

## **Chorleywood Common Users Group -**

### **Notes by GH (representing Friends of Chorleywood Common) of matters discussed at the meeting on 9 July 2013**

#### **Present:**

**CWPC** - Cllr Edwards, chairman of Open Spaces Committee; Cllr Mrs Jarrett, vice-chairman; Mrs Merritt, Parish Clerk

**Golf Club** - Mr Rodwell, Secretary, and Mrs Watson, chairman  
Mrs Pearson, local livery stable owner

**Friends of the Common** - Gregory Hill, chairman

**Mr Frank Arnold, a commoner**, sent his apologies and comments by letter: he stressed the environmental and conservation importance of the Common and acknowledged the hard work of the Council and the Rangers; he noted and regretted increasing misuse of the Common, particularly by cyclists using the horse track. He was saddened by the proposal to introduce an artificial play area, and was disappointed that there had been no specific consultation with the commoners. He considered that the suggested play area would increase the pressure on car parking at Shepherds Bridge, and that the bridge itself was a significant hazard; the area would be attractive to teenagers for whom it was not intended and who would be likely to leave litter; dog fouling would also be a problem.

**Mrs Watson and Mr Rodwell** expressed similar concerns about the suggested play area, and raised the additional consideration that the site was to the left of the sixth fairway, creating a risk of harm either from golf balls being struck into the trees, as happens, or from children running out onto the fairway, as would also happen. (The Parish Council's representatives felt the proposed site was far enough into the woodland to be safe.)

They raised the issue of the pressure on parking at the Memorial Hall, which is having an adverse effect on the number of the Golf Club's members; it would be most unfortunate if the Club ceased to be viable, and they proposed the introduction of a system to deter commuters by requiring timed tickets which would be issued later in the day than when commuters would wish to leave their cars. [*See also notes of discussion of this issue in Open Spaces Committee.*] On behalf of the Parish Council it was suggested that the Council and the Club might investigate the possibility of increasing car parking by constructing a vehicle access along their shared boundary to the areas at the rear of the Memorial Hall and the Clubhouse.

The Golf Club representatives also enquired about the revision and re-printing of the Byelaws: an awkward situation had arisen with a resident claiming a right as a member of the public to walk in the middle of a fairway whilst play was in progress; the Parish Council confirmed that the reprint would be available fairly soon.

**Mrs Pearson** confirmed that she does not always remain on the horse track when riding on the Common; she believes there is a public right to ride everywhere. [*CWPC categorically disagrees with this suggestion.*] She commented that difficulties can arise when horse rider meets cyclists, buggies or dog-walkers on the track, and that it might be advantageous to re-route the track onto drier ground in the section between the Lorry Park and Top Common Ponds, and through the woodland rather than the stretch of open grassland past Cherry Tree Dell. She agreed that "location 13" is not appropriate for a play area, and mentioned that there can be difficulty for horse-riders in negotiating the enlarged bunds at Shepherds Bridge parking area.

**Gregory Hill** said that the Friends of the Common were in favour of the grazing project and hoped the "virtual fencing" would be a way forward; that the Friends had received complaints about the parking signs at the Memorial Hall and Shepherds Bridge - the wording about controlled hours was inconsistent and misleading; that the Friends' ponds experts remained unconvinced by the proposed new method of managing the ponds and would continue to discuss the issues with the Rangers; that the dog control order was in principle desirable; and that the Friends' Committee felt considerable concerns at the play area proposal, not only for what it immediately represented, but also because of what other pressures might arise longer-term, e.g. fencing out dogs; more seating; more car parking; public lavatories; the present proposal might be the thin end of a very large wedge.

**The Parish Council's representatives** recognised that the play area proposals raised significant concerns, and emphasised that anyone who wanted to influence the outcome of the section 38 application should make representations to Defra *with reasons*.

They explained that the work to be done needed three Rangers, and one part-timer had been engaged so that with the apprentice, the operation was up to strength.

They also distributed copies of the 2013-14 annual work programme: points of note include the proposal for "electro-fishing" Darvells Pond to get rid of goldfish and other invasive species; and it is intended to include a seed harvest at the time of the cut-and-lift in the autumn, so that appropriate reserves of seed are available if any part of the Common has to be worked on and then re-seeded; but the success of what was done last year, baling the grass and making it available to residents for animal bedding, will be borne in mind, and a repeat may be practicable.

*GH*