

Minutes of the Meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee held on 16 March 2015

PRESENT-

Councillors Jean Smith (Chairman) (Epsom and Ewell Borough Council); Councillor Clive Smitheram (Epsom and Ewell Borough Council); Mr Andrew Cooper (Epsom Downs Racecourse); Mr Nigel Whybrow (Training Grounds Management Board); Mrs Angela Clifford (Epsom Civic Society); Mr Hugh Craddock (British Horse Society); Mr Alex Stewart (Epsom Downs Riders Protection Society) (Items 12 d) - 19); Mr Roger Marples (Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club); Mr Bob Eberhard (Epsom and Ewell Cycle Action Group); Mr Mark Harvey (Epsom Golf Club) (Items 11 – 18 d)); Mr Richard Balsdon (College Ward Residents' Association); Mr Conor Morrow (Lower Mole Countryside Management Service); Mrs Teresa Cass (Woodcote Residents Association).

Apologies for absence: Mr Simon Dow (Training Grounds Management Board); Mr Simon Durrant (Epsom Downs Racecourse); Mr Bob Harding (Head Downskeeper).

Officers present: Frances Rutter (Clerk to the Conservators), Tim Richardson (Democratic Services Officer), Samantha Whitehead (Streetcare Manager) and Simon Young (Head of Legal and Democratic Services).

- 11 MINUTES. The Minutes of the Meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee held on 29 September 2014 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

- 12 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MEETING AND OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST. The Committee received and noted a report providing updates on matters raised previously. The following items were noted:
 - a) Flooding at the Roundabout outside Epsom Racecourse (Grandstand Road / Tattenham Corner Road). The Committee noted that Surrey County Council Highways Department had completed works to this area, and that flooding had not reoccurred following this.

 - b) Code of Conduct Signs. The Committee noted that all 5 signs were now in location on the Downs.

 - c) Condition of the Hack Sand Track, bottom of Walton Downs. The Committee was informed that Officers of the Council would arrange to meet the Horserace Betting Levy Board regarding this matter, and intended that this meeting would be held before the end of April 2015. Simon Young informed the Committee that the purpose of that meeting would be to identify a pragmatic solution to the issues surrounding the condition and maintenance of the track. The Hack Rider representatives informed the Committee that regular harrowing of the track had not been undertaken in recent months, and requested that this be reinstated. It was noted that Officers would look into this matter.

- d) Car parking for events. The Hack Rider representatives informed the Committee that the grass area adjacent to the Derby Arms Public House was a designated Hack Ride, and requested clarification of the powers used by Epsom Downs Racecourse to utilise it for car parking on non-racing days. It was noted that Officers would look into the legal situation surrounding this practice, and present a report to the next meeting.
- 13 REPORT OF THE HEAD DOWNSKEEPER. The Committee received and noted the report of the Head Downskeeper. The Epsom Civic Society representative informed the Committee that flytipping had occurred on Ebbisham Lane to the South of the Downs. Officers would look into this matter to identify whether the Downskeepers were able to assist with its removal. If it was a matter for Reigate and Banstead Council or Surrey County Council, the matter would be passed to the relevant authority.
- 14 ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE CONSERVATORS. The Committee received a report providing a summary of items of interest considered at meetings of the Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators held on 13 October 2014 and 21 January 2015. The following item was noted:
- a) Surface of Walton Road – installation of speed hump. The cycling group representative expressed concern that the Training Grounds Management Board (TGMB) had not sought the Conservators approval prior to undertaking works to install the hump. The TGMB representative informed the Committee that this was not a situation which would occur again in the future. It was noted that there was a requirement under the Epsom and Walton Downs Regulation Act 1984 to undertake works to the surface of Walton Road in this area to the “reasonable satisfaction” of Surrey County Council (SCC) (the Highway Authority). Officers would confirm that SCC was satisfied with the works.
- 15 REVISION OF THE EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLAN. The Committee received a report providing an updated draft Habitat Management Plan for Epsom & Walton Downs 2015-2020, for comment prior to its submission to the Conservators for approval. The following matters were considered:
- a) Positioning of Maps within the document. It was suggested that the maps could be moved to an earlier section of the Plan to aid referencing for readers.
- b) Integrate with Golf Course Management Plan. It was noted that the Plan was not fully integrated with the Epsom Golf Course Habitat Management Plan. It was suggested that this should be done.
- c) Reference to impact of horse trampling on sensitive sites. The Committee noted that cattle grazing had a different impact to that of horse trampling/grazing, which could be damaging to sensitive sites such as Juniper Hill.
- d) Integration with management of Woodland Trust Langley Vale Centenary Wood site. It was noted that the Plan did not reference the Woodland Trust’s Langley Vale Centenary Wood site, which would be adjacent to the Southern part of the Walton Downs.
- e) Fixed point photography. The Committee enquired whether a schedule of fixed point photography was in place for the Downs, and noted that Officers would look into this matter.

- f) Loss of Small Blue Butterfly from Juniper Hill. The Committee noted that scrub encroachment had contributed to the loss of the Small Blue Butterfly from Juniper Hill, and expressed that this was a matter which the Conservators may wish to consider addressing. The Lower Mole Countryside Management Service Representative informed the Committee that additional soil scrapes were being undertaken on the Downs and sown with locally collected Kidney Vetch seed to provide further habitat for the Butterfly. It was also noted that Officers were considering the re-introduction of grazing on the site.

Officers requested that if representatives to the Committee had any further comments following the meeting, that these be provided to Samantha Whitehead.

- 16 DOG CONTROL. The Committee received a report presenting proposals intended to address issues of Dog Control on the Downs. The Committee noted that this focussed upon a polite request to dog walkers using the Downs to keep their dog(s) on leads prior to noon, daily, and utilise designated lead-free areas during the afternoon if they wished to release their dog(s) from the lead. It was not proposed to introduce further legal restrictions to control dog walking on the Downs, as it was felt that improved communication and education would be more successful. The Clerk informed the Committee that officers continued to work with Surrey Police on the issue of dog control. The following matters were considered:

- a) Views of Hack Rider Representatives. The Hack Rider Representatives welcomed the measures proposed within the report. The Representatives expressed concerns that the proposals appeared to focus on Race Horse Training use of the Downs as their priority, and that there was a risk that restricting lead-free access during mornings could result in an increased number of dogs being walked during the afternoon, and therefore an increase in issues for Hack Riders. Following a question regarding the number of dog related incidents experienced by hack riders on the Downs under current arrangements, it was noted that the British Horse Society website maintained a register of such incidents, which might provide useful information.
- b) Incidents involving model aircraft. The EDMAC Representative informed the Committee that there had been two recent incidents of dogs trampling model aircraft on the Downs.

- 17 ISSUES RAISED BY THE HACK RIDER REPRESENTATIVES. The following items were raised by the Hack Rider Representatives:

- a) Drainage works to the Old London Road crossing of the Racecourse. The Epsom Downs Racecourse Representative informed the Committee that the drainage works incorporated a large soakaway within its specification, and would reduce erosion of Bridleway 127 currently being created by surface-water run-off.
- b) Conservators' consideration of racing season fencing extensions. The Hack Riders representatives expressed concern that the report presented to the meeting of the Conservators on 21 January 2015 regarding racing season fencing extensions did not reference discussion held at the meeting of the Committee held on 12 June 2010. At that meeting, some members of the Committee had expressed concern at the fencing extensions granted by the Conservators for the 2010 race season.

Officers informed the Committee that the report referenced the Committee's original consideration of the matter, in 2002 in addition to detailed reference to the relevant legislation and Byelaws which enabled the Conservators to grant an extension to the fencing period if they wished to do so. It was noted that in future years if a fencing extension was requested by the Racecourse, the report presented to the Conservators would include reference to the 12 June 2010 meeting of the Consultative Committee. An item requesting the views of the Consultative Committee with regard to fencing extensions would be presented to the Committee's next meeting.

- c) Signposting for Hatched Area. The Committee noted that signposts for the 'Hatched Area' at the foot of Walton Downs to state whether it was open or closed for hack riding had not yet been put in place by the Training Grounds Management Board (TGMB). The TGMB Representative informed the Committee that these would be put in place shortly.
- d) Management of Hack Rides and Areas. The following items were considered;
 - i. Horse Ride on south side of Downs House enclosure. It was noted that vegetation had now been cut back.
 - ii. Hack Ride markers on Epsom Golf Course. It was noted that a programme of renewing markers and posts was underway.
 - iii. Sand Track west of Nohome Farm. The Hack Rider representatives expressed concern that this track was boggy and being damaged through use by motor vehicles. It was noted that officers would look into this matter.
 - iv. Maintenance of triangular Hack Area East of Downs House. It was noted that Officers were looking into the possibility of procuring machinery which would enable grass to be cut and collected, in line with the Habitat Management Plan.
- e) Scrub clearance on Hack Area crossing top of Rifle Butts Alley. The Hack Rider Representatives requested that scrub clearance be undertaken on the Hack Area at the top of Rifle Butts Alley, to improve drying of wet areas and access to alternative routes.
- f) Post Derby Downs clean-up. The Hack Riders Representatives expressed concern at the level of glass left on the Downs following the Derby every year and expressed that they felt that further efforts should be made by Epsom Downs Racecourse to remove it.
- g) Access to Tattenham Corner Road traffic crossing for pedestrians walking from Tattenham Corner Station. The Hack Rider Representatives expressed that access arrangements for pedestrians walking from Tattenham Corner Station to the road crossing on Tattenham Corner Road found it very difficult to do so, as there was no footway on the eastern side of the road's surface. This was even more difficult for wheelchair users. It was noted that this was a Surrey County Council issue, but that it had previously been discussed by the Conservators and Consultative Committee. It was noted that Officers would look into the matter.

- 18 ISSUES RAISED FOR CONSIDERATION. The following items were raised by Representatives to the Committee:

- a) Cars offered for sale on the Downs. The Committee was informed concerns had been expressed that cars stored near Clear Height Stables were being offered for sale on Downs land. It was noted that Officers would look into this matter.
 - b) Epsom Golf Club – new path from 11th Green to 12th Tee. The Committee considered a proposal from Epsom Golf Club for a new path on the Golf Course between the 11th Green and 12th Tee, and noted that it would be presented to the next meeting of the Conservators. No comments were made upon the proposal.
 - c) Epsom Golf Club – enlargement of 1st Tee and vegetation clearance. The Epsom Golf Club Representative informed the Committee that Epsom Golf Club intended to submit a proposal for works to the 1st Tee area of the Golf Course to the next meeting of the Conservators. These works would be in line with those proposed during the Committee's Downs Tour on 1 September 2014. No comments were made upon the proposal.
 - d) Downs House. It was noted that Epsom Downs Racecourse had reported that it had now progressed outstanding matters relating to the sale of Downs House, and that the exchange of contracts would hopefully take place soon. It was noted that Barn Owls had previously nested at the site, and that Officers would look into whether this was still occurring.
 - e) Traffic lights at Langley Vale for cross over to 30 Acres and Ermyn Lodge. It was noted that traffic lights were the responsibility of Surrey County Council, but that the traffic plan for the Woodland Trust Centenary Wood might involve works in this area.
 - f) Broken gate at top of Chalk Lane. The Committee noted that repairs to this gate were the responsibility of Surrey County Council. The British Horse Society Representative expressed the view that the condition of the gate was a matter which the Conservators should address, but it was noted that it was outside the boundary of the Downs as defined by the Epsom and Walton Downs Regulation Act 1984, and therefore not the responsibility of the Conservators to maintain. It was noted that Officers would raise the issue with the Surrey County Councillor for that Division.
 - g) Timing of the Running of the Derby race meeting. The Committee was informed that the race card for the 2015 derby festival (both 5th and 6th June) would start and finish 20-30 minutes later than in previous years. The Oaks and Derby races would be run at 4.30 on the respective day.
 - h) Byelaw Boards. It was noted that the number and location of Byelaw Information Boards would be considered by the Conservators at a future meeting as an element of signs audit undertaken by Downskeepers.
- 19 THANKS FROM THE CHAIRMAN. The Chairman informed the Committee that it would be her last meeting as a member of the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee, as she would not be standing as a candidate at the upcoming Borough Council elections. The Chairman expressed her thanks to the Committee, and informed the meeting that her time as its Chairman had been both interesting and stimulating.

The meeting began at 18.00 hours and ended at 19.36 hours.

JEAN SMITH
Chairman