

Chorleywood Parish Council: Open Spaces Committee -

Notes by GH (in attendance as a member of the public) of matters relevant to Chorleywood Common raised at the meeting on 11 September 2012

Matters arising. There was nothing further to report on Veolia's proposed borehole near the cattle creep; a response is awaited to the Council's suggestion of a payment of £1000. Nor was there any further progress on the possible Dog Control Order, where proposals are awaited from Three Rivers. It was noted that screens have now been placed around the generator unit inside the railway fence at Shepherd's Bridge.

Ranger's Report. *[I have a copy of the full document if anyone wants to see it.]* Ponds: Countryside Management Service now advise that the contamination of the silt at Christchurch Pond is minor, and when the silt is removed it can be disposed of on site; steps to control the duckweed on Sladdys Pond will be necessary in the autumn. All the ponds have maintained a good depth of water this summer. Plant growth: has been vigorous following the wet weather, and more cutting has been needed than usual. All the grass will need to be cut and lifted *[now done; the bales are in the Lorry Car Park]* to prevent a build-up of fertility if it was left to die back and rot: that would be detrimental to wild flowers, which do best on nutrient-poor soil. Photos of wild flowers, particularly on Larks Meadow, have been taken and will be put on the website. Volunteers from the Friends of the Common have taken part in two sessions of ragwort pulling. Filming: one of the Rangers supervised the location and use of vehicles when filming took place on the Common at a weekend; a further request for permission to film is being directed towards a weekday. Butterflies: Michael Hyde of Friends of the Common was present and reported to the meeting that volunteers from the Friends, under the guidance of Mr Bill Cattle, had been out to undertake surveys and would be doing some more. *[Further details and photos will be in the forthcoming FoCC Newsletter.]* Apprentice: the first apprentice had found that travel from near Thame took too long and cost too much. The new apprentice, Jason, lives in Mill End, and is keen, fitting in well and enjoying the work; at present he is on a 4-6 week trial period and if that is successful will be taken on and will start his College work in October; he is aged 19 and is learning to drive, so that in due course he will be able to use the vehicles.

Common Grassland Survey. Mrs Brenda Harold of Herts and Middx Wildlife Trust has made a survey of, particularly, the acid and neutral grassland on the Common, as part of the Council's "four-year plan" project to establish a programme of surveys of aspects of the Common, and with a view to identifying changes taking place in the flora. It appears that the area at the top of Larks Meadow is now largely neutral rather than acid; possibly the ph is being affected by grass cuttings being allowed to decompose. On the Common Road side of the Common there are some species of grass which are rare in the County. The Committee recorded their thanks to Mrs Harold for undertaking the survey (and for doing so free of charge). The results of the survey are held in paper and electronic form by the Parish Office and sent to the County Biological Records Centre; it was suggested that the grassland survey should be put on the website, and the list of further surveys to be done. The RSPB has agreed

to do a survey of bird life.

Proposed low voltage cable from Dog Kennel Lane to Cherry Tree Dell. A request has been received for permission to lay a cable to improve the supply to Cherry Tree Cottages. Various routes have been suggested; the one now proposed runs around the north side of Artichoke Dell, along the track to Cherry Tree Dell and around the outside of the properties to enter from the south side. That route was considered to have the least impact and to do no environmental damage. The utility provider would be responsible for doing the work, including reinstatement, and for the necessary Commons Act 2006 section 38 application. The Committee decided to approve the application in principle, subject to negotiation of a wayleave agreement.

Paths. The Council has received a grant of £300 from Herts County Council, which will cover the replacement of four signs. It was considered that another three would need attention, and then it would be possible to prepare and publish a Parish Paths map, perhaps also with notes on places of interest.

“Four Year Vision”. The Open Spaces Committee’s projects within the Council’s “four year vision” were reviewed. In order of priority, they are: (1) water harvesting at the allotments, under investigation; (2) Butterfly survey, progress has been made by Mr Cattle and the Friends [*see above and Newsletter*]; (3) possible Leisure Trail, proposals are being formulated, principal input would be Rangers’ time; (4) information signs and lecterns, grant funding from the Chilterns Conservation Board would be available (£600 would cover two), and the next stage is to consider content, materials, designs and locations, possibly at one of the ponds and at Larks Meadow; (5) surveys, see above under Grassland Survey; (6) change of use of Hollybush Hall to Education Centre, low priority for Open Spaces because the first steps are for the Village Halls Committee.

Legal opinion relating to Chorleywood Common: discussed as private business. The Committee resolved to exclude the Press and public from the discussion of the agenda item “to consider legal opinion relating to Chorleywood Common”. [*The inference appears to be that this relates to advice in connection with the further legal issues on grazing which were mentioned briefly at the end of the Council’s recent letter to Parish residents about the history and future of the grazing project. I asked that the Friends should be told of any result of the discussions which could be put in the public domain, but have since heard that the result of the Open Spaces Committee discussion is still being kept confidential – I infer that there is likely to be a further confidential discussion of legal and practical considerations relating to grazing at the Full Council meeting on Tuesday 25 September. The Committee of the Friends still consider that the grazing project is desirable in principle, and strongly hope that the Council will formulate proposals for grazing which comply with the legal rules and promote the benefits of grazing. We strongly encourage all who agree with this to write to the Council expressing support for the project.*]

GH