

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 March 2014**

Matters arising from Minutes: the Cricket Club have recently met with the planning officers at TRDC to discuss what design for a new Pavilion would have the best prospect of receiving planning permission, but nothing has yet been heard about the result of that meeting. The Parish Office has given the Club a copy of the Defra / Natural England views on what would be an acceptable "footprint" etc, given that the Pavilion site is within 200 m of ponds where Great Crested Newts breed.

Nature Trail: Emma Bindloss presented her report on further progress with the project and on the Information Day on 9 February. The survey of opinion at the Information Day was not mathematically robust but yielded some useful information and guidance. Most of those who attended were regular users of common, and walked to get there; the largest groups by age were those over 65 and families with primary school age children. There was general support for the idea of the Nature Trail, including the "Wildwood Den", the xylophone, the dragon, totem pole and other animal carvings, and the holly tunnel. (Since then, the "mushrooms" carved out of the stumps of damaged trees have proved very popular with children.) Visitors to the Information Day were less aware of educational activities taking place on the Common, but they are already happening: for instance the Ranger would shortly be taking a group from Christ Church school on a "nocturnal walk", and the nursery year had been out to make a "Gruffalo House". Funding for the project will emphasise this aspect. An application will shortly be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund, who have encouraged the Parish Council to "think big" and include in the application everything on the wish list - the Fund is positively looking to support projects in Watford and Three Rivers. The Chiltern Conservation Board, the Countryside Management Service and Groundwork Herts are also involved. *[Note: the full report to the Committee is at <http://www.chorleywood-pc.gov.uk/pdf/CWPC-Open-Spaces-Agenda-Committee-Reports-2014-03-11.pdf> at pages 10-11, Item 13.]*

The Horse Track: it was noted that the sum budgeted for repairs to the Horse Track (where it is very soft, near the holly tunnel,) had not been used - this was because Natural England would not permit the proposed surfacing material material to be put down within 200 m of a newt pond, and the alternative of "grascrete" (as used at Christ Church car park) would not be safe for horses. It was also noted that some horse riders have been deviating from the Horse Track and riding through the May Bushes area. The Clerk reported that she had been in touch with the British Horse Society, who considered that where there is a permissive horse track, riders who deviate from it are not insured if there is an accident. Under the Scheme of Regulation for Chorleywood Common, riding is permitted on the Horse Track and nowhere else. It was agreed that the officers should enter into discussions with the local and national Horse Societies to

confirm what is and is not permitted - and to consider whether it may be appropriate, in consultation with user organisations, to realign any sections of the existing Horse Track; it was hoped that if the Horse Societies endorsed the Parish Council's position, that would influence individual riders to keep to the permitted route. It was also agreed that the Horse Track signage is in need of attention.

Officers' Report on Open Spaces. [*Note: the full report - and it is very full - is on the Parish Council's website, URL above under Nature Trail, pages 2-4, Item 6.*]

The clearance of trees blown down or damaged in successive storms is largely complete, though it has been hampered by ground conditions (too soft for the tractor). Much of the smaller diameter wood has been made available for residents to take for firewood; feedback has been positive, as has been the reaction to the tree stump carvings at Darvells Pond and elsewhere. The paths in the woodland areas are clear but still boggy. The agreed tree work on the Golf Course is partly done.

Parking at Memorial Hall and Shepherd's Bridge: the Golf Club has agreed to contribute to the setup costs and the first year's running costs for the new system, which will therefore go ahead; the objective is to install the ticket machines before, and introduce the new regime on, 1 April. The notices will make clear that the areas in question belong to the Parish Council. There will be new signs at both locations, with white wording on dark green. The Committee discussed the new system, and the publicity to be given to it, at some length, and agreed that it should be as clearly and as widely advertised as possible, including an article in Chorleywood Matters and an updated section on the Parish Council website. During the early weeks of the scheme, the contractor enforcing it will issue warnings rather than penalty notices to "first offenders".

["Doing my bit" to publicise: the purpose of the exercise is to discourage commuters from using the parking areas, whilst not interfering unnecessarily with other people who park there. Every car in either of the parking areas between 12 noon and 3 p.m. will be required to display a ticket obtained from the ticket machine, which will issue it without payment, but only after 12.00, which, it is hoped, will be later than when commuters want to leave; legitimate users of the Common who arrive before the machine starts operating will be able, if they wish, to return to their cars to obtain and display a ticket. The enforcement contractor will attend between 12.30 and 3 p.m., on a schedule which will not be publicised, and issue penalty notices to cars not displaying tickets. The charge for infringement will be £100, reduced to £60 if paid within 14 days of the date on the notice. GH]

Height restriction at Shepherd's Bridge parking area: the Committee had previously considered, and were invited to consider further, the possibility of putting a height restricting barrier at the entrance to the Shepherd's Bridge parking area, to prevent access by HGVs, which have repeatedly caused damage to the parking area and the banks around it when they fail to negotiate the corner onto the bridge and try to turn round in the parking area. The Committee accepted that in principle something should be done, but the entrance is about 9 m wide, and it was thought that a barrier might raise practical

difficulties; it was suggested that the highway authorities should be consulted, and that consideration should be given to putting vehicle size restriction signs at the hairpin bend, to stop or discourage HGVs from coming down to the bridge in the first place.

Grazing: the grazier's stock man came to the Information Day, and spent most of the time answering questions from members of the public. He has also walked the fence lines with the Ranger and agreed the water supplies (from the Dog Kennel Lane allotments) and the boundaries of the grazing compartments, subject to one change: the boundary parallel to Dog Kennel Lane between the allotments and Artichoke Dell will be at the brow, not the bottom, of the slope, and the Rangers will carry out "cut and lift" on the ungrazed slope (they have suitable equipment). The Common is drying out, and it should be possible to install the underground cables, etc, fairly soon. There will be four cattle on the site during the first, trial, grazing period this spring. Representatives of the owners of commons in Harpenden and Sevenoaks are expected to visit, to see how the system works.

Moth survey: the Committee agreed to the application for permission to continue the moth survey for a further year, and to use a vehicle to bring necessary equipment (principally lights) onto the Common. 242 different species of moth were recorded in 2013.

Assistant Ranger: the post has been advertised and there have been 16 applications; interviews will take place later this month, and it is hoped that the person taken on will start shortly after Easter.

Cllr Mrs Jarrett will be standing down from the Parish Council and from the Committee at the forthcoming election, after 25 years on the Committee (and chairing it for a substantial part of that time); Cllr Edwards, from the chair, thanked her for everything she has done over that period.

GH.