

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 12 March 2013

Public Forum: Michael Hyde (of FoCC) thanked the Parish Council, and particularly the Clerk and the Hall caretaker, for making the Memorial Hall available at short notice for the AGM; congratulated those responsible for the successful dredging of Christ Church pond, and suggested that consideration be given to speeding up the refilling of the pond (so that the newts will be less vulnerable to predation when they return); noted that the clearing of the May bushes near Larks Meadow had revealed World War II tank terraces, and hoped that the clearance would be completed and the feature maintained; and put in an advertisement for a guided walk, organised by the Countryside Management Service, to take place at Carpenters Wood on 20 April (meet at Whitelands Avenue at 11.00).

Open Spaces Officers' Report *[GH has copy].*

It was suggested that a fence should be installed between the Common and the Dog Kennel Lane allotments (on the allotment side of the boundary so that Defra consent under the Commons Act 2006 would not be needed), to improve the security of the allotments; the cost would be £950 including squeezes and a gate for access; the recommendation was adopted.

The new "bundling" at Shepherds Bridge parking area has been damaged by lorries *[turning when they find they cannot get over the railway bridge]* and it is therefore suggested that a height restriction barrier *[as at the Cricket Club]* should be installed; quotes are being obtained.

Christchurch Pond has been drained and the silt removed (with precautions to protect newts), and a new filter pit installed below the outfall from the road drain. As to refilling the pond, Andrew Goddard (Ranger) advised that tapwater would be unsuitable because of the levels of chlorine and in particular phosphates, which are a nutrient and would therefore encourage the duckweed to come back, and using water from other ponds would risk introducing fish, to the detriment of any newt larvae: the pond will refill with rainwater and the fact that the ground is saturated will increase the amount of run-off into the pond, *[I had a look on Saturday 16 March and there was noticeably more water than a week previously,]* so in Andrew's opinion the best course is to let the pond refill naturally and accept that the newts there may have one less successful breeding season.

Top Common Pond has been netted and no sticklebacks were caught – a positive sign though not conclusive that there are none; the pond will be netted again. All the ponds have been cleared of floating deadwood.

Sites for fixed point photography have been agreed and monthly photographs are now

being taken. *[Anyone interested in helping should contact Simon Varnals.]*

There has been further felling of the May bushes *[near the Railway Field]* but this will now stop because the birds are starting to nest.

Saplings and scrub have been cleared around the New Pond and some trees felled or had their crowns raised to let in more light, and gorse bushes coppiced.

A leaning oak tree has been removed on the Dog Kennel Lane section of the horse track.

Beating of the Bounds of the Common: the Committee agreed unanimously that this will take place on Sunday 5 May, Rogation Sunday; meet at Christ Church at 2 pm. The purpose of the event is to check the boundaries of the Common and record any encroachments or maintenance problems for Open Spaces Committee to take action as appropriate. *[The Friends of the Common have supported and assisted with Beating the Bounds on previous occasions and will do so again.]*

War Memorial Hall parking area: although parking is prohibited between 8 and 8.30 a.m., commuters are now parking from 8.30 onwards. (Complaints have been received from users of the Memorial Hall.) It has been suggested that commuter parking could be prevented, and space kept available for genuine users of the Common, by a ticketing system: parking between 2 and 3 pm would be prohibited unless the vehicle displayed a timed and dated ticket from a machine which would not charge, but would only issue tickets from 12 o'clock onwards; the enforcement company (either the present one or a replacement) would inspect and issue fines in much the same way as currently. Two machines would be needed (in case one failed); they cost about £1000 each and are powered by solar panel. If the system worked at the Memorial Hall, it might need also to be introduced at the Shepherds Bridge parking area if the commuters moved on. Cllr Mrs Sutherland proposed and the Committee unanimously agreed that the officers should investigate this suggestion further and report.

Ice cream concession: one ice cream seller has tendered £600 for the concession to sell at weekends only (he says there is simply no business during the week). The Committee agreed unanimously to accept the tender. An upmarket ice cream shop from Berkhamsted has applied to have a stall at Village Day; the Committee considered that it would be appropriate to notify the concessionaire of this, to put the stall at the other end of the Fire Ride from the Cricket Club, and to charge both ice cream sellers the same for Village Day. *[Subject to revision, presumably, if the weather causes a relocation.]*

Four Year Vision.

Surveys: the acid grassland survey is due to take place this summer. *[It is understood that an invertebrate survey is also being considered.]*

Signs and lecterns: the officers are receiving training on the creation of lecterns and signboards; it is recommended that each information point should have no more than 200-250 words of text, plus artwork, but can be linked by a "QR" code on the sign/lectern to a website providing further information – the code plaques cost about

£20-£25 each, and could also be used on the proposed Leisure Trail. [*Note: “QR” codes. My son and technical adviser explains, in a little more detail, that a QR code is a square or rectangular plaque up to about 6” square, with a pattern of black and white squares and rectangles, like a two-dimensional barcode: an appropriately high-tech mobile phone can take a photograph of it, can translate the code into text, and if that text is a website address, can then connect to the website for further information.*]

Leisure Trail: a Leisure Trail / Play Trail can be done in-house at comparatively small cost, and the Chilterns Conservation Board will be providing a course on “natural play” in September. The Committee considered that it is desirable to progress the idea of a Leisure Trail even though TRDC is working on the proposal for a Play Area: that will involve an access survey and an environmental impact survey, further consultation, and quite possibly a public enquiry when an application for Defra consent is made, and it was felt that the Parish Council can separately provide something worthwhile.

GH