

Nomansland Common Joint Management Committee**Minutes of the Meeting of Thursday 11 June, 19.30h, No 1**

Held at the Wheathampstead Cricket Club
Following the annual inspection of the Common

Present	Councillors	J Newton-Davies	Chairman
		D Johnston	Vice Chairman
		G Clark	
		C Duran	
		S Wood	
	Officers	Jon Green	Parks & Green Spaces Manager
		Nick Sherriff	Parks & Green Spaces Officer
		Charlotte Hawkins	Countryside Ranger
	Administrator	Julia Warren	Clerk to Wheathampstead Parish Council
		Press	0
		Public	8

45-15 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor J Shardlow.

46-15 Election of Chairman

Councillor Johnston proposed, seconded by Councillor Duran, and it was agreed, that Councillor Newton-Davies be elected Chairman of the Nomansland Joint Committee for 2015-16.

Resolved Councillor Newton-Davies be elected Chairman of the Nomansland Joint Committee for 2015-16.

47-15 Election of Vice Chairman

Councillor Newton-Davies proposed, seconded by Councillor Duran, and it was agreed, that Councillor Johnston be elected Vice Chairman of the Nomansland Joint Committee for 2015-16.

Resolved Councillor Johnston be elected Vice Chairman of the Nomansland Joint Committee for 2015-16.

48-15 Cricket Club report

Alistair Sykes reported that the Wheathampstead Cricket Club had three teams running, a fourth team having been dropped because of falling numbers. Cricket participation nationally was dropping, and Wheathampstead also suffered from demographics, many members being a similar age and with family commitments. They did however have a good fixture list and would promote this at Village Day.

The Club's concerns relevant to this committee were the large number of rabbits on the common, reflected throughout the parish, and the problems of infilling their burrows; and the car park. He asked whether road scalplings scrapings? could be obtained to help level the surface; club members would be able to assist with any works. It was noted that such material had been used on this particular car park for many years, in contrast to the Ferrers Lane car park where the surface was inert granite type 1.

During the annual inspection walk officers had noted that a small heap of fine turf had appeared, presumably whilst the Club's groundsman undertook rabbit damage reparation works. It was agreed that this would be removed to maintain the ecology of the area.

The Clubhouse benefitted from new showers. The access ramp was regularly used by members with pushchairs, a more permanent access was to be designed when resources allowed.

Resolved To note the report.

49-15 Replacement members

None .

50-15 Specific Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

None.

51-15 Minutes of Committee meeting of 19 March 2015

The Chairman proposed and it was agreed that the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2015 be approved.

Resolved To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2015 to be a true and fair account and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

52-15 Points emerging from the annual inspection of the Common

This meeting was preceded by a walk and the annual inspection of the Common. Members had seen the varying growth of the ecotones, a few months for the most recently cut area, 3 years for another. The woodland area was also visited and vegetation seen to be naturalising the areas where forestry work had recently been undertaken. Some of the larger buttresses and remaining brash would be moved in the winter into eco piles further within the wooded area.

The repairs to Ferrers Lane Car Park, undertaken prior to the summer closure of Heartwood Forest Car Park, were inspected. The application of the 20 tonnes of granite MOT type 1, together with grading of the surface, had made a significant improvement.

Members also observed the effect of older rabbit exclosures on allowing heather to mature and grow, and the newly fenced areas

previously cleared of gorse and saplings where heather was now growing well.

53-15 Countryside Ranger Progress Report

It was reported that the Common was regularly litter picked particularly around the climbing tree and the car park. Paths had been cleared of fallen branches and log piles made by the public spread out in an attempt to avoid fires being set. The code of conduct sign by the flying strip had been taped to cover exposed edges and the missing, subsequently found, interpretation panel had been cleaned and awaited installation by the CMS.

Since Christmas the CMS had undertaken a number of tasks, including coppicing the gorse within the existing rabbit fence to allow regeneration, and clearing a substantial area of brambles and blackthorn to create bare ground for the new rabbit enclosure. The brash was then used as a dead hedge on the northern boundary. A post and wire fence had been installed to exclude rabbits and protect the heather from grazing.

In March sixty local children had taken part in a Nomansland Nature Quest participating in activities including orienteering, den building, catapult making, and learning about and identifying trees.

The heather was growing well in the rabbit enclosures indicating that the fencing was effective in restricting their access. However the rabbit population remained large elsewhere on the common. A pair of red kites was known to be nesting along Down Green Lane, and kestrels, buzzards and sparrow hawks were often seen, indicating a healthy population of small mammals and birds. The bluebells flowered well in the recently coppiced woodland area, suggesting minimal damaged during winter woodland works.

The flying strip was now cut by John O'Conner.

Two incidents of fly tipping had occurred between March and June and been quickly cleared away. A number of complaints had been received regarding the state of the woods following the woodland work. Paths were now cleared, concerns addressed, and signage erected to inform the public of the importance of such works and importance of woodland glades. Potholes in Ferrers Lane Car Park had been levelled prior to the closing of Heartwood Forest Car Park for resurfacing work.

Ragwort was beginning to appear. This was to be monitored and a pulling day organised in the summer. Signage would be put up to both inform the public and also encourage volunteer support. The propose date would be circulated to those attending the meeting.

Resolved To note the report.

54-15 Parks & Open Spaces Officer's Progress Report

1. Finance

Nick Sherriff reported that all expenditure would be kept within

2. Car park repairs – Ferrers Lane

To minimise disruption, regrading and infilling of potholes with granite MOT type 1 had been undertaken prior to the closure of Heartwood car park, and subsequent increase in use of the Ferrers Lane car park.

3. Woodland winter work

As noted at Minute 40-15 woodland work north of the Cricket Club was complete. The contractors would return in the autumn/winter (outside the growing and nesting season) to tidy further. Trees marked for removal were identified by SADC and CMS officers on the basis of what was best for the woodland, not upon economic value of the wood. Work had been undertaken a little later than intended because of contractor commitments, however a visual inspection was undertaken to avoid any active nesting sites. Birds in March were generally searching for nest sites. Two on-site meetings with residents had taken place subsequent to the work. It was acknowledged that further signage to inform users of the Common of the works would have been useful, and any future works would have project follow up notices explaining management needs and the environmental works. This project was essentially self-funding because of the current price of wood.

4. Questions from public

A number of questions were raised about the ecology of the woodland and the public present's desire to retain the ambience of the woodland rather than have it managed. The environmental need for management was explained as was some of the history of the Common. Councillors were pleased that the local public was interested and engaged and encouraged participation at all meetings and inspection walks as well as during the consultation process

Resolved **To note the reports.**

55-15

Items raised by Committee Members

Evidencing the Puddingstone

As agreed at Minute 41-15 Sandridge and Wheathampstead Parish councils has considered and agreed to jointly fund a semi-circular bench to mark the Puddingstone (budget £800 including installation). The teak bench previously discussed was discounted on sustainability grounds and SADC policy to avoid using tropical hardwoods. It was agreed that an alternative supplier be sought and this and the wording of the commemorative plaque be brought to the next meeting.

Resolved **1 To note the report.**
 2 To consider bench and commemorative plaque at the next meeting.

