

MINUTES OF MEETING NO. 3 OF THE NOMANSLAND JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Held in the Hewitt Room, the Memorial Hall, Marford Road, Wheathampstead on Thursday 4 February 2010.

Present:

Councillors: G. Churchard (Chairman), J. Churchard, G. Clark, P. Kennedy, N. Page, J. Shardlow (Vice Chairman), J. Turner

Officers in Attendance:

Ms. J. Adamson – Solicitor, St. Albans City and District Council
Mr. J. Green – Senior Parks and Green Spaces Officer (Culture and Community Development)
Mr. R. Shwe – head of Culture and Community Development
Mr. R. Sweetland – Commons Ranger
Isabel Crozier - CMS

Also in Attendance:

7 members of the public

Administrator:

Mrs. I. Casper, Deputy Clerk Wheathampstead Parish Council

1. **Apologies for Absence** - None
2. **Replacement Members** - None
3. **Disclosures of Interest** - None
4. **Minutes of meeting held on 1 October 2009**

The minutes of Meeting No. 2 held on 1 October 2009, which had been circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

5. **Woodland Trust – Alistair Crosby – Presentation and Questions on Heartwood Forest**

Alastair Crosby updated members on the progress of Heartwood Forest.

Tree planting efforts at the Woodland Trust's Heartwood Forest got off to a sterling start in the New Year with over 300 locals turning up and planting over 7,000 trees between them at a community planting day on Saturday January 30th.

40,000 trees have been planted so far, all by volunteers, including 1000 local schoolchildren.

The trees are all native broadleaved species, including Oak, Ash, Hazel, Hawthorn, Rowan, Holly and Wild Cherry. Heartwood will be the largest continuous new native forest in England, there will be a gradual transition from farming to woodland. There will be tree planting days on 14th February and 21st March.

In the future more land will be opened for public access, an orchard will be established. New access links will open, car parking will need to be provided.

Members were then shown draft car parking drawings.

Mr. Crosby then took questions.

(Q) How many responses had been received from the Environment Impact Consultation?

(A) About a dozen, but lots of informal responses.

(Q) Sponsorship what arrangements have been made?

(A) Disney is the only large sponsor. Most funds are from grants and donations. On the 28th February Disney staff will be planting trees.

(Q) Will the fencing be removed?

(A) The stock fencing (rabbit fence) will not be removed until 5/10 years after the trees are established.

(Q) What trees will be in the orchard?

(A) Native species of apples.

(Q) Car Parking – how will this issue be addressed will there be a visitors centre?

(A) No Visitors Centre is planned.

Members then discussed the impact of not having a Visitor's Centre. With so many visitors expected toilet facilities are vital. Members requested clear signage for cyclists and pedestrians.

Cllr. Shardlow proposed that the committee formally request for the installation of an arboretum, seconded Cllr. G. Churchard.

Resolved

The Woodland Trust are requested to install an arboretum at Heartwood Forest.

Action

Administrator to write letter.

Jon Green asked the committee to consider a bridleway be installed at the Kissing Gate, this could be done immediately.

Two more access points between Nomansland and the Forest would be beneficial for pedestrians. Second access point will be opened in October 2012.

The flying strip could be a problem.

Action

Richard Shwe will do a Risk Assessment on the second access point and report back to the committee with a proper solution.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Crosby for his presentation and wished the Woodland Trsut well with the tree planting.

The Chairman agreed that Mr. Stoker could speak at the end of the meeting.

6. PROGRESS REPORT

Jon Green gave the report.

Works emerging from the Management Plan.

Led by CMS, volunteers have cut back and opened up the path leading from the Right of Way at the South East corner of the Common. They have also carried out removal of small birch and Oak Scrub from between the heather in Dry Valley Bottom.

April/May 2010 the volunteers will be enlarging the rabbit exclusion fencing in the thinned area adjacent to Ferrers Lane and removing leaves from the heathland areas.

As the price for this winter's works has come in cheaper than expected further work can be carried out. The ride that has become overgrown from the track opposite West End Farm on to the meadow will be opened up. This will consist of felling, removing limbs and reducing crowns of trees. There is also some Blackthorn that will be coppiced back by 5 metres. This will have a resulting benefit to wildlife and users of the common.

Interpretation

Due to work pressure this project has not moved along as fast as last discussed. We will be producing a design brief to go out to selected companies to price. From this we are expecting to have some examples of the companies work for discussion at the next meeting in July.

Kite Day

The event did not take place on 1st November 2009 due to adverse weather conditions. If funding becomes available to reschedule the event, would the committee still allow premission on the same terms.

Resolved

The Committee agreed a Kite Day may take place funding permitting.

Ferrers Lane

Cllr. Page asked if the dead elms impeding the path from FP14 to the track connecting West End Farm to its grazing pastures could be cleared as soon as possible. A lot of people access the common via this footpath.

Members are extremely concerned about the speed of traffic along Ferrers Lane. Many people cross from one side of the Common to the other, cars use the road as a 'rat run' making it difficult and dangerous to cross this road.

Cllr. Turner suggested that as the path which walkers could use to avoid walking on Ferrers Lane was breaking up, the officers should look at whether a temporary alternative path/route could be marked out thus enabling walkers not to go on the road.

Action

- i. The administrator to invite Rupert Thacker (Herts Highways) to the next committee meeting to discuss this item.
- ii. Jon Green will look at the footpaths and see what can be done.

Cricket Club Gate

The gate is open at the moment allowing more parking. Day time parking is not a problem. Members discussed the security of the area including CCTV arrangements. (Item 8 on agenda).

Action

- (a) The administrator to have a word with the local PCSO regarding night time parking.
- (b) Richard Shwe to speak to the Community Services Manager about the situation.

Update - Unsightly metal and concrete railings on the corner of Down Green Lane

Jon Green has visited the site with a surveyor. The concrete posts are not going to be taken out, the railings will be removed.

Resolved

That the report be approved and noted.

7. Rangers Report

Mr. Sweetland gave a report.

The general duties of litter picking and pest control had been carried out as usual. There is more litter to collect in the car park on Saturday mornings.

Adverse weather had made clearing up difficult. There has been some fly tipping i.e. builders rubble in the car park, a load in the turning circle and a huge bulk bag of rubbish/boiler/pipes.

The Ranger has a good relationship with O'Connors and they collect the rubbish.

The Ranger meets regularly with the PCSO and the Ward Officers, they are fully aware of all the problems which are still occurring. Mr. Sweetland would like to see the barrier moved further down the lane towards the turning circle. He would like the barrier to be locked.

During the recent snow there had been some fantastic snowmen built on the Common.

There has been an explosion of moles in the latter part of 2009 and this year. They are a significant problem on the outfield and by the cricket pavilion.

The Committee Noted:

(a) The moles are the responsibility of the Cricket Club and Wheathampstead Parish Council.

(b) The barrier is the responsibility of Wheathampstead Parish Council.

Action

The administrator to bring these matters to the attention of Wheathampstead Parish Council.

Resolved

That the Rangers report be approved and noted.

8. The Chairman invited Mr. Stoker to speak.

Mr. Stoker was concerned:

(i) That there was a move to re-implement grazing on the Common.

(ii) About parking on verges and the increase of heavy lorry traffic in the vicinity of West End Farm.

Mr. Shwe assured Mr. Stoker that there will be no grazing on Nomansland Common.

Mr. Green reported that the matter of parking on verges had been addressed by the installation of posts.

Action

Mr. Green will ask Officers from the planning Department to look into the situation at West End Farm.

9. Nomansland Common Management Committee - Constitution

Members discussed the merits of a committee structure or a Forum arrangement for this committee.

RESOLVED

The Nomansland Common Joint Management Committee remains as a committee

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Meeting No. 1 Thursday 8 July 2010

The Chairman closed the meeting at 21.10pm.

Signed

CHAIRMAN