

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 14 July 2015**

The Agenda is on the CWPC website at

<http://www.chorleywood-pc.gov.uk/pdf/agendas/CWPC-Open-Spaces-Agenda-2015-07-14.pdf>

and the supporting papers are at

<http://www.chorleywood-pc.gov.uk/pdf/agendas/CWPC-Open-Spaces-Agenda-Committee-Reports-2015-07-14.pdf>

Matters arising from Minutes of 19 May meeting:

- Cllr Green confirmed that articles about the possible resurfacing of the parking areas, and the Public Spaces Protection Order proposed by Three Rivers, had been published in Chorleywood Matters;
- the Clerk reported that the Open Spaces Society and Natural England did not object to the ‘new’ pond being created between Darvells Pond and the bunding beside Common Road: the Open Spaces Society accepted that this would be restoration of a pond which had previously been there, and so would not amount to impeding access to the Common. The work will be done in the winter months. It may later be necessary to drain the existing pond to get rid of the fish, which eat the newt larvae.

Public Forum: *the Committee allowed me to address the meeting –*

- to thank the Council and particularly the staff, on behalf of FoCC, for organising a very successful Village Day;
- to say that we would be in favour of the Council turning felled timber to account (Agenda item 6);
- to support the ‘parkrun’ proposal in principle, but not on the horse track (item 11);
- to confirm, if the final, private, item on the Agenda (item 14) related to enforcement of the horse track byelaw, that for the safety reasons in our recent Newsletter, we would support steps being taken to ensure that the byelaw is observed, and we hope that every effort would be made to resolve the issue amicably before any resort to legal proceedings; and
- to plug the two forthcoming glow-worm surveys: Thursdays 16 and 23 July, 10.30 p.m. at Shepherds Bridge parking area.

Financial statement: the Clerk reported that the recorded “easement” income represented consideration of £60 per metre received for a right to lay a water-pipe across the Common to a development on the east side of Dog Kennel Lane. Two grants of parking rights at Chorleywood Bottom were under negotiation and likely to produce a further

£3000 or more. All easement income is 'ring-fenced' for the Common; possible projects include installing kerbs in Clements Road, to discourage parking on the Common, and at the low point of Commongate Road, to reduce erosion by surface water.

Open Spaces Officers' Report (*Agenda Papers pages 2-7*): the Committee accepted a recommendation to allow reduction of a sycamore tree at Darvells Yard, at the request of a resident whose property is shaded, subject to the resident obtaining Conservation Area consent and paying for the work. The Report also raised the issue of whether in general further management of the hedges around the Common is necessary; the Clerk suggested that a 'beating of the bounds' next Rogation Sunday would be a suitable way of beginning to collect the necessary information. [*Note: Rogation Sunday, the fifth after Easter, will be on 1 May in 2016.*]

The Committee accepted a recommendation to remove the dead oak tree at the entrance to the fire ride, near the cricket pavilion: it is or will become a safety risk, and is infected with honey fungus, so any chain-saw carving would last only a year or two. The Office will obtain quotations for felling the tree and grinding the stump.

The Report drew attention to the existing and ongoing need to arrange for the removal of fairly large quantities of felled timber; it seems that the 'portable sawmill' will not now do the work, and both the amount of timber and the size of the largest pieces are too much for the Rangers to handle in-house. After discussion, the Committee agreed that the Office should make enquiries and bring suggestions back to a future meeting. A contractor or a biomass fuel company might be interested in taking the timber and paying something for it; the Chiltern Commons Association, the Countryside Management Service, TRDC and the Ashridge estate might have useful contacts.

Other points of interest in the Report: steps are being taken to restrict the growth of bracken near Sladys pond and the Gun Dell; London Transport propose to install crash barriers at Shepherds Bridge and will need access to the Common to investigate the condition of their banks - local residents will be given notice of what is happening; the cattle (six of them) were on the Common from 14 May to 24 June and the grazing has been beneficial – they are expected back in the last week of August; the cattle have not eaten the hawthorn saplings in Larks Meadow and there may be a call for volunteers to remove them manually over autumn and winter; some of the pignuts near the railway suffered from spray drift when London Transport sprayed their banks with weedkiller; Pyramidal Orchids have been flowering since 8 June, Bee Orchids since 11 June (including three on Larks Meadow, a new location), and a Common Spotted Orchid was noted on 29 June between Common Road and the Fire Ride (previously only on Larks Meadow, many years ago); Wild Strawberry, Tormentil, and the Common Crab Spider are also present; the Butterfly Survey is up to 22 species, including Painted Lady and Large Skipper; the Dew Pond, the New Pond and Sladys have dried out so much that juvenile amphibians will not reach maturity there; and the Ranger has led several successful educational events.

Cllr Dickens asked for the website to be updated with the dates when the cattle will be

on and off the Common.

Parking ticket machines: the machine at Shepherds Bridge was knocked over in May and although it has been set upright, it needs repair. Both machines were acquired second-hand and are now out of warranty; the Committee was asked to decide between taking out a maintenance contract with the supplier at £500 per machine per year, or paying for call-outs, parts and labour as needed. In view of the number of call-outs so far, it was decided to take the annual contract; the Office should continue to keep a record of call-outs (to check what is the better value for money); the Golf Club should be asked to contribute to maintenance as well as running costs; and the Office will ask the supplier to confirm that the work on the Shepherds Bridge machine is included in the contract.

Four Year Vision: the Committee had a preliminary discussion of items to be included in the Council's 'four-year vision'. Cllr Green suggested improvement of the parking area surfaces; Cllr Dickens mentioned signs for the Horse Track (which should make clear that it is not a bridleway, and therefore bicycles are not permitted); the Clerk referred to the possibility of 'brown signs' for the Common as a Local Nature Reserve. Cllr Edwards pointed out that any projects should be consistent with the Community Plan. All members of the Committee were asked to give their ideas to the Clerk in time to be discussed at the next meeting (22 September); a list will then go to Full Council, with other Committees' suggestions, in time to be considered (if necessary) when next year's Budget is being set.

"parkrun" proposal (*Agenda Papers pages 9-14*): the Committee considered a proposal from the local organisers of 'parkrun' to use Chorleywood Common as one of their venues: they are a worldwide network of over 400 local, free, 5 km runs, open to everyone who wants to take part, every Saturday between 9 and 10 a.m. (Though the name is 'parkrun', some of their other events are held on commons rather than in parks.) [*Note: more details are in the Agenda Papers and, for the Cassiobury event, at – <http://www.parkrun.org.uk/cassiobury/>]*

The general view of the Committee was in principle in favour of the proposal, which was thought to be an appropriate way of encouraging people to use and find out about the Common; but the suggestion of using the Horse Track was considered most undesirable. After discussion, the Committee decided to offer a six-month trial, on the basis that the Council would determine the route to be used, which would not be the Horse Track, and would reserve the right to divert or even cancel the event if that were necessary because of weather or ground conditions.

Legal advice regarding the Common byelaws: the Committee considered this to be confidential business, and directed the press and the public to withdraw. [*If anything likely to be of interest to members of FoCC comes into the public domain and to the knowledge of the Committee, a report will be circulated.*]

GH