

Minutes of the Meeting of the EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE held on 26 September 2016

PRESENT -

Councillor Liz Frost (Chairman); Councillor Jean Steer, Hugh Craddock (British Horse Society), Simon Durrant (Epsom Downs Racecourse), 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), Angela Clifford (Epsom Civic Society), Bob Eberhard (Epsom and Ewell Cycle Action Group) (Items 1 - 6 c) only), David Lambert (Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club) and Conor Morrow (Lower Mole Countryside Management Service) (Items 1 - 4 c) only)

Absent: Teresa Cass (Woodcote Residents' Association), Andrew Cooper (Epsom Downs Racecourse), Nick Harrison (Tattenhams Residents' Association), Mark Harvey (Epsom Golf Club) and Roger Marples (Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club)

Officers present: Sam Beak (Downs Manager) (Items 1 - 7 only), Tim Richardson (Democratic Services Officer) and Simon Young (Head of Legal and Democratic Services)

1 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee held on 9 March 2016 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment:

- Minute 16 b). That the words "Downs Road" be amended to "Headley Road".

2 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MEETING

The Committee received and noted a report providing updates on matters raised previously. The following items were noted:

- a) Hack Sand Track, foot of Walton Downs. The Council's Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed the Committee that he had written to the Horse Race Betting Levy Board (HRBLB) to inform it that the Conservators did not regard the Hack Sand Track at the foot of Walton Downs to be their responsibility to maintain. No response to this had been received from the HRBLB. The Conservators had agreed to instruct the

Downskeepers not to undertake further maintenance works to the track, as it was not their responsibility to do so, and had been advised by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services not to place public notices on the Downs with regard to the condition of the track, as this was also the responsibility of the HRBLB.

The Hack Rider Representatives enquired what mechanisms could be utilised to enforce the undertaking contained in the Epsom and Walton Downs Regulation Act 1984 (that the Sand Track be provided and maintained) and the Committee was informed by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services that this was likely to be a matter which could only be enforced by Parliament.

It was noted that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services would write to the HRBLB again regarding the maintenance of the Track, and that this would be sent via recorded delivery.

- b) Hatched area, foot of Walton Downs. The Committee was informed that the Training Grounds Management Board (TGMB) had created a task group to look into the matters relating to the area. The TGMB Representative informed the Committee that he anticipated that this would provide more clarity on the conditions which made the area unsuitable to be utilised for hack riding. The TGMB Representative also informed the Committee that the signs stating whether the area was currently open or not were now in place.

3 REPORT OF THE HEAD DOWNSKEEPER

The Downs Manager provided the Committee with a verbal report. The following matters were discussed:

- a) Antisocial behaviour in Top car park. A number of incidents of antisocial behaviour involving dangerous driving had been reported in the Top car park. These incidents had involved vehicles making 'hand-brake turns' and 'doughnutting' in the car park. It was noted that the possibility of providing the Downskeepers with dashboard mounted cameras (to assist in providing evidence) was being considered by officers.
- b) Staffing. The Committee was informed that the Head Downskeeper Bob Harding and Downskeeper John Gilvary were currently on long term sick leave, and that the Council's ranger service was assisting with duties on the Downs during the evening shifts. This arrangement enabled the trained Downskeepers to maintain their presence during the Racehorse training periods.
- c) Flytipping. The College Ward Residents' Association Representative enquired whether flytipping on the downs had increased since Surrey County Council had introduced new charges for waste disposal, and informed that he had identified some instances recently. It was noted that

flytipping on the Downs was cleared by the Council's Operational Services teams, not the Downskeepers.

- d) Locking times for car parks on the Downs. The Committee noted that the car parks on the Downs were closed at set times – either 5pm or 9pm, depending upon the time of year. It was suggested that this could be changed to 'dusk', as it might reduce the instances of vehicle-related antisocial behaviour (see a) above). It was noted that such behaviour also occurred during daylight hours, but that officers would consider whether it would be helpful to change the locking times, and logistics of doing so.
- e) Speed limit for Old London Road leading to Top car park. The Committee enquired whether a speed limit could be applied to Old London Road in order to reduce vehicle-related antisocial behaviour. It was noted that Surrey County Council had previously considered this possibility, and that it had been found to not be practical or enforceable.

4 ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE CONSERVATORS

The Committee received a report providing a summary of items of interest considered at the meetings of the Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators held on 13 April and 15 June 2016. The following items were considered:

- a) Advance warning signs for equestrian crossing on Ashley Road. It was noted that these signs had not yet been installed by Surrey County Council, as it was reviewing the arrangements of the crossing.
- b) Cars on the roadway outside the Rubbing House. The Committee was informed that the Racecourse was considering whether improvements could be made to the arrangements for parking at the Rubbing House. If it was a matter which the Racecourse or TGMB wished to further pursue, a proposal would be submitted to the Conservators for consideration.
- c) Number of horses in training on the Downs. It was noted that the number of horses in training on the Downs had dropped below 150, but that it was hoped that the positive publicity regarding the recent St Leger victory by the Downs-trained Harbour Law would help to increase this.
- d) Location of the Derby Gypsy site. The Epsom Equestrian Conservation Group Representative enquired whether the Derby Gypsy site could be moved to a different location to reduce the difficulties encountered by horse riders accessing the Downs from nearby routes. It was noted that the Racecourse reviewed the location of the site during its planning for the event each year.

5 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE DERBY RACE MEETING

The Committee was invited to provide its views on the arrangements for the 2016 Derby Race Meeting. The following matters were considered:

- a) Family enclosure. Positive comments were made regarding the family enclosure area.
- b) Review of arrangements with Surrey Police. It was noted that a review of arrangements had been held with Surrey Police, and that a number of actions had been agreed as a result. These included improved communication with local residents in advance of the 2017 Derby, to inform them of the importance of reporting incidents to the Police and how to do so. Additional bins for confiscated alcohol in Epsom Town Centre would also be provided.

The Epsom Downs Racecourse Representative informed the Committee that the Racecourse was disappointed at the incidents of anti-social behaviour which had occurred, but was working closely with Surrey and Sussex Police with regard to future arrangements.

- c) Post Derby clean-up. The clean-up of the Downs following the Derby was praised by the Committee.

6 ISSUES RAISED BY THE HACK RIDERS REPRESENTATIVES

The following matters were raised by the Hack Rider Representatives:

- a) Use of the Downs including hack areas for parking on non-race days. The Hack Riders Representatives informed the Committee that the hack area adjacent to the Derby Arms public house and area of land outside the Derby Stables was utilised for parking on non-race days. The Representatives expressed that the hack area outside the Derby Arms was used by hack riders to gain access to onward hack rides and bridleways, and that it's use for parking diminished a facility available to hack riders. The representatives informed the Committee that the area had previously remained locked outside of race days and on infrequent occasions on which the Racecourse was hosting a large event, but that it was now left permanently unlocked. The Representatives requested that the area be locked in the future outside of these times to prevent access by cars.

It was noted that Officers of the Conservators and the Racecourse would discuss the use of the area. Following this discussion, if there was a proposal to be considered by the Conservators, the Hack Rider Representatives would also be consulted.

- b) Condition of the afternoon hack ride up 6 Mile Hill from Langley Vale. The Hack Rider Representatives informed the Committee that this hack ride had been damaged during the recent works to extend the neighbouring Poly Track. It was agreed to view the area on the Downs Tour of 28 September 2016.
- c) Access to Lonsdale Enclosure hack area on non-race days. The Hack Rider Representatives informed the Committee that access to the hack

area located within the Lonsdale Enclosure had not been possible at times, as gaps had not been left in the fencing to enable it. The Epsom Downs Racecourse Representative apologised for this issue and requested that he be informed directly if it should occur in the future, as he would be able to arrange for the situation to be rectified. It was noted that the Racecourse would look into the possibility of providing a gate in the fence in future, rather than physically removing panels to enable access.

- d) Missing marker posts along the Valley hack track below Rubbing House towards the Beech Wood junction. The Downs Manager informed the Committee that any posts missing in this area would be replaced by the Downskeepers as part of their winter work programme.
- e) Parking in Derby Stables Road. The Hack Rider Representatives informed the Committee that cars were being parked all-day, and advertised for sale in Derby Stables Road. The Representatives suggested that a parking restriction could be introduced to limit parking on the road, and suggested a maximum stay of 3 hours, with no return on the same day. It was noted that this would be a matter for the Surrey County Council (Epsom and Ewell) Local Committee to consider.
- f) Scrub clearance at the top of Rifle Butts Alley. The Downs Manager informed the Committee that scrub clearance in this area would be undertaken by the Downskeepers as part of their winter work programme.
- g) Condition of hack facilities on the Downs. The Hack Rider Representatives highlighted to the Committee that they had expressed concerns over the condition or lack of availability of 3 hack facilities on the Downs:
- Hack Sand Track at the foot of Walton Downs
 - Hatched Area at the foot of Walton Downs
 - Hack ride on 6 Mile Hill (see b) above)

The Representatives expressed that if hack riders were unable to make use of these areas, it would be a significant reduction in the facilities made available to them under the 1984 Act and requested that the provision of alternative areas or facilities was considered.

7 ISSUES RAISED FOR CONSIDERATION

The following items were raised by representatives to the Committee:

- a) Signs for dog walkers on eastern routes onto the Downs. The Committee was informed that dog walking signs from some routes onto the Downs had been stolen, and that they would be replaced with laminated notices. It was also noted that signs had been amended to reflect Sunday training hours, and requested that dogs be kept on a lead until 9.30am.

8 DATES OF MEETINGS IN 2017

The Committee did not express any preference with regard to the options for dates of meetings in 2017 listed within the agenda. It was agreed that the Democratic Services Officer would confirm the dates following the meeting.

9 ITEMS FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE CONSERVATORS

The Committee felt that no items from the meeting would require verbal representation to the Conservators.

The meeting began at 6.05 pm and ended at 7.16 pm

COUNCILLOR LIZ FROST (CHAIRMAN)