

Minutes of the Meeting of the EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE held Virtually on 12 January 2022

PRESENT -

Councillor Liz Frost (Chair); Simon Durrant (Epsom Downs Racecourse), Councillor Bernice Froud, Alex Stewart (Epsom Downs Riders Protection Society) and Nigel Whybrow (Training Grounds Management Board).

In Attendance: Caroline Baldock (Epsom Equestrian Conservation Group), Richard Balsdon (College Ward Residents' Association), Andrew Cooper (Epsom Downs Racecourse), Hugh Craddock (British Horse Society) (Item 01-02 (Hack Sand Track) only), Nick Lock (Epsom Civic Society), Nick Harrison (Tattenhams Residents' Association), Steven McCormick (Woodcote Residents' Association), Stephen Wallis (Jockey Club Racecourses) and Robin Willes (Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club)

Absent: Bob Eberhard (Epsom and Ewell Cycle Action Group)

Officers present: Kathryn Beldon (Chief Executive), Jackie King (Director of Corporate Services), Samantha Whitehead (Streetcare Manager) and Tim Richardson (Democratic Services Manager)

1 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee held on 17 September 2018 were agreed as a true record and the Chairman was authorised to sign them.

2 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Replacement of Hack Sand Track.** The Chair invited Mr Stephen Wallis, as a representative of the Training Grounds Management Board and Jockey Club Racecourses and Mr Hugh Craddock as a representative of the British Horse Society (BHS) to provide an update on this matter.

Mr Wallis expressed his thanks for the constructive and helpful way in which representatives of the BHS and Epsom Downs Riders Protection Society had engaged with the Racecourse as landowner in trying to find a solution to the problems surrounding the hack sand track. Mr Wallis outlined that the hack sand track was uneconomic to maintain and would

fall into disrepair in its current location. It was proposed that a new 16 metre wide grass hack canter ride be created in the bottom section of the area reserved for Racehorse training, and made available for use by the hack riding community after noon daily. The continued maintenance of the ride would be undertaken by the Jockey Club and Training Grounds Management Board. The Committee was presented with a plan showing the proposed location of the new ride. The Consultative Committee noted that the proposed route of the ride clipped the 'hatched area' at the foot of Walton Downs in part, and narrowed at both ends due to the space available in those locations. It was noted that there would be no impact from the proposed ride on the status or size of the 'hatched area'.

Mr Craddock informed the Committee that the BHS very much welcomed the initiative and felt that it was capable of being an enduring agreement subject to minor remaining negotiations, and that the BHS was more than prepared to commend it.

Mr Alex Stewart informed the Committee that the views of local hack riders had been sought via the BHS's Facebook and that there had been initial support from the 50 responses received. The BHS also would undertake a more comprehensive consultation of its Members, local riding establishments and individual riders. This would be communicated with an endorsement for the proposal from the BHS, setting out its benefits to hack riders. It was anticipated that the proposed new ride would reduce the incidence of hack riders encroaching on the Gallops and other tracks, and the communications would reinforce this message.

- b) **Condition of hack canter at top of Six Mile Hill.** The Committee received images of the condition of the hack canter at the top of Six Mile Hill. The Streetcare Manager informed the Committee that the area was a high priority within the works schedule for the Downskeepers and extended an invitation to Mr Stewart to meet with the lead Downskeeper to assist in identifying future works.
- c) **Marking of hack ride across The Hill and Hack post renewal.** The Chair informed the Committee that the Conservators had been successful in a bid to the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development recently and had been awarded funding for new signage, picnic tables and litter bins on the Downs. The Streetcare Manager informed the Committee that the works to be funded by the bid included a full replacement of all hack posts across the Downs and some additional posts in areas where it was felt that they would be beneficial.
- d) **Water logging of track at top of Rifle Butts Alley.** The Streetcare Manager informed the Committee that resurfacing work was underway by Surrey County Council as a result of a successful Community Infrastructure Levy Bid. Drainage channels would be incorporated into the works to help alleviate some of the problems caused by waterlogging and scrub clearance would also be taking place during February.

- e) **Update on Downskeepers' winter work programme.** The Streetcare Manager provided a verbal update on the winter work programme, and extended an invitation to the Committee to suggest works to be included in the next winter work programme.
- f) **Traffic light phasing for pedestrians and racehorses crossing by Bus Shelter.** Mr Stewart asked whether the phasing of the lights was correctly configured, as it seemed that the timing provided to pedestrians was the same as that provided to equestrians. It was noted that Councillor Steven McCormick, as the Surrey County Councillor for the area, would raise this issue with the County Council.

3 ISSUES RAISED FOR CONSIDERATION

The Committee considered the following matters raised by invited representatives:

- a) **Lights on Farm Lane.** The Committee was informed that a condition on woodland trust car park for traffic lights had been removed by the relevant planning authority. It was noted that Councillor Steven McCormick, as the County Councillor for the area would be taking this matter forward with Surrey County Council and Mole Valley District Council. It was further noted that an alternative equestrian crossing solution was operated effectively in both Newmarket and Lambourn.
- b) **Encroachment on the gallops and grass above the wax track by hack riders and information signs and leaflets on the Downs.** The Committee noted the issues detailed on the agenda and was informed that the sign posts identified had been included in the recent signs audit undertaken by the Downskeepers. It was noted that the Streetcare Manager would discuss the issue of cyclists crossing the Valley Gallop with the lead Downskeeper and Training Grounds Manager to identify any actions which could assist with the matter. The Committee also noted that the Jockey Club had funded an education programme aimed at improving awareness of issues on the Downs.

4 ITEMS FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE CONSERVATORS

The Committee did not identify any items from the meeting which would require verbal representation to the Conservators.

The meeting began at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.54 pm

COUNCILLOR LIZ FROST (CHAIR)

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