

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators  
held on 15 April 2015**

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**PRESENT-**

Councillor Jean Smith (Chairman); Mr Andrew Cooper (Vice Chairman) (Epsom Downs Racecourse); Councillors Paul Dallen, Liz Frost (Items 43 b) - 52), Chris Long and Jan Mason; Messrs Simon Durrant and Nigel Whybrow (Epsom Downs Racecourse).

In attendance: Mr Conor Morrow (Lower Mole Countryside Management Service)

Officers present: Frances Rutter (Clerk to the Conservators), Bob Harding (Head Downskeeper), Tim Richardson (Democratic Services Officer) and Sam Whitehead (Streetcare Manager).

Absent: Councillor Ben Cahill-Sawford, Mr Simon Dow (Horserace Betting Levy Board).

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- 38** PRESENTATION TO THE CHAIRMAN. The Vice Chairman informed the meeting that he was aware that this would be the Chairman's last meeting of the Conservators following 16 years of service. The Vice Chairman expressed the thanks and gratitude of all Members of the Conservators to the Chairman for her work on their behalf over that time, and for her wise council and stewardship during her tenure as the Chairman. The Conservators presented the Chairman with a card and a print of Brett Lohn's painting entitled 'Final Furlong' with their thanks.
- 39** THANKS TO MEMBERS AND OFFICERS. The Chairman expressed her sincere thanks to all Members of the Conservators and their Officers: The Clerk, The Treasurer, Downs Manager, Streetcare Manager, Head Downskeeper and Democratic Services Officer as well as Conor Morrow of Lower Mole for their unfailing support throughout her years serving as the Chairman.
- 40** MINUTES. The Minutes of the Meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators held on 21 January 2015 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.
- 41** BEST WISHES TO DOWNS MANAGER. The Conservators were informed that the Downs Manager was currently on sickness leave and sent their best wishes to her for a speedy and successful recovery.
- 42** ITEMS OF INTEREST DISCUSSED BY THE TRAINING GROUNDS MANAGEMENT BOARD (TGMB). The following items of interest had been discussed at the last meeting of the Training Grounds Management Board:
- a) Hatched area at the foot of Walton Downs. The Board had considered that it had no reason to change its current stance with regard to the Hatched Area, and reconfirmed that it could not authorise the use of the Hatched Area for hack riding.

- b) Epsom Downs Training Grounds leaflet. A copy of an Epsom Downs Training Grounds information leaflet produced by Jockey Club Estates was circulated to the Conservators.

**43** MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS AND OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST.

- a) Hack Sand Track, foot of Walton Downs. The Conservators were informed that the Council's Legal Department had arranged a meeting to be held with the Horserace Betting Levy Board at the end of May 2015.
- b) Downs House. The Clerk informed the Conservators that matters for action by the Council and Jockey Club had now been resolved. There were outstanding matters for the attention of the purchaser which required resolution before the sale of the property could proceed further.
- c) Flooding at the roundabout outside Epsom Racecourse (Grandstand Road / Tattenham Corner Road). The Conservators were informed that Surrey County Council was undertaking further work to the drainage system in this area, but there was uncertainty over the exact duration of the works. The works were being undertaken with sensitivity to the requirements of Racehorse Trainers, and causing little disruption to their activities.
- d) Epsom Golf Club unauthorised development and other matters. The Conservators noted that these issues were being pursued by the Council's Legal Department.
- e) Old London Road crossing of the Racecourse – drainage works. The Vice Chairman informed the Conservators that the Racecourse would undertake its drainage improvement works during 2015, but not prior to the Derby festival. However, works by Surrey County Council to flush-through and clean the existing soakaways in the area would be undertaken in May, prior to the Derby.
- f) Proposed tree works to be carried out by Epsom Golf Club. The Conservators noted that approval had been granted to the works in line with the recommendations of the Borough Council's Tree Officer.
- g) Downskeepers' Hut Insurance arrangements. Following an enquiry at the last meeting, the Conservators received a written briefing note from the Treasurer relating to the insurance arrangements for the Downskeepers' Hut. The Downkeepers' Hut was covered under the Council's insurance policy and the cost of the insurance was included within the Conservators' "insurance recharges" budget. The briefing note informed the Conservators that over the past few years the way insurance had been accounted for had changed and that the budget monitoring statement would be amended to reflect this. In future the redundant insurance code would be removed.

**44** REPORT OF THE HEAD DOWNSKEEPER. The Conservators received and noted the report of the Head Downskeeper, including updates on Events, Fox attacks, Fly tipping and the Winter Work Programme. The following item was discussed:

Bridleway 127. The Conservators noted that it was hoped that works to improve water drainage near the Old London Road Crossing of the Racecourse would also improve the condition of Bridleway 127, as surface water run-off would be reduced.

**45** CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2014/15. The Conservators received and noted the Chairman's report of the 2014/15 financial year.

**46** PROPOSED EVENTS ON THE DOWNS. The Conservators received a report presenting applications for events on the Downs during 2015 and 2016.

Officers informed the Conservators that in addition to the events listed in the annexe to the report, a small number of racing pigeon releases would be taking place in the Grandstand Road car park during 2015. These would take place at daybreak, and had been held on the Downs for a number of years.

It was noted that the Omni Terrier Derby (30 August 2015) was scheduled to take place on the day prior to this year's Trainers Open Day, as it would otherwise clash with the Bank Holiday Race meeting.

Following consideration of the report, the Conservators agreed:

- To approve the EDMAC Cloud Tramp event on Saturday 1 August 2015.
- To approve the Omni Terrier Derby event on Sunday 30 August 2015.
- To approve the Cross Country Surrey League Race on Saturday 7 November 2015.
- To approve the Tadworth Athletic Club 'Tadworth10' event on Sunday 3 January 2016.

The Conservators noted the Calendar of Events for 2015/16 and the fees and charges to be applied to each event.

The Conservators noted that the Fees and Charges for events had last been reviewed in January 2014, and requested that this be done annually at the January meeting in future.

**47** EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLAN 2015-2020. The Conservators received a report requesting their approval to the final version of the Habitat Management Plan for Epsom & Walton Downs 2015-2020.

The Conservators were informed that comments made by the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee at its last meeting had been integrated into the Plan where possible. Information provided by Angela Clifford (representative of the Epsom Civic Society to the Committee) and her husband regarding bird species observed on the Downs over a period of many years would also be included as an annexe to the Plan.

The Conservators noted that once the Epsom Golf Course Habitat Management Plan had been reviewed (scheduled for the end of 2015), this would be integrated with the Epsom and Walton Downs Habitat Management Plan to produce a single document.

Officers recognised the importance of working in partnership with the Woodland Trust, due to the proximity of its neighbouring Centenary Wood site. It was intended to build stronger communications and share information with the Trust, especially with regard to habitat management and maintenance plans.

Following consideration, the Conservators approved the final version of the Epsom and Walton Downs Habitat Management Plan 2015-2020 and agreed the Management Recommendations set out for the next 5 years.

The Conservators expressed their thanks to the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee for its comments on the draft Plan.

- 48** PROPOSED WORKS TO BE CARRIED OUT BY EPSOM GOLF CLUB. The Conservators received a report presenting proposals from Epsom Golf Club to carry out works to the Golf Course. These included vegetation clearance, tee extension and creation of a new path for the 1<sup>st</sup> hole, and creation of a new path between the 11<sup>th</sup> Green and 12<sup>th</sup> Tee.

The following matters were considered:

- Comments of the Borough Council's Tree Officer. The Conservators were informed that the Council's Tree Officer would undertake a site visit and provide recommendations for consideration by the Clerk and Chairman.
- Seeding of grass areas – proposal 1. Conor Morrow advised the Conservators that it would be more beneficial to the habitat and ecology of the site if some areas adjacent to the woodland edge were not seeded with a grass mix. Mr Morrow informed the Conservators that if existing grasses in the area were encouraged to colonise such spaces, it may result in a more diverse and interesting habitat.
- Material and location of path – proposal 1. The Conservators considered that prior to full approval being granted to the proposed works, a confirmed location/route for the new path and details of the materials to be used should be presented to a future meeting.
- Material of path – proposal 2. The Conservators requested further information regarding the 'red path top material' listed within the proposal, and considered that this should be presented to a future meeting prior to full approval being granted to the proposed works.

Following consideration, the Conservators agreed in principle to the works detailed in the proposals submitted by Epsom Golf Club, but requested that further information be provided to a future meeting prior to full approval. The additional information required related to the location and material of new paths included within proposal 1 and proposal 2.

- 49** EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE. The Conservators received a report presenting the Minutes of the meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee held on 16 March 2015.

The following matters were considered:

- Post Derby Downs clean-up. The concerns raised by Hack Rider Representatives were noted. Simon Durrant expressed that the clean-up of the Downs following the Derby was a large scale and difficult operation, but informed the meeting that Epsom Downs Racecourse understood the concerns expressed. The Racecourse would seek to improve upon last year's clean-up operation.

- Broken Gate at top of Chalk Lane. It was noted that this was a matter for Surrey County Council's consideration, and had been referred to it.
- Signposting of Hatched Area. It was noted that 4 signs had been produced by the TGMB and were now ready to be put in place on the Downs.
- Access to Tattenham Corner Road crossing for pedestrians walking from Tattenham Corner Station. The Conservators noted that this issue had been previously considered several years ago, but that it had not been possible to find a satisfactory solution at that time. It was agreed that the Streetcare Manager would look into the matter and liaise with the Vice Chairman to identify potential ways forward.

**50** DOG CONTROL. The Conservators received a report proposing a 12 month trial of a policy to ask Downs users that they keep dogs on a lead whilst visiting.

The Conservators were informed that a Working Group had been formed to consider the issue of dog control in relation to the whole Borough, but had identified specific proposals to address the issues experienced on the Downs.

It was proposed to request dog walkers to keep their dogs on a lead at all times whilst visiting the Downs for a trial period of 12 months. This was intended as a polite request, rather than a legal requirement. The Conservators were informed that whilst there was legislation which would enable stronger legal restrictions on dog walking on the Downs to be introduced, the enforcement of such powers would be difficult and very costly to implement. The Working Group had considered that a polite request accompanied by a high level of communication and education would be more successful in addressing the issues experienced.

The Working Group had also discussed alternative proposals, such as the introduction of specific 'lead-free' areas on the Downs, but considered that these would be likely to be confusing and inconvenient for dog walkers, leading to a dilution of the key request that dogs be kept on a lead.

It was noted that if approved, significant Officer time would be required to successfully launch and communicate the request to Downs users, but that through strong partnership working with the Jockey Club and Racehorse Trainers this would be managed. The Conservators also noted that continued partnership working would be key to the success of the proposal, and that it would require sustained commitment from all parties.

The Conservators noted that it was intended to highlight the issue of dog control on the Downs at a public Awareness-Day event similar to that held successfully for (and at) Nonsuch Park in previous years. It was proposed to link this to the annual Trainers' Open Day. It was also intended to work closely with the Council's and Jockey Club's communications teams, to maximise awareness of the issue. Possibilities such as appointing local 'dog walking champions' and providing information via local radio would also be investigated.

Following consideration, the Conservators approved the proposal to request dog walkers visiting the Downs to keep their dogs on a lead at all times whilst on the Downs. It was agreed that this would be trialled for a period of twelve months.

The Conservators expressed their thanks to the Downs Manager and Streetcare Manager for all their work with regard to this matter.

- 51** PROPOSALS FROM EPSOM DOWNS MODEL AIRCRAFT CLUB. The Conservators received a report presenting two proposals from Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club (EDMAC) regarding the use of 'Multi Rotor' model aircraft and the use of cameras on model aircraft.

The Conservators considered the proposals, and noted that in the view of the Council's Solicitor there was no legal reason to object. Following this consideration, the Conservators agreed:

- That 'Multi Rotor' model aircraft be included in the types of model aircraft (Helicopters and Fixed Wing) permitted to be flown on Epsom Downs, as detailed in Proposal 1, Annexe 1 of the report.
- That permission be granted for model aircraft fitted with stills or video cameras to be flown and operated on the Downs, as detailed in Proposal 2, Annexe 1 to the report.

- 52** OUTSTANDING REFERENCES. The Conservators received and noted the position of their outstanding references to officers.

*The meeting began at 18.00 hours and ended at 19.02 hours.*

JEAN SMITH  
Chairman