

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 13 January 2015**

Cllr Trevett in the chair; apologies for absence from Cllr Green (visiting her daughter, who had given birth to a baby boy on Monday, Cllr Green's first grandchild; the Committee congratulated her;) and from Cllr Khiroya.

Matters arising from Minutes: the Parish Office is still working on the revised application for lottery funding for the Nature Trail proposal. The information lecterns funded by the Chiltern Conservation Board (for Christchurch Pond and Larks Meadow) have been approved and are expected to arrive next week; the Board has agreed to fund a third lectern to provide information about the social history of the Common, which will be located near the air-raid shelters: Mrs Jarrett has prepared some text (limit of 200 words) and the illustrations will be "then and now" photographs. The Conservation Board has also agreed to allow the Parish Council to reproduce and add to the map of the Common prepared for the lecterns.

Open Spaces Officers' Report: the full report is on the Parish Council's website at: <http://www.chorleywood-pc.gov.uk/pdf/agendas/CWPC-Open-Spaces-Agenda-Committee-Reports-2015-01-13.pdf> as pages 2, 3 and 4 of the agenda papers.

Cllr Watkins asked what was going to happen to the stumps of the trees recently cut down at the top of Larks Meadow, and to the logs stacked at the edge of the woodland; several residents had asked what was going on, and advance information would have been useful. The Ranger explained that this is "work in progress" and the plan is to grind the stumps and remove the logs when weather and ground conditions allow; these tree works were in the works programme and on the website (<http://www.chorleywood-pc.gov.uk/pdf/common-work-plan-2013-14.pdf>), and are part of the "Higher Level Stewardship" plans, but had been held up by last season's wet weather. It is hoped that a contractor with a mobile sawmill will be able to convert the usable timber, mostly oak, into posts and planks where it is (rather than cut it into pieces which are too small to be useful in order to take it away). The Clerk agreed to put up explanatory notices, and explained that a plan was being considered to take the schoolchildren to see the sawmill in operation if and when it came on site.

Open Spaces report: other points of interest -

- The Ranger has combined his own list of butterfly sightings with the list made by the FoCC volunteers and the result is available.
- There was some discussion of the possibility of covering or removing, when grazing is not actually happening, the signs in Dog Kennel Lane warning of cattle.
- The Council's insurers' advice is that if the Council decides to clear snow and ice from public spaces, staff must be available 24/7 to keep those areas clear; the Council has not the resources to do so, and will say so on the website.

- In addition to the Larks Meadow work, there has been extensive tree work on dangerous and windblown trees.
- The gorse has been coppiced near the May Bushes and along Dog Kennel Lane.
- The filter bed at Christchurch pond has been cleared of debris.
- The Council may need to obtain a Conservation Licence to carry out the proposed clearance work at Top Common Pond because of the possible effect on newts; the officers will discuss the position with an ecologist and report further, with a view to the work being carried out as a priority next winter.
- The Rangers have fitted a new dog bin behind the Lorry permissive parking area.

Beehives at The Swillett Allotments [*not the Common, but of general interest*]: the Committee agreed to a request from a local beekeeper to place two hives at the allotments; they will be on an unlet plot at one corner of the site and should improve the pollination of allotment-holders' crops (Cllr Trevett declared an interest as an allotment-holder), and it was felt that it is in general ecologically desirable to encourage bees.

The Rural Payments Agency made some payments to the Council in 2005 and 2008 under the Single Payment Scheme, but is now alleging that the money should be repaid because, it is said, the relevant land was not being grazed. The Clerk has been asking, without success, for details of the RPA's reasons for saying the payments were wrong; the Committee authorised the officers to continue to press for the relevant information.

Memorial Hall permissive parking area: the Chairman of Chorleywood DAFAS had written to the Council complaining of the inadequate size, uneven surface and lack of lighting of the parking area. The Clerk reported that DAFAS has arranged to relocate its meetings to The Junction next season beginning in September (and that the office has already re-let that "slot" at the Hall). The Ranger explained that because the parking area is part of the Common, it is not permissible to introduce surfacing materials; it is possible to use a JCB to scrape the surface to level and compact it, and consideration could be given to doing so again, perhaps also including the other parking areas at the same time to get a better price. It was also suggested that if and when the next phase of modifications to the Hall proceeds, it may be possible to improve the lighting (though it will be necessary to comply with Conservation Area requirements as to light pollution). The Committee agreed that the Clerk should reply to DAFAS explaining the constraints on what the Council can do at the Memorial Hall parking area.

Purchase of new "front mower": the Council had acquired a "cut and collect" mower for larger areas of grass, and no longer has any use for the towed mower, which is difficult to manoeuvre; it was therefore proposed that a new machine should be acquired with cutters at the front, for use in smaller and more awkward areas. Funds were available and the supplier was willing to allow £3750 in part exchange for the towed mower (bought in 2011 for £2500); the Committee agreed the proposal.

GH, 14 January 2015.