

## Nomansland Joint Management Committee

### Minutes of the Meeting on Thursday 18 October 2018, 19:30, No 2

Held at the Wheathampstead Memorial Hall

Present:	Councillors	David Johnston	Chairman
		Janet Churchard	
		Gill Clark	
		John Newton-Davies	
		Tessa Reason	
		Sandra Woods	
Officers		Nick Sherriff	Green Spaces and Cemeteries Team Leader, St Albans District Council
		Faye Tuffnell	Countryside Ranger
		Ellie Beach	Projects Officer, Countryside Management Service
		J Warren	Clerk to Wheathampstead Parish Council
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#### **178-18 Welcome and Introductions**

Councillor Johnston welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **179-18 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor Jonathan Booth and Graham Leonard and the Wheathampstead Cricket Club. Councillor Reason substituted for Councillor Booth.

#### **180-18 Replacement Members**

Councillor Reason substituted for Councillor Booth.

#### **181-18 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

Councillors agreed that declarations of interest, such as organisation membership was pertinent when the subject of an agenda item. No one declared an interest or had sought a dispensation.

#### **182-18 Minutes of the meeting of 19 July 2018**

The Chairman proposed, and it was agreed that the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2018 be approved.

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### **Resolved:**

**To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2018 to be a true and fair account and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

### **183-18 Green Spaces and Cemeteries Team Leader's report**

It was formally reported that branches damaged by installation of impromptu swings, and dead wood, had been pollarded from the 'climbing tree'. The tree was very popular and healthwise could ideally benefit from a rest. It was hoped that the pruning would extend its life.

Further to Minute 169-18 the contract for car park works had been awarded to Volker Highways, a new contractor to St Albans but one who had undertaken a number of projects for Luton BC. The Green Spaces and Cemeteries Team Leader and Countryside Management Services officer had gone through the contract details prior to contract sign off. Once agreed the work start date would be advertised. This would be phased with car parks closed to the public whilst work was in progress.

The Countryside Management Services had been approached by a local developer for information on local biodiversity projects, a number of possible 'offset' projects arising from the management plan could be identified on Nomansland. Committee members discussed whether there were any projects (closer to the proposed development) that could be put forward. CMS officers to send details to Parish Clerk to allow the Parish Council to offer projects.

The commemorative bench sponsored by Martin Weston had been purchased, Mr Weston to be contacted prior to its installation.

### **184-18 CMS Officer's report**

It was reported that 22 volunteers spent 121 hours on site on 15 August removing the old heather enclosure which had become swamped with brambles. 24 volunteers spent 144 hours on site on 22 August erecting a new heather compartment at the far end of the cricket area by Ferrers Lane, a small team returned a few days later to complete the task. An event was planned for 24 October, when, subject to start date of the car park works, the volunteers would begin scrub clearance around the heather and, once car park works complete, planting of a gorse band.

The Bats, Moths and More talk on 19 July was attended by 26 people. Few bats were active but 573 moths totalling 107 species were found. Of particular note were the True Lover's Knot and *Aristotelia ericinella*. The trapping of 9 True Lover's Knot moths on one evening suggested that the heather feeding species may be resident where it was generally believed to be rare or a migrant in Hertfordshire. *Aristotelia ericinella* (this was just the fourth county record) was also abundant with 31 specimens. These moths were an indication of the importance of the local heather habitat.

A range of tree works had been identified that needed to be under taken around the heathland area, the woodland beyond and the hedgerow behind the flying area. Contractors were being invited for a site visit to cost up the

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individual areas of work. This to be undertaken over the winter with any outstanding items rolled over to the following winter.

Parkrun held its last event at Heartwood Forest the first weekend in October and was moving to Jersey Farm, the Woodland Trust were concerned about the damage and impact it was having on the site at Heartwood Forest.

### **185-18 Country side Rangers' report**

The Countryside Ranger reported on fly tipping down Dyke lane and in the adjacent area of Acid Grassland, plus litter in the roadside ditches and across the Common.

Five rope swings had been removed from the Heathland area of the Climbing Tree. A discussion followed regarding the balance between fun, safety of children using such structures and damage to trees. *Clarification was sought from the insurance risk consultant and subsequently confirmed that swings should be removed upon discovery as the Council would otherwise be legally liable should any claim occur.*

The main footpaths and rides had been cut throughout the summer months to improve access. A reported dangerous overhanging branch at West End car park had also been cleared.

18 people had attended the butterfly walk and many insects seen including 31 Small Coppers, 1 Common Blue and cocoons of 6 Spot Burnet Moths. The heather had recovered from the summer heatwave and the planned scrub and birch removal would prevent shading of the heather, a unique habitat for many butterflies and moths. Common toadflax was abundant, a good late season source of nectar for bumblebees and butterflies, fungi were appearing near Ferrers Lane Car Park.

### **186-18 Cricket Club Report**

No formal report, but it had been noted that the outfield had improved following the programme of rabbit culling.

### **187-18 Items Raised by Committee Members**

Councillor Wood raised the issue of better access to the Common, Heartwood Forest and Arboretum, in particular for disabled people.

This to include a metaled footpath on the east side of Nomansland, to access the Arboretum. This improved access she suggested could be directly from Dyke Lane, following the Eastern boundary of the Common until it connected with an existing footpath behind the Pumping Station in Drovers Lane, which then leads down to the North entrance of the Arboretum. This route from Wheathampstead had the advantage of not having to cross the Sandridge Road.

The Green Spaces and Cemeteries Team Leader advised that the first section was part of the car park works and access works: 45 m of surfaced path will be installed from Dyke Lane. The rest of the path through the woods was opened up 2 years ago in anticipation of this. This would not be surfaced but was clear of vegetation and pretty accessible. Secretary of State approval (hard surfacing of common land) would be required to surface the path and additional funding would be needed. It was unclear whether the usage would warrant the expense.

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She further asked for the continuation of the existing Heartwood Forest path from Sandridge to Nomansland, running immediately adjacent and to the west of the road, so as to cross the Common through to the existing metalled path from Wheathampstead, opposite The Wicked Lady, adjacent to the Cricket Club entrance. Whilst this had the disadvantage of still having to cross the Sandridge Road into Drovers Lane to gain access to the Arboretum from the north, it would complete an important footpath connection from Wheathampstead not only to Heartwood but also thereon to St Albans.

Councillor Wood asked that both the above routes be upgraded to the existing footpath route from the Nomansland Car Park to the Arboretum to enable disabled access and complete connectedness of all Heartwood footpaths in some way not only to Sandridge but also to the immediate neighbouring village Wheathampstead.

The Green Spaces and Cemeteries Team Leader responded that whilst she recognised that she had been continually requesting these changes, the project would be for Hertfordshire County Council to agree and sanction. work undertaken in the 2017-18 winter had opened up the vegetation and improved access to the first section coming from Heartwood Forest. Metalled paths would similarly require permission from Natural England and the Secretary of State.

### **188-18 Pre- advised user group comments**

It was reported that refreshing the byelaws continued to be constrained by limited staff resources. However a district wide solution for multiple dog walking was to be considered in the shape of a Public Space Protection Order following issues with individuals walking 15-18 dogs together.

### **189-18 Date of next meeting**

7 February 2018, 19:30 at the Memorial Hall.

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 20:15**

**Dated this                      day of                      2019**  
**Chairman**