

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 22 September 2015

The **Agenda** is at <http://www.chorleywood-pc.gov.uk/pdf/agendas/CWPC-Open-Spaces-Agenda-2015-09-22.pdf>

Supporting papers are at <http://www.chorleywood-pc.gov.uk/pdf/agendas/CWPC-Open-Spaces-Agenda-Committee-Reports-2015-09-22.pdf>

Cllr Trevett in the chair; apologies for absence from Cllr Green.

Request for seating outside the Old Shepherd pub: the Chairman took this item early in the meeting and permitted the landlord of the Old Shepherd, Mr Billy Chuter, to speak. He said that he had worked hard to make the pub into one that would serve the community, and that he was asking for movable, not fixed, seating outside; he acknowledged that he would also have to apply to TRDC to extend his liquor licence. The Chairman also allowed me to say, on behalf of FoCC, that we trust anything done on the Common will be in keeping with its natural character and not obtrusive. As to particular items on the agenda: we noted that the proposal at the Old Shepherd was for removable benches and we should not like anything permanently fixed; in principle we support the Nature Trail project on the basis that it will blend in; we would not object to individual permissions for golfers who actually need golf buggies to use them; and improvements to the signage (of the horse track in particular) would be welcome, but we hoped that any new signs would be designed to be both properly visible and in keeping with the surroundings.

Cllr Trevett expressed appreciation of the way Mr Chuter was running the Old Shepherd as a community pub, and proposed that the permission requested should be given on the basis that it would be withdrawn if the outside seats became a cause of public complaint, and would be for the benefit of Mr Chuter only, and not any future landlord of the pub. The proposal was **carried unanimously**.

Financials: the income from wayleaves and easements, and from licences for particular uses of the Common, was more than had been predicted; it will be ring-fenced for use in connection with the Common.

Open Spaces Officers' Report [*pages 2-6 of Agenda papers; the following combines information from the Report and the Committee's discussions*]:

- Cut and lift continues; the contractor made 58 bales, and removed them because (in view of the incursions of travellers onto the Common) it was felt unwise to leave the barrier open at the Lorry parking area to enable the public to come and remove the hay. The Ranger had also pulled a quantity of ragwort, but not plants being used by Cinnabar moth caterpillars.

- The Ranger also met London Underground’s contractors to arrange access for tree works between the station car park and Shepherd’s Bridge.
- Five cattle have been grazing since 25 August; parts of the grazing compartment have been cut and lifted to encourage the cattle to graze where it is most beneficial.
- The campaign to encourage the spread of heather is having some success.
- There has been little progress in making arrangements to deal with the felled timber (stacked at the top of Larks Meadow) but steps are being taken to identify an alternative sawmill.
- Eyebright had been found in the Larks Meadow grazing area, where it is likely to set seed for next year (cut and lift would restrict the amount of seed produced); since the report was prepared, the particular species had been identified by the County Botanist as “near-threatened”. The Ranger had also seen a Clouded Yellow butterfly (a migrant), and the total sightings of butterflies and day-flying moths this season came to 27 species.
- Parakeets have been seen on the Common but are not thought to be nesting there.
- Wasp spiders have been found in new areas. The three glow-worm surveys did not find any glow-worms, though this does not necessarily mean that there are none.
- The cut and lift, and the associated disturbance of small animals, has attracted several birds of prey: a kestrel, a buzzard and two red kites, as well as corvids.
- The deeper ponds (other than Darvells) have good numbers of newt larvae.
- The Ranger accompanied the FoCC’s “wildflowers and butterflies” walk; Chorleywood and Loudwater Children’s Centre had a bugs and butterflies walk (more bugs found than butterflies); a planned U3A walk and a FoCC butterfly survey had to be called off because of heavy rain; and Chorleywood Beavers had a successful and well-attended pond dipping and bug hunting session.
- The Report **recommended** that the Committee should consider whether further measures, including a height restriction barrier at Christ Church, are needed to deter further incursions of travellers. It was explained that such a barrier would need to be kept open during the daytime to allow other users access; the Church and the School would also hold keys, and the next step would be to discuss with them whether they could arrange to unlock and lock it. The barrier would need to be sited about halfway between the road and the car park, to enable large vehicles to get completely off the road before it was opened for them. It was thought that the cost would be covered by this year’s filming fees, and if further incursions were indeed prevented, that would save costs of up to £1000 each time. The Committee **decided** that the Officers should check with the Church and the School whether the proposal would be viable, and if so should obtain quotations for consideration at the next meeting. The meeting thanked the Officers for dealing with the incursions which had taken place; it was explained that the process-server was experienced in dealing with travellers, and it was hoped that there would be cooperation with the other authorities involved (the police and the District Council).
- The Report also **recommended** consideration of whether quotes should now be

sought for the clearing of Top Common South Pond on the basis of the revised specification. The Ranger explained that it was now planned to put the silt in an area which was anyway not suitable for newts, and to leave enough water in the pond for newt larvae. The Committee **decided** that quotes should now be sought on the revised specification.

- The Report further **recommended** and the Committee **decided** that the Country-side Management Service should be engaged to consult on the proposed location for the new pond adjacent to Darvells Pond.

Memorial Hall: the meeting thanked the staff for the efforts made to have the Hall ready for the Horticultural Society's Autumn Show.

Four Year Vision: the Committee agreed to continue the proposal for a Nature Trail (and to accept the recommendation from Policy and Resources Committee, to authorise the Officers to take the proposal forward with the help of an officer from the Chilterns Conservation Board, if available, the cost to be taken from the Stewardship grant for educational purposes). Other proposals already in place are to establish and fix a budget for a programme of surveys (e.g. grasslands, birds, flowers,) in consultation with CMS (and making use of the digital mapping facility recently acquired), and to explore the possibility of harvesting and storing water at the allotment sites. Additional possibilities mentioned were: adopting a protocol and budget for dealing with future incursions by travellers (Cllr White); introducing "Welcome to Chorleywood Common" signs (Cllr Trevett).

Request for golf buggy: a member of the Golf Club had made a request, supported by a doctor's letter, for permission to use a buggy to enable him to complete a full round (18 rather than 9 holes). The Byelaws prohibit use of a 'mechanically propelled vehicle' without reasonable excuse. A "one-off" permission had been given in 2013 (and on previous occasions). The Committee **decided** (1) to grant the permission requested on an individual basis and (2) to tell the Golf Club that the Committee will consider such applications, including applications on behalf of visitors to the Club, on a case-by-case basis, and will expect such applications to be accompanied by medical evidence.

Signage on the Common: it was felt that the signage needs maintenance and upgrading, in particular the Horse Track where at times different uses come into conflict. It has also been suggested that, in places, the route of the Horse Track may not be ideal. The British Horse Society could be asked to advise on the route and signage; and the Country Landowners Association can be asked to assist on legal issues. It may be possible to use part of the timber felled on the Common to make new or replacement signs. The Committee **decided** to start by asking the British Horse Society to come to advise on the route and signage for the Horse Track; a decision on further steps will then be taken in the light of that advice.

Watford Mencap 10 km run: since the Agenda was issued, Watford Mencap had asked permission to organise a 10 km run on the Common on 2 May 2016 [*Bank Holiday Monday*]; the Committee **decided** in principle to give the permission requested,

subject to the route being agreed with the Ranger and the Clerk [*and presumably to the organisers dealing with insurance, health and safety, etc*].

“Nordic walking”: a request had also been received for permission to use the Common for “Nordic Walking” as a paid-for rehabilitation therapy (under medical referrals); the Committee **decided** in principle to give this permission also, subject to the location being agreed with the Ranger and the Clerk, and on the usual terms [*i.e., presumably, licence fee, insurance, etc*].

GH (with apologies for delay).