

Minutes of the Meeting of the EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS CONSERVATORS held on 19 April 2017

PRESENT -

Councillor Liz Frost (Chairman); Andrew Cooper (Epsom Downs Racecourse) (Vice-Chairman); Councillor Rekha Bansil, Simon Dow (Horserace Betting Levy Board), Simon Durrant (Epsom Downs Racecourse), Councillor Robert Foote, Councillor Jan Mason and Nigel Whybrow (Epsom Downs Racecourse).

In Attendance: Conor Morrow (Lower Mole Countryside Management Service)

Absent: Councillor Lucie Dallen and Councillor Clive Woodbridge

Officers present: Kathryn Beldon (Clerk to the Conservators), Sam Beak (Downs Manager), Bob Harding (Head Downskeeper), Peter Howarth (Countryside Officer), Samantha Whitehead (Streetcare Manager) and Tim Richardson (Democratic Services Officer)

31 CLERK TO THE CONSERVATORS

The Conservators were informed that following the recent resignation of Mrs Frances Rutter as the Chief Executive of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, the Council had appointed Mrs Kathryn Beldon as Chief Executive, and (pursuant to Section 9 (1) of the Epsom and Walton Downs Regulation Act 1984) Clerk to the Conservators. The Conservators welcomed Mrs Beldon to her new position.

32 TREASURER TO THE CONSERVATORS

The Conservators were informed that following the appointment of Mrs Kathryn Beldon as the Chief Executive of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and Clerk to the Conservators, the Council had appointed Mr Lee Duffy as the Interim Treasurer to the Conservators.

33 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators held on 18 January 2017 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

34 ITEMS OF INTEREST DISCUSSED BY THE TRAINING GROUNDS MANAGEMENT BOARD (TGMB)

The Conservators received a report providing an update on items considered by the Epsom and Walton Downs Training Grounds Management Board (TGMB). The report provided updates on the following matters: number of horses in training; Downskeeper recruitment; hack rider encroachment; Kempton Park Racecourse; the hatched area at the foot of Walton Downs; and the Vision for Epsom Downs.

It was noted that a leaflet regarding the TGMB's Vision for Epsom Downs had been circulated to all members of the Conservators, and provided to members of the public in attendance at the meeting.

35 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS AND OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

The Conservators received a report providing an update on issues raised at previous meetings. The report provided updates on the following matters: the hack sand track at the foot of Walton Downs; public consultation on proposal for parking on land in front of the Derby Arms public house; and the public information meeting in Langley Vale on 22 March 2017.

With regard to these updates, the following matter was considered:

- a) Hack sand track, foot of Walton Downs. It was noted that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services had written to the Horse Race Betting Levy Board again setting out the Conservators' position regarding maintenance of the track, and that this letter had been sent recorded delivery. No response to the letter had yet been received.

36 REPORT OF THE HEAD DOWNSKEEPER

The Conservators received a report of the Head Downskeeper updating them upon recent issues and activities on the Downs.

The following matters were considered:

- a) Hack riding map and information event on the Downs for hack riders. The Chairman expressed thanks to the Hack Rider Representatives on the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee for their valuable offer of assistance in arranging an information event on the Downs for hack riders.
- b) Staffing. The Conservators were informed that a member of staff had been recruited to fill the position created by the recent resignation of a Downskeeper. This Downskeeper had previously worked as an agency staff member to cover sickness absence. Induction training had been provided, including a horse handling session, and more detailed training would now be arranged. A member of the Downskeeper team was

presently still on long term sick leave, and would be covered by agency staff.

37 WORKS TO WATER PIPE OUTSIDE THE DOWNSKEEPERS' HUT

The Downs Manager informed the Conservators that she had been notified of the need to undertake works to replace the water supply pipe to the Downskeepers' Hut. This proposal had been received on the day of the meeting and was necessary as the current pipe was leaking. Full details of the works required were not yet available, but a photograph identifying the location of the existing pipe, and proposed route of the new pipe was circulated at the meeting. The proposed works would take 7 days to complete, and would be undertaken outside of racehorse training hours.

The Conservators requested that full details of the proposed works be provided prior to approval being granted, including confirmation of the intended start date. The Downs Manager would provide these once they had been received, and it was noted that this was likely to be prior to the next meeting, on 14 June 2017. If this was the case, details of the proposed works would be emailed to all members of the Conservators to seek their opinion.

38 POLICY TO REGULATE SMALL GROUP SESSIONS ON THE DOWNS

The Conservators received a report proposing the introduction of a new policy to regulate the use of the Downs by small groups. The following matters were considered:

- a) Level of interest in use of the Downs by small groups. The Downs Manager informed the Conservators that over the past 6 months she had received a number of requests for permission to use the Downs for small group activities. These included both commercial operations (such as fitness groups/personal trainers) and charity/community groups. The Conservators' event strategy did not currently provide any guidance on the regulation of the use of the Downs by such groups.
- b) Impact of granting approval to small group use. The Conservators expressed concern that granting approval to the use of the Downs by small groups could lead to the proliferation of such activities, and negative impact on the condition of the Downs and use for other activities, such as race horse training. It was noted that the proposed policy would not permit any events during race horse training times, and that all applications would require the consent of the Conservators, to guard against proliferation. It also proposed that each applicant be limited to a maximum of 6 small group events on the downs per year.
- c) Difficulty in regulation of events. The Conservators were informed that some small group events were already informally held on the Downs, but were difficult to regulate, as they either used public rights of way over which the Conservators had little control, or could not be distinguished

from individual public use (permitted by the Epsom and Walton Downs Regulation Act 1984), due to their small size.

- d) Potential for policy to permit specific group use. The Conservators considered whether it would be possible to introduce a policy which only permitted a small number of specific small group activities, if they did not wish to approve the proposed policy. The Downs Manager advised the meeting that this would be very challenging to both define and implement.

Following consideration, the Conservators expressed the view that small group activities should not be permitted on the Downs due to their potential negative impact upon the condition of the Downs and existing activities. Accordingly, the Conservators:

- (1) Refused to approve the proposed policy to regulate small group sessions on the Downs.

39 PROPOSED EVENTS ON EPSOM DOWNS

The Conservators received a report providing details of event requests for the Downs.

The following matters were considered:

- a) Refusal of policy to regulate small groups. It was noted that in the Conservators' refusal of the policy to regulate small groups on the Downs (see Minute 38, above) they had expressed that they did not wish to approve the use of the Downs for such activities. The application for guided walking tours (included within this item) would therefore be refused.
- b) Concerns over impact of granting approval. The Conservators expressed concern that granting approval to the use of the Downs for events could have a negative impact on the condition of the Downs and their use for other activities, such as race horse training. This related to all events, but in particular to large events.
- c) Large events on the Downs. The Conservators expressed concern at the potential impact of large events on the Downs and requested clarification of the number of attendees involved. The Downs Manager informed the meeting that the number of participants stated in the Committee report included all entrants, organisers and observers for the event. The Race for Life event already approved by the Conservators to be held on the Downs in 2017 had been limited to 4,000 participants. The Conservators considered that only 1 large event should be permitted on the Downs each year, and that as the Cancer Research UK Race for Life had already been approved for 2017, the application for the Alzheimer's Society, Memory Walk on 24 September 2017 would therefore be refused.
- d) Limits on number of events. The Conservators were informed that the agreed Event Management Strategy for the Downs had limits on the

number of each category of event which could be held per year. It was noted that none of these limits had yet been reached. The Conservators requested that the level of these limits be reviewed at a future meeting.

- e) New event organisers using the Downs. The Conservators considered that event organisers who had not previously used the Downs should be restricted to 1 event in their initial application, to ensure that there were no issues with their usage or post-event clean-up.

Following consideration, the Conservators:

(1) Decided to:

- **Approve** the Royal Pigeon Racing Association: Pigeon Racing Liberations on various Saturdays between May – September 2017
 - **Approve** the First Stride Events Ltd: 5km & 10km running races on Sunday 20 August
 - **Refuse** the First Stride Events Ltd: 5km & 10km running races on 18 June and 29 October 2017
 - **Refuse** the Guided Walking Tours on Sundays from 2 July – 13 August 2017
 - **Approve** the EDMAC Cloud Tramp on Saturday 5 August 2017
 - **Approve** the Omni Terrier Derby on Sunday 27 August 2017
 - **Refuse** the Alzheimer’s Society Memory Walk on Sunday 24 September 2017
 - **Approve** the Tadworth Athletics Club: Tadworth Ten on Sunday 7 January 2018
 - **Approve** the 79th Pioneer Run for Veteran Motorcycles on Sunday 18 March 2018
 - **Refuse** the Alzheimer’s Society Memory Walk on Sunday 23 September 2018
- (2) Noted the Calendar of Events for 2017/18, subject to the decisions on applications detailed above.
- (3) Noted the fees and charges to be applied to each event.
- (4) Requested officers to present a review of the limits placed on the maximum number of events permitted per year to a future meeting.

40 SIGNS ON THE DOWNS AUDIT

The Conservators received and noted a report presenting an audit of signs on the Downs, and expressed their thanks to officers for all their work to complete such an extensive analysis. It was noted that officers aimed to present a follow-up report before the end of the financial year to agree a schedule for replacing/repairing signs where necessary.

41 REVISION OF THE HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLAN TO INCLUDE EPSOM GOLF CLUB SITE

The Conservators received a report presenting the final version of the Habitat Management Plan for Epsom and Walton Downs and Epsom Golf Club 2015-20.

It was noted that a couple of small elements of the Habitat Management Plan were still outstanding, and would be added to it as soon as they were available. The Conservators expressed their thanks to officers and all contributors, for their work to complete the Plan.

Following consideration, the Conservators:

- (1) Noted the amendments made to the Habitat Management Plan, which now included an updated version of the Epsom Golf Club Plan.
- (2) Approved the final version of the Plan and adopted the Management Recommendations set out for the next 3 years.

42 MINUTES OF THE EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The Conservators received a report providing the Minutes of the meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee held on 13 March 2017. It was noted that the Chairman had contacted Surrey County Council with regard to the condition of the hedge adjacent to the horse margin running from Langley Vale Farm to Shepherds Walk and was awaiting a response.

43 OUTSTANDING REFERENCES

The Conservators received and noted the position of their outstanding references.

44 VOTE OF THANKS

The Conservators expressed their thanks to the Chairman for her work on their behalf over the past year.

The Chairman thanked the Conservators and officers for their work throughout the year.

The meeting began at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.25 pm

COUNCILLOR LIZ FROST (CHAIRMAN)

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