

Nomansland Joint Management Committee

Minutes of the Meeting on Thursday 13 July 2017, 19:30, No 1

Held at the Wheathampstead Cricket Club Pavilion, Nomansland

Present:	Councillors	John Newton-Davies	Chairman
		Gill Clark	
		Claudio Duran	
		Tessa Reason	
Officers		Nick Sherriff	Green Spaces and Cemeteries Team Leader, St Albans District Council
		Sophie Barker	Countryside Ranger
		Ellie Beach	Projects Officer, Countryside Management Service
		J Warren	Clerk to Wheathampstead Parish Council
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112-17 Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman thanked the Wheathampstead Cricket Club for their hospitality and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were made.

113-17 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Janet Churchard, David Johnston and Sandra Wood.

114-17 Election of Chairman

Councillor Reason, seconded by Councillor Clark, nominated Councillor Newton-Davies as Chairman. He was duly elected.

115-17 Election of Vice Chairman

Councillor Clark, seconded by Councillor Newton-Davies, nominated Councillor Johnston as Vice Chairman. He was duly elected.

116-17 Replacement Members

None.

117-17 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Councillor Newton-Davies declared an interest as a member of the Woodland Trust.

118-17 Minutes of the meeting of 13 April 2017

The Chairman proposed, and it was agreed that the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2017 be approved.

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Resolved:

To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2017 to be a true and fair account and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

119-17 Points emerging from the Annual Inspection

A number of points emerged during the annual inspection immediately preceding the meeting:

- Ragwort would be pulled by John O’Conner staff and volunteers in an attempt to prevent excessive spreading.
- Consideration through the Greenspace Action Plan would be given to opening/ improving access to permissive bridleway 32 from Nomansland. Some discussion on which route would be officially preferred ensued; parallel to the B651 or a more diagonal route.
- Consideration also through the Greenspace Action Plan, to be given to surfacing and levelling the path as it meets Ferrers Lane.
- Temporary enclosures to be made to encourage heather growth in the area north of Ferrers lane and south of the cricket pitch.
- Selective thinning of scrubby woodland to improve diversity and vigour of trees
- Limbs of tree fallen across footpath from private house near Down Green Lane to be cleared
- Forestry work and creating the ‘New Ride’ two years on showed marked improvements to the locality.
- Rabbits were prolific and many territory marker depressions found.
- Councillor Reason remarked on the improved care and management of the Common since she was last a member of the Management Committee some three years previously.

120-17 Committee Terms of Reference

To be circulated by the Green Spaces and Cemeteries Team Leader

121-17 Green Spaces and Cemeteries Team Leader verbal report and Green Space Action Plan

In addition to items noted at Minute 119-17 it was noted that access to the Common east of the B651 would be across the ditch at Dyke Lane, possibly using a boardwalk. The flooding/drainage issue there would be taken into consideration.

Further winter work to the southern hedge area near the Fliers’ area was to be undertaken.

The Countryside Management Service Project Officer was invited to explain that the Green Space Action Plan (GAP) was to cover a period of 5 years, 2018-2023 to include access and interpretation improvements, tree and ditch management. It was designed as an overarching plan to promote awareness of the Common and ascertain stakeholders’ requirements. Once passed by the Management Committee it would go to Stakeholders for consultation.

The role of the Countryside Management Service in producing the GAP was explained.

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The Chairman proposed, and it was agreed, that the GAP be put out for consultation.

Resolved:

To put the Green Space Action Plan (GAP) out to consultation

122-17 Countryside Rangers' Report

The Countryside Ranger reported on her regular litter-picks and planned ragwort pull within the forthcoming few weeks. Volunteers would be welcomed. Sandridge and Wheathampstead Parish Councils and stables at West End Farm to be notified.

123-17 Cricket Club Report

Wheathampstead Cricket Club's report had been circulated. Their concerns regarding rabbit damage were noted. Rabbit culling would continue through the summer by shooting.

The request for a memorial bench for David Cresswell, stalwart of the Cricket Club and recently deceased, was discussed and agreed.

Resolved:

To approve the request for the Wheathampstead Cricket Club to install a memorial bench.

124-17 Nomansland Nature Quest

It was reported that ten groups of school children, from Beech Hyde (Wheathampstead) and Sandridge Schools had recently taken part in Nature Quest events. Here they learnt a little of the history and natural history of the Common, and had fun den building, exploring and making bows and arrows.

125-17 Items Raised by Committee Members

126-17 Park Run

A request to organise a junior park run across Nomansland was discussed. The Chairman proposed, and it was agreed that whilst the Management Committee tried to support activities for community benefit Nomansland was not suitable for a park run.

Members were concerned for both the natural environment (lowland acid grassland and lowland heathland, supporting rare grasshoppers, butterflies and bees, both priority habitats in the UK) and for participant parking, access and safety. The Site was under a conservation agreement with Natural England in which the Council received grants to improve and maintain the meadow and heathland. The Council would need to pass the proposal for a run past them as it might impact on the agreement and funding may be withdrawn.

Nomansland is used by many individuals and groups – dog walkers, horse riders, cyclists, model aircraft fliers, kite fliers and of course the Wheathampstead Cricket Club - who needed to respect one another and coexist. Parking is very limited, as already identified by the applicant, and at the weekends the various groups already monopolise parking on the Common. The Wicked Lady car park was opposite the Cricket Club but there

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was concern that this was a very dangerous crossing point, and indeed a number of road accidents had occurred along the B561

Further the Common is plagued by rabbits which dig many small marker holes. The Cricket Club, mindful of health and safety, prior to matches and practice endeavour to infill these to reduce the possibility of turned ankles and tripping. The Nomansland JMC works to a ' Greenspace Action Plan ' to care for the fragile natural environment, manage the grazing by rabbits/ deer. Moveable enclosures around patches of heather which are used to encourage the plants to grow strong enough to be less palatable to wildlife and maintain the diversity of the Common must not be compromised.

If it was still the wish to carry out the run at Nomansland, both a comprehensive risk assessment, safeguarding documentation and details of relevant insurances would need to be provided and a site meeting arranged to see if a location within the site could be identified that would not have a negative effect on the delicate flora and fauna present on the common. An event licence would be needed.

Resolved:

To advise the applicant, with reasons, that Nomansland was not deemed suitable for a park run.

127-17 Refugia mats

The request for refugia mats would be passed to the CMS, with the recommendation that they be labelled to minimise the risk of removal. These were designed to provide refuge for reptiles and amphibians and the occasional small mammal. A simple form was made of corrugated roofing felt (best size for ease of storage and handling is 50cm by 50cm).

Resolved:

CMS to provide details on where to locate refugia mats.

128-17 Fliers and Riders

Further to Minute 119-17 no further instances of disputes between fliers and riders had been reported. Both user group representatives were keen that the Common be a place of harmony.

The horse riders' representative reported some issues with uncontrolled dogs, and spoke of the need to educate dog owners about interaction with horses.

129-17 Date of next meeting

5 October 2017, 19:30 at the Memorial Hall.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 21:05

Dated this day of 2017
Chairman