

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 9 July 2013**

Matters arising from Minutes: there has been progress with the preparations for using the Common as an educational facility. The Chilterns Conservation Board wants to do an "arts, science and technology" project on the Common with one of the schools - Christ Church is on the spot, but Stag Lane school is also keen and the Russell has been contacted. Grant funding is likely to be available for developing an "education pack"; the Rangers' involvement is likely to be 2 to 3 hours a month.

There has also been a further site meeting at Shepherds Bridge with London Transport, Herts Highways (who indicated that protecting the Common is a priority), and other agencies. The bridge is due for maintenance; it may have to be completely rebuilt, in which case facilities for pedestrians will be included, or a pedestrian footbridge may be "clipped onto one side". In due course a proposal will be formulated and put to the Committee.

The flowerbed outside the Office has been planted as part of the apprentice's training; planting in the cemetery, and the hanging baskets, are likely to be a project for the winter. The apprentice and the Rangers are now working together successfully; the Council has a good relationship with the College (and is receiving contributions towards the apprentice's training costs).

Open Spaces officers' report: the Rangers have cut all the sightlines and verges around the edge of the Common, and the fire rides will have a total of three cuts in preparation for Village Day. The grass on the Common is long and thick because of the weather; there will be a cut-and-lift of all of it, probably in September. The enlarged banks at the Shepherds Bridge permissive parking area have been seeded and have greened over. Pupils from Christ Church have had an educational trip on the Common, which they appeared to find very interesting; they have written to thank the Rangers and the Office for arranging it.

Matters raised at Users Group meeting [*see also separate Note*]: Several of the issues raised in the Users Group meeting would be considered under other items on the Open Spaces Committee agenda. It was reported that there has been some progress towards Three Rivers making dog control orders for the Common and Chorleywood House Estate, but any further evidence of need for such orders will be welcomed: incidents can be reported through the Three Rivers website. A number of residents who walk their own dogs on the common have expressed themselves as in favour of restrictions on professional dog walkers, who may have as many as eight dogs at a time and do not clean up after them.

The Committee approved the suggestion that the Clerk should have further discussions with Mrs Pearson (and other horse-riding interests) on the question whether alterations to the route of the permissive Horse Track may be desirable.

Grazing - "virtual fencing": members of the Council have now seen "virtual fencing" [*an underground wire that sends signals to collars worn by the cattle and gives them a mild shock if they cross the line, which they soon learn not to do*] in use in Epping Forest as well as at Burnham Beeches, and the Clerk played a short video of the system in use. There was some difference between the two operations in relation to the amount of "training" required to get the cattle used to the system: this would depend on the requirements of the grazier and the temperament of the cattle. The cost would be significantly below that for temporary fencing, and well within the funds available. Although the system is comparatively new in this country, it has been used successfully in France for several years. The officers and the Rangers suggest that two "loops" of virtual fence should be installed, one around Larks Meadow and the other around the May Bushes area, with a gate between them, so that the cattle can if necessary be kept to one of those areas, and the animals kept in the Railway Field overnight. When the equipment is installed, bringing it into use will be possible at quite short notice, and checking it and the cattle whilst grazing is in progress will take perhaps two hours daily for the Rangers or the grazier.

The Committee decided to recommend to the next Full Council meeting (8 October) that grazing should be undertaken with virtual fencing; the equipment should be installed in the autumn of this year and wide publicity given to the project, through the community magazines and a public meeting after Christmas, with grazing for a few weeks in the spring and again for as long as is appropriate in the autumn of 2014.

Trees at Grovewood: there has been a survey, and the trees have been numbered for ongoing record purposes; the immediate recommendation is for some tree surgery and one tree to be felled. The Committee agreed that the officers should obtain quotations for the work that cannot be done "in-house", and that a meeting on-site for the residents, to explain what is proposed for the future, should be arranged for the autumn half-term break.

Parking at Christ Church: the parking area, which is part of the Common, is surfaced with "grasscrete" plastic mesh; but the area is too heavily used for grass to grow in it, and the exposed plastic can be slippery, so every four or five years a load of 40 tons or more of pea shingle has to be put down and spread. This needs to happen now, and will involve closing the area for about a fortnight, (to be on the safe side,) in the school holidays so that people attending the Church and The Junction can park on the asphalt area used as the school playground in term time. The opening of The Junction has significantly increased the use of the area - and the availability of The Junction, with "free parking" (on Parish Council land!) has affected the level of bookings at the Memorial Hall. The Committee agreed to the area being closed for maintenance for a period dur-

ing the school holidays, and authorised the Clerk to make a request to The Junction for a contribution to the cost, and to discuss the best time for the closure to take place.

Parking areas at the War Memorial Hall and Shepherds Bridge: complaints about the new notices continue to be received, and it was agreed that the wording needs to be improved to clarify that parking is restricted between 8.00 and 8.30 in the morning, not all day. But the Council is advised that it is a legal requirement to have the number and size of signs which have been erected. The meeting considered there would be advantages in using the alternative system suggested by the Golf Club, with tickets required to be displayed in the afternoon and issued by machines which would only do so after (say) midday, to deter the commuters who now park from 8.31 onwards. It would be necessary to install the system at Shepherds Bridge (which would otherwise be where the commuters would go) as well as at the Memorial Hall, and to have two machines on each site, to prevent complaints if one failed. The machines and their solar panels cost about £1500 each; Cllr Mrs Worrall suggested, and the meeting agreed, that it was appropriate to see whether the Golf Club or local businesses would be willing to sponsor them.

The question was also raised whether the time has now come to consider turning the Memorial Hall "permissive parking area", strictly speaking only available for people using the Common (as opposed to the Hall, the Arts Centre or the Golf Club Clubhouse), into an authorised car park: that would mean taking the parking area out of the Common and providing other land in exchange, which would have to be the Railway Field (it belongs to the Council but is not at the moment part of the Common). The meeting authorised the officers to ascertain the areas of the parking area and the Railway Field and investigate the possibility of such a land swap.

Play Area proposals: the meeting adjourned into closed session to consider the tenders for equipment which Three Rivers District Council has obtained.

The public consultation on the latest Play Area proposals will start at Village Day on 13 July and will run until 9 August. (Planning permission will be required for any scheme which TRDC and CWPC may decide they wish to carry out; a preliminary Environmental Impact Assessment has been made.)

*There will also be an application to Defra (under section 38 of the Commons Act 2006), and anyone who wishes to make representations, either on the principle of the proposal or on the details, will be entitled to do so. **It is important that everyone who has an opinion, either for or against the proposals, should make that opinion known, WITH REASONS, in order to have any influence on the eventual decision.***

GH