

**Minutes of the Meeting of the EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS CONSERVATORS
held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 26 January 2026**

PRESENT -

Councillor Steven McCormick (the Council) (Chair); Jim Allen (Jockey Club Racecourses (the Company)) (Vice-Chair); Councillor Christine Cleveland (the Council), Andrew Cooper (Jockey Club Racecourses (the Company)), Simon Dow (Horserace Betting Levy Board (the Levy Board)), Councillor Liz Frost (the Council), Councillor Bernice Froud (the Council), Councillor Kim Spickett (the Council) and Councillor Clive Woodbridge (the Council)

Absent: Simon Durrant (Jockey Club Racecourses (the Company))

Officers present: Jackie King (Chief Executive), Sue Emmons (Chief Accountant), Samantha Whitehead (Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare), Sarah Clift (Senior Countryside Officer) and Phoebe Batchelor (Democratic Services Officer)

15 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators held on 3 November 2025 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Andrew Cooper provided Conservators with an update on the 6-furlong project. He explained that the project is planned to commence in the next month, and it is currently subject to final budgetary approval at the Jockey Club. The Chair noted the update and reminded the racecourse to ensure the works are communicated to relevant stakeholders and users of the Downs.

16 MINUTES OF THE EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The Conservators received the Minutes of the meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee held on 13 October 2025.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Receive and note the Minutes of the meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee held on the 13 October 2025.**

17 BUDGET 2026/27

The Conservators received a report seeking approval for the 2026/27 budget and the recommended precepts on the constituent bodies.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Safety equipment.** A Member of the Conservators asked where safety items and equipment, such as eye wash stations, fall under the budget. The Interim Assistant Head of Service & Streetcare Manager explained that safety equipment would fall under the budget line for general office expenses.
- b) **Maintenance of the grounds.** A Member of the Conservators queried why the maintenance of the grounds budget is being increased significantly. The Interim Assistant Head of Service & Streetcare Manager explained that some of the underspend in fuel was reallocated to grounds maintenance. She also explained that the demand for materials has caused prices to increase so it is a welcome increase for that budget line. The Chief Accountant explained that this was likely due to rounding and ensuring the total figure was a round number.
- c) **Local Government Reorganisation.** A Member of the Conservators queried how budget setting will be done going forwards, given the changes that will happen due to Local Government Reorganisation. The Chief Executive explained that she has formally put the Conservators arrangement into the LGR workstream, sitting under finance and property. She continued to set out that in terms of the budget for the shadow authority, there has to be a three-year Medium Term Financial Strategy produced for the new organisation, and this will be part of the budget setting process. Therefore, as long as it has been raised that the Conservators need to be considered, that will be picked up as part of the unitary budget. There is not information as to what this will look like yet as it will need to be considered by the legal team as to how the Conservators arrangement will continue going forwards, with fewer Councillors in the Epsom and Ewell area. The Chair informed the Conservators that any updates will be shared when they are available.
- d) **Vending on the Downs.** The Chair raised that the vending units have provided some welcome additional funding into the Conservators budget which has enabled some other items to be progressed. He highlighted the new budget line for bins, which is budgeting for roughly 10 new bins, and a new budget line for signage. The Chair informed the Conservators that there will hopefully be an additional vending unit starting in the Top Car Park from the beginning of February. He expressed thanks to officers for their help.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Note the latest income and expenditure position for 2025/26.**

- (2) Approve the 2026/27 budget and the requested precepts, as set out in section 4 and Appendix 1 to this report.**

18 RISK REGISTER

The Conservators received a report presenting the risk register for Epsom and Walton Downs (EWD) for review and noting.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **EWDC16.** A Member of the Conservators raised that the inherent risk of EWDC16 should be 12 not 16 as set out in appendix 1. The Chair thanked the member for raising this and confirmed that the inherent risk number would be updated.
- b) **Headphones.** A Member of the Conservators raised that a current risk experienced on the Downs is people placing themselves at risk during training times by wearing headphones and not being aware or able to hear instructions of Downskeepers or racecourse staff. The Chair suggested that the risk is added to the risk register and welcomed input into how to articulate and mitigate the risk.
 - Simon Dow proposed a motion that headphone users on the Downs during training times was added to the risk register. The Chair seconded the motion.

The Conservators unanimously agreed the risk could be added to the risk register.

- c) **Safety of Downs users.** A Member of the Conservators suggested that signs could be used to convey the dangers of walking around the Downs during training times with headphones in. The Chair noted the comments. Another Member echoed the comments and raised that in some London parks there are signs which say no headphones. The Chair informed Conservators that there are some comms coming out soon about various topics, so this could potentially be folded in and included.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Review and note the strategic risk register located at Appendix 1.**

19 EPSOM DOWNS RACING SEASON 2026

The Conservators received a report informing them of dates of race meetings in 2026 and presenting a request from Jockey Club Racecourses for consent for race meetings and extensions to the periods permitted for fencing, as required by the Epsom and Walton Downs Regulation Act 1984 and Epsom and Walton Downs Byelaws.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Fencing request.** A Member of the Conservators noted that the fencing requests around the Derby Festival are longer than requesting in previous years. The Vice Chair explained that as part of the Jockey Club's plans to rejuvenate the Derby, one of the things that has been looked at, is all the temporary structures that go up for the period of the Derby Festival. He explained that a new contractor has been hired this year who doesn't know the site. He also highlighted that previously it has always been a very, very tight build and having experienced it for the first time last year and spoken to the contractors, it would be greatly appreciated to have more time for the build. In that additional week, it would be about getting the new contractor used to the site and getting deliveries to arrive a little bit earlier. The Vice Chair explained that it's not necessarily something that the racecourse will request every single year, but it is necessary for 2026.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Note the dates of the 2026 racing season for Epsom Downs detailed in paragraph 2.1 of this report, and grant their consent to the following meetings in accordance with section 14 of the Epsom and Walton Downs Regulation Act 1984:**
- **Wednesday 1 July (Evening)**
 - **Thursday 9 July (Evening)**
 - **Thursday 16 July (Evening)**
 - **Thursday 30 July (Evening)**
 - **Sunday 27 September**
- (2) **Note that Jockey Club Racecourses has applied to Surrey County Council for the temporary suspension of Footpath 50 as detailed in section 4 of this report.**
- (3) **Consider and determine an application from Jockey Club Racecourses for consent under the Byelaw 2 (i) (a) to extend the fencing period for the Upper Tattenham Enclosure and Lonsdale Enclosure for 11 days to cover the period 11 May – 21 May 2026.**

20 DERBY 2026 UPDATE

The Conservators received an update on the arrangements for the Derby 2026.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Reinvigorating the Derby.** The Vice Chair re-emphasised that the Jockey Club is really focused on reinvigorating the Derby Festival and Epsom Downs Racecourse. He explained that they are planning to hopefully attract more people than attended the 2025 festival. He set out that the Jockey Club will be investing in marketing, the site, the structures, and the appearance of the racecourse, which has obviously slid over the years. He continued to explain that as a result, the Jockey Club have not requested to close the footpath tunnel that leads into the centre this year and it will be left open and accessible for the public and racegoers to get in and out of the racecourse. The Chair welcomed the comments and agreed to help and support in anyway necessary.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Note the update on the 2026 Derby arrangements from the Epsom Downs Racecourse.**

21 EVENTS ON THE DOWNS 2026

The Conservators received a report informing them of the current confirmed events on the 2025/26 Events Calendar for the Downs and seeking approval for two new events proposed to take place in 2026.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Amendment to 2026 Calendar.** The Interim Assistant Head of Service & Streetcare Manager raised that there is an additional event to be added to the 2026 event calendar. She informed the Conservators that the Banstead Rotary Club annual walk will be held on the 26th of April and will be no more than roughly 60 people, with 20 spectators and staff. She highlighted that it is classified as an A event, with low impact on the Downs and is run in support of local charities. She also raised that a request has been received from the RAC Club to use the Downs for parking. She explained that this request is the same as received in previous years and is currently being discussed. If approved, this would be on the 8th of July.
- b) **Declarations.** The Chair declared that he is a member of the Tadworth Athletic Club. Councillor Clive Woodbridge declared that he is a member of the RAC Club.
- c) **Banstead Walk.** A Member of the Conservators asked for the timings and day of the week for the Banstead Walk event so as to ensure it does not interfere with training times. The Interim Assistant Head of Service & Streetcare Manager confirmed that the event will be held on a Sunday, and it does not interfere with training as it will begin after training and conclude at 15:30.
- d) **Additional Events.** A Member of the Conservators flagged that any additional events on the Downs increase footfall and it is the Conservators

responsibility to consider the implications of allowing additional events to be held on the Downs. The Chair noted the comments and agreed that there is a delicate balance to be struck. The Interim Assistant Head of Service & Streetcare Manager highlighted that the Cancer Research Race for Life event no longer takes place on the Downs, and the two new applications are much smaller events. She explained that officers and Conservators would be reticent about bringing back or allowing such a large event again.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Note the Events Calendar for 2025/26.**
- (2) Approve the event request for the Andy Macfarlane Charity Walk as set out in Appendix 1.**
- (3) Approve the event request for The Oddballs – 2000 Perch event as set out in Appendix 2.**
- (4) Note the increase to fees and charges for Events on the Downs as set out in section 8 of this report.**

22 SCHEME FOR BBQS AT THE RACECOURSE REVIEW

The Conservators received a review of the use of barbecues during 2025 race meetings and an application from Epsom Downs Racecourse for the use of barbecues at events throughout 2026.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Sustainable Charcoal.** A Member of the Conservators flagged para 6.3.2 which talks about using sustainably produced charcoal and suggests the Jockey Club may want to look into it. The Member asked if the Jockey Club have looked into it and would they consider using it. The Vice Chair confirmed that the Jockey Club would certainly be considering it for the future and will ensure the sustainability team are made aware. Another Member suggested that the Jockey Club could use charcoal makers on Epsom Common. The Chair noted the comments.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Note the success of the Barbecue Scheme during 2025 race meetings.**
- (2) Grant Epsom Downs Racecourse permission to allow the use of barbecues at race meetings throughout 2026, namely Ladies Day, The Derby and the August Bank Holiday race meetings.**
- (3) Nominate and authorise the Clerk to the Conservators, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators, to consider and grant permission to any future**

continuation of the Barbecue Scheme, subject to no material issues or concerns having been raised during the preceding season.

23 CAR PARK MANAGEMENT

The Conservators received an update on the use of the Owners and Trainers and Derby Arms Car Parks by the Racecourse during 2025 and a request for permission for ad-hoc use in 2026.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Parking habits.** A Member of the Conservators asked if there was anything the racecourse will do to try and prevent cars from parking in car park when it is not one of the days of approved and genuine use. The Vice Chair explained that the usage of car park has dramatically reduced and was used for roughly 10 days last year. He explained that there was an issue with people breaking the bolts off the barriers, which the racecourse is trying to address as well. He stated that on those occasions when there's been no barrier up, that's when one or two cars would use that car park. He explained that it wouldn't be a racecourse car over there because they use the tarmac car park in the grandstand area and anyone else visiting the race course is encouraged to use that. He confirmed the racecourse is looking at the management of the gate on that car park to ensure that it's properly secured.
- b) **Car Park 3.** A Member of the Conservators asked which car park is the owners and trainers car park. The Vice Chair confirmed that the owners and trainers car park is car park number 3. The Member raised that the key to the safe operation of that as an additional car parking space is the efficiency and skill of the car park attendant. The Vice Chair noted the comments and agreed to address the matter.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Note the level of use by the Jockey Club of Car Parks 3 and 8 during 2025.**
- (2) **To approve an application by the Jockey Club to use these car parks during 2026 for ad-hoc events.**
- (3) **Approve the Car Park Management Operational Note as set out in Appendix 1.**
- (4) **Nominate and authorise the Clerk to the Conservators, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators, to consider and grant permission to any future continuation of the use of Car Parks 3 and 8, subject to no material issues or concerns having been raised during the preceding season.**

24 REINTRODUCTION OF GRAZING TO JUNIPER HILL

One of the three main objectives of the current five-year Epsom and Walton Downs Habitat Management Plan (2023-2028) is to draw up a project plan to reintroduce grazing to Juniper Hill.

At the Conservators meeting held on 23rd June 2025, it was agreed to progress the project, using robust fencing and for an implementation plan to be brought to the January meeting.

The Conservators received the implementation plan.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Funding.** The Senior Countryside Officer explained that there have been developments with funding the project. She raised that the project would get funding from Your Fund Surrey and the Downlands Trust.
- b) **Additional Costs.** A Member of the Conservators asked what the balance of costs is between going forward with the grazing project and the associated costs with implementing it or not proceeding with the project but having potentially higher costs longer term when it comes to managing the land. The Senior Countryside Officer explained that the grazing project will probably be more expensive at first, but the costs may balance in the future, and it will ultimately be a much better way of managing the rare habitat and land.
- c) **Queries.** A Member of the Conservators asked if the animals being referred to are sheep and if they will be checked daily. The Senior Countryside Officer confirmed that the animals would be sheep, and they would be checked daily by the countryside team, Downskeepers, or volunteers. A Member of Staff from the Downlands Partnership would check weekly on the sheep.
- d) **Hiring Sheep.** A Member of the Conservators asked why the sheep would be hired instead of purchased. The Senior Countryside Officer explained that owning a herd would not be as cost effective as we would only want grazing on the Downs for some months of the year. She explained that it would require much more resource and capacity to own sheep instead of hiring.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Support the reintroduction of grazing to Juniper Hill, subject to securing external funding for initial infrastructure and nominate and authorise the Senior Countryside Officer, in conjunction with the Clerk of the Conservators to progress this initiative to completion.**
- (2) **Agree recommendations as set out in the Implementation Plan.**

(3) Agree the timetable as set out in the Implementation Plan.

25 PROPOSAL TO LAY RUBBER SURFACE TO BRIDGE OVER UNDERPASS

The Conservators received a report presenting a proposal from The Jockey Club to replace the existing tarmac surface with a permanent black wet-pour rubber surface on the bridge over the underpass at Epsom Downs Racecourse, near the Rubbing House Public House. The proposal is seeking to improve safety for equine and pedestrian users and to provide consistency with existing rubberised surfaces elsewhere on the Racecourse.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Comms.** The Chair raised that it is important to get the communication about this works out to all users of the Downs. He invited Conservators to share the message widely.

Following consideration, the Conservators unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Approve the proposal to lay a permanent black wet-pour rubber surface to the bridge over the underpass.**

The meeting began at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.00 pm

COUNCILLOR STEVEN MCCORMICK (CHAIR)