dealt with and can be closed.
- k) **Additional Lighting.** The Chair explained that some additional lighting will be going outside the Durdans, and progress should be seen shortly.
- l) **School Run Traffic.** The Chair looked into if there is a TRO for the bottom of Chalk Lane, and there is. The Chair explained that this is an ongoing issue and welcomed solutions from members and representatives.
- m) **Dog Walking on the Downs.** The Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare explained that the Nonsuch Dog Walking licensing scheme goes live at the beginning of April. The Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare shared that there is a dog walking code of conduct which can be shared before the next meeting, to get Committee member and representative thoughts.

Following discussion, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Note the status and update on actions listed in the Committee Action Tracker.**

10 ISSUES RAISED FOR CONSIDERATION BY INVITED REPRESENTATIVES

The Committee discussed the issues raised by representatives invited to attend the meeting.

The following matters were discussed:

- a) **Flying on the Downs.** The Epsom Equestrian Conservation Team representative asked if there is a specific area where EDMAC fly their planes. The EDMAC representative explained that there is a specific zone within which EDMAC members fly their zone, it is bounded by the inner barrier of the racecourse. The EDMAC representative explained that there are noise restrictions on planes, and they can check planes, if there are any incidents, to ensure it meets the requirements of the club. The EDMAC representative explained it was probably an internal combustion engine plane that was making a lot of noise, as the electric planes are much quieter, and are the preferred choice of many members now.
- b) **Runway Damage.** The EDMAC representative explained that horses crossing the runway strips can cause damage and problems to planes taking off or landing. Alex Stewart explained that there is no reason for horses to be crossing the runway strips and stated that information could be shared on the Epsom Riders Facebook group to remind people where they should and shouldn't be riding. The Chair agreed with the comments made by Alex Stewart.
- c) **Hosting a family event.** The EDMAC representative explained that EDMAC wish to encourage young people to join and wish to hold a family event to get young people involved and able to try it out. The Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare explained that EDMAC need to apply to hold their event on the Downs via the normal form and process, which can be found on the Council's website.
- d) **Grazing on Juniper Hill.** The Senior Countryside Officer provided an update on the feasibility study carried out regarding reintroducing grazing on the Downs. They explained that there is nothing in the act that does not allow grazing on the Downs, and shared the Conservators must agree before it is reintroduced. The Senior Countryside Officer shared that it would be sheep grazing. A report will be going to Conservators in June to seek their approval. The Senior Countryside Officer has consulted with relevant parties and the main issue would be animals getting loose and the proximity to the gallops, with solutions currently being considered. They explained that the project will be progressed through getting grants to fund it. An invited representative asked if the grazing will affect the movement of deer. The Senior Countryside Officer said it would not impact deer. A Committee Member asked if animals would be moving around or located in one area. The Senior Countryside Officer said the animals would be located in just one area. The Member suggested reaching out to NESOT to get volunteers to help with the project. The Senior Countryside Officer

noted the comment. The Senior Countryside Officer explained it would roughly cost £15K to set up the project and a key point to sort would be having a member of staff who is responsible for finding and supporting the volunteers who help with the project. The Senior Countryside Officer stated that the timeline of the project is up for discussion.

- e) **Repair and reinstatement of tracks and grass.** The Epsom Civic Society representative mentioned the damage caused by the repair of the lower track. The Chair mentioned that the area has significantly improved but there is still work to be done. The Epsom Civic Society representative asked if there is a date for when the work is due to be finished. Nigel Whybrow confirmed that the work would all be completed before the next meeting in October.
- f) **Horse Numbers.** The WERs representative raised concerns regarding the number of horses coming both ways through Langley Vale village. The Chair noted the comments and stated that communication would be made with the relevant parties to update them on the current situation and developments regarding Downs House. The Chair invited the WERs representative to a meeting on the Downs, to discuss areas of particular concern, regarding the condition of bridleways and pathways. The Chair shared that there is a new entrance at the back of Downs House and there is work going into looking at sight lines, visibility and awareness for those who aren't familiar with the area.
- g) **Fallen Tree.** A Committee Member raised that there is some fallen tree across the paths on the Downs. The Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare asked the Member to share the location of the fallen trees and agreed that the Downskeepers will have a look and move trees that are blocking paths. The Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare stated that if the trees are too big to be moved by the Downskeepers, it will be referred to the Tree Officer to sort.
- h) **Social Media Videos.** The Chair stated that there are videos circulating on social media of hack riders riding up the Poly Gallop on a Sunday afternoon. The Chair shared that the gallops will be monitored more closely from now on and expressed that this behaviour is trespass and if people are caught, they may be prosecuted. The Chair asked the Committee to share that warning and information with users of the Downs.
- i) **Open days.** The Chair shared that there are dates that will be shared, once confirmed, regarding open days of stables on the Downs. The Chair asked the Committee to help publicise the dates once they have been confirmed.
- j) **Filming on the Downs.** The EDMAC representative raised that EDMAC would like to produce a video of a plane flying over the Downs, as a promotional element for the club. The EDMAC representative asked if they had permission to do so. The Chair invited EDMAC to submit an

application to do so and encouraged them to avoid horse training times. The Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare asked if EDMAC would be flying outside of the designated zone when taking the photo and video content. The EDMAC representative stated that they would not need to fly outside of the designated zone.

- k) **Hack Gallop.** An invited representative raised that there is no sign on a hack gallop, near the bottom gallop, informing people that it cannot be used until after 12. Nigel Whybrow confirmed that there are yellow hack markers in place to indicate that it cannot be used until after 12. The invited representative explained that a sign would also be helpful for those that do not know what the hack marker represents.
- l) **Hack posts.** The Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare informed the Committee that additional hack posts are being installed across middle hill. The Chair asked that hack posts in place can be left where they are and not removed or disturbed.

Following discussion, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Consider the matters raised by invited representatives as set out in this report.**

11 ITEMS FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE CONSERVATORS

The Committee identify that the Grazing on the Downs item would be going to the June meeting of the Conservators to seek their approval before the project progresses any further.

The resurfacing of the lower track item was identified to be added to the Committee Action Tracker.

The meeting began at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.10 pm

COUNCILLOR STEVEN MCCORMICK (CHAIR)