

MINUTES OF MEETING NO. 1 OF THE NOMANSLAND JOINT FORUM

Held in the Hewitt Room, the Memorial Hall, Marford Road, Wheathampstead on Thursday 2 July 2009, 7.30pm

Present

Councillors G Clark, J. Churchard, G. Churchard, P. Kennedy, J. Shardlow

Officers in Attendance

Mr R Shwe – Head of Culture and Community Development
Ms J Adamson – Solicitor, St. Albans City and District Council
Mr J Green – Senior Parks and Green Spaces Officer – (Culture and Community Development)
Mr M Carter – Hertfordshire Countryside Management Service (CMS)

Also in Attendance

Mr D Culver, Mr. D. Hughes, Mr. R. Hill, Ms L Myland, Mr. J. Featherstone, Ms B Harrison, Ms G Webb

Administrator

Mrs. I. Casper

1. **MEMBERSHIP**

Mrs. Casper informed members that this evening's meeting was cancelled by St. Albans District Council before it became a Forum. Sandridge Parish Council and St. Albans City and District Council had not yet ratified the councillors who would be their representatives on this committee.

Mrs. Casper read out a statement from Councillors J. Turner and N. Page

Cllrs. Turner and Page, who have been elected by Wheathampstead Parish Council as the representatives on the Nomansland Common Joint Management Committee, do not recognise the status of this meeting, Thursday 2nd July 2009, and will therefore not be attending.

This meeting will now be a Forum Meeting and will be chaired by Mr. Richard Shwe.

The Chairman informed those present that, as the committee was due to agree the date for the annual inspection of the common, it was appropriate to have this meeting in a forum setting.

Questions were then taken how a forum operates.

Ms Adamson advised that at a forum meeting members of the public can make comments and suggestions. At this forum meeting decisions would be taken by the Nomansland Joint Management Committee and St. Albans District Council.

The Chairman, when asked why the committee meeting had not been cancelled, informed those present, that members of the public were interested in what works were scheduled to take place, delaying this meeting until September or October could give rise to the complaint that people did not know what was happening. The District Council is in charge of the budget for Nomansland Common and any budgetary items arising would need to be resolved.

Agenda items 2 – 7 - to be taken at the next meeting.

8. **PUBLICATION OF COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Mrs. Casper reported that Wheathampstead Parish Council are launching their own web site on 12th July. The site will display all committee minutes and agendas.

9. **STANDING ORDERS**

Nomansland Joint Management Committee operates under the Standing Orders of St. Albans District Council.

10. **COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

After a review of the committee structure by St. Albans District Council the membership of the committee is:
Two members from Wheathampstead Parish Council.
Two members from Sandridge Parish Council
Three members from St. Albans District Council.
The District Council representatives to be from the District Wards of Wheathampstead, Sandridge and Marshalswick North.

11. **PROGRESS REPORT**

Jon Green presented the report which had been circulated.

- (i) Works emerging from the Management Plan
Areas of heathland, that have been heavily rabbit grazed, were fenced to exclude rabbits with dramatic results. The fences have been removed and placed in different areas that are suffering from over grazing (as the rabbits eat the vegetation very close to the ground). It is hoped that the vegetation will be too woody and not palatable for the rabbits.
- (ii) Winter works for 2009/10 are expected to be sent out for quotation in early October and will be discussed at the annual committees walk. Although no date has been set for the walk, it would be advantageous to have a date in August.
- (iii) Management Plan
The updated management plan, containing the context and site appraisal has been placed on the St. Albans council website for consultation. Notices have been put on the common to advise members of the public of this. The close of consultation is 31st July 2009.
(Copies of the management plan were circulated)
- (iv) Heartwood Forest
On 26th May, St. Albans District Council's Senior Parks and Green Spaces officer and the Countryside management Project Officer met on the Common with a representative from the Woodland Trust. The negative impact of increased visitor pressure was discussed and the positive benefits of working in partnership with the development and management of both sites.

Specifically the new kissing gate, put in place by the Woodland Trust, was discussed. The Trust saw the problems that had created by making this new access point. Growth needs to be cut back and those path surface needs to be made safe with the installation of steps. An update on the situation was given at the meeting, as the Council are in discussion with the Woodland Trust over this matter.

- (v) Interpretation
A project has been set up to look at the interpretation and signage of the Common. There are no signs at present to tell you that you're on Nomansland Common or to provide information of the site's features. It is also envisaged to produce a new leaflet.

A project plan has been produced for discussion, with a map of the proposed signage areas. (Circulated to all members).

The following questions/comments were put at the end of the report:

Cllr. G. Churchyard informed members that he had looked at the plan on the District Council web site and reported that the font was hard to read.

Cllr. Kennedy is very concerned about inadequate parking with regard to Heartwood Forest.

Cllr. Shardlow reported - that part of the St. Albans District Council core strategy – stating what it does and doesn't want to see in relation to Heartwood Forest provides a degree of reassurance.

It was brought to members' attention that the Woodland Trust had recently held an open day; coaches were driving up a narrow lane. This has been a regular occurrence during June.

The Woodland Trust are organising walks, these are being advertised in the national press.

The Local Access Forum has received an invitation from the Woodland Trust to attend an Open Day on 29th August 2009.

Can nettles be cut back on the north side of Ferrers Lane?

In answer to a question on new fencing erected between Woodland Trust land and Nomansland Common Jon Green answered; fencing was already on the other side of Ferrers Lane, under instruction from the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) land owners are legally required to undertake this work to keep animals (rabbits) off the land. The cost of the new fencing was split between the land owner and St. Albans District Council. Upkeep of the fence is the duty of the land owner.

Action

1. Richard Shwe to:

- (a) Speak too the I.T. Department regarding the problems with downloading the Management Plan.
- (b) Speak to Heartwood Forest regarding transportation problems.
- (c) Discuss the Open Days and advertised walks with the appropriate District Council officer.

2. The Ranger to walk the Common and identify areas where nettles need cutting back.

12. **RANGERS REPORT**

In the absence of the Ranger Jon Green reported:

The Ranger has carried out gorse coppicing, the cut offs laid on top of gorse to deter rabbits.

While patrolling the Common the Ranger had apprehended youths who had started a fire. Police are now dealing with this.

13. **DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN** – ITEM 11 (iii)

14. **ROTARY CHARITY DOG WALK**

The Rotary Club have been advised to contact the Safety Advisory Group at the District Council.

Items 15 & 16 moved to next meeting

17. **SUMMER WORKS – RAGWORT, BIRCH SAPLINGS**

Ragwort is in the contract for removal.

Birch Saplings - some cleared a few years ago. The area to the south of the runway will be inspected during the walk.

Birch saplings on the dry valley bottom along Ferrers Lane on the left hand side to be weed wiped.

Mark Carter (CMS) explained why burning is not allowed, it is recommended to wipe with glyphosate a herbicide which goes to the roots and kills plants. Dead material is then removed.

18. **LETTER FROM ALTHORP ESTATE** - Moved to next meeting

19. **FUTURE MEETINGS AND ANNUAL INSPECTION VISIT**

The Annual Inspection will be on the 6th August.

Meet at Ferrers Lane Car Park at 6pm

Next meeting Thursday 1st October 7.30pm

Signed

Chairman