

## **MINUTES OF MEETING NO. 1 OF THE NOMANSLAND JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

held in the Hewitt Room, The Memorial Hall, Marford Road, Wheathampstead on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2010 at 7.30pm.

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### Present:

Councillors A. Brewster, G. Clark, G. Churchard, J. Churchard, P. Kennedy, J. Newton-David, N. Page

### Officers in Attendance:

Mr. R. Shwe – Head of Culture and Community Development  
Nick Sherriff – Parks and Green Spaces Officer  
Alex Laurie – CMS

### Members of the Public - 5

### Administrator

Mrs. I. Casper - Deputy Clerk Wheathampstead Parish Council

#### 1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

##### **RESOLVED**

That Councillor G. Churchard be elected Chairman for the 2010-2011 Municipal Year.

#### 2. **ELECTIONS OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

##### **RESOLVED**

That Councillor Brewster be elected Vice-Chairman for the 2010-2011 Municipal Year

#### 3. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

R. Sweetland – Commons Ranger

#### 4. **REPLACEMENT MEMBERS** – None

#### 5. **DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST** - None

#### 6. **NOTES OF MEETING HELD ON 30 JULY 2008**

The notes of meeting No. 3 held on 4 February 2010 had been circulated.

The following amendments were made

Item 5, page 3 change the wording 'will be opened' to 'is proposed'

Remove wording 'Richard Shwe', add St. Albans District Council

Page 5 – amend Stoker to Stocker

The minutes were then confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

7. **UPDATE FROM NICK SHERRIFF ON WEST END FARM**

No application for change of use has been submitted to SADC.

8. **SPEEDING ON FERRERS LANE**

Hertfordshire Highways Engineers have had a site meeting  
They advised no physical items can be installed i.e. humps, chicanes, lights.  
Changing the speed limit is a long, involved process.  
HCC could 'beef' up the horse signs by adding a yellow background and  
install advisory 'maximum speed limit' signs.  
Cllr. Brewster informed members that County Councillor Crawley has been  
asked to look into the matter of 'deaths on the road'. This is one of the criteria  
for altering a speed limit.

**DECISION**

Request Hertfordshire Highways to add yellow background to horse signs and  
install advisory 'maximum speed limit' signs.

Hertfordshire Highways to provide details of process for changing speed limit  
on this road.

**ACTION**

Administrator to write to Hertfordshire Highways.

9. **POSSIBLE BENCH ON SOUTH SIDE OF NOMANSLAND COMMON**

A request for a bench be installed on the south side of the Common has been  
received. There are a couple of rustic benches on the south side of the  
Common. Alex Laurie informed members that CMS have previously  
constructed benches and could install another one.

During the discussion it was mentioned that under an agreement with DEFRA  
seats have to have backs and seat two people, although it is unclear whether  
this ruling is only applicable if grant money is used to purchase a seat not if  
self funding. Members agreed to purchase a purpose built seat with back for  
the south side of the common

**DECISION**

A seat will be installed on the south side of the Common, a suitable site to be  
selected on the Annual Inspection in August.

**ACTION**

Administrator to contact DEFRA and confirm the whether seats  
have to have backs or not.

10. **PROGRESS REPORT**

Nick Sheriff Parks and Green Spaces Officer reported on works emerging  
from the Management Plan.

- (i) In April 2010 the CMS volunteers enlarged the rabbit exclusion fencing in the thinned area adjacent to Ferrers Lane.
- (ii) As previously reported, the ride at West End Farm has been opened up. The old footpath route was on the side of a steep slope and very uneven, and it was agreed that a new route should be identified. The new route was found to be wet underfoot, so a boardwalk has also been installed which was covered under existing revenue budgets.

Cllr. Page expressed concern that 8 dead elms, on the north side of the Common, are still in situ when their removal has been requested on more than one occasion and why live trees on the north side of the Common were felled without permission when Wheathampstead Parish Council had requested that they were not cut down.

He asked who agreed the new route of the footpath, what budget was used and if competitive tenders were sought. Nick Sherriff reported that the installation of the new boardwalk was covered by the existing budget and SADC always use Best Value principals for seeking tenders and appointing contractors. Competitive tenders were sought for the boardwalk. Committee members would welcome more communication from SADC Officers and it was agreed, because the committee meets infrequently, an email group will be set up to enable more communication from SADC Officers. During the discussion it was pointed out that access to the new boardwalk at the road end is down steps making it difficult for parents with buggies, and the walk could be slippery when wet.

Cllr Page was also concerned that the access to and from the road/common from the old footpath was 8 metres straight across, the new route is 48 metres walking along the very busy, narrow road.

Nick Sherriff explained that leaving dead wood is a good eco system. The path was re-sited for Health & Safety reasons. SADC officers will always look at the Health & Safety implications and ecological impact of actions they take. The boardwalk has been treated with non-slip paint.

### **ACTION**

- (a) The issued of cutting down of live trees and the dead trees will be addressed on site during the Annual Inspection.
  - (b) The site of the new path/boardwalk will be looked at on the Annual inspection.
  - (c) As part of Access for All SADC officers will look into the problem caused by the steps at the end of the boardwalk.
  - (d) An email group to be set up by SADC officers to enable better communication with committee members between meetings.
- (iii) Weed wiping of the birch re-growth has been completed.
  - (iv) During February, John O'Connor (Grounds Maintenance) Ltd undertook flailing of the southern boundary. Blackthorn, self sets and bramble were cut back at an approximate width of 10ft as the boundary vegetation had been slowly encroaching.

- (v) Interpretation  
Fitzpatrick Woolmer has been selected to carry out the interpretation project. Officers are meeting with the company next week and will send a draft plan etc. to Committee Members for comment. This project will be largely funded by a forestry Commission Grant. The project will include way marking, signage and a new leaflet.
- Cllr. Brewster informed the committee that Wheathampstead Parish Council has received LSP funding for a Heritage Trail. Phase 2 of the Trail will include Nomansland Common, and it would be beneficial if styles of signage could be linked.
- (vi) Access Improvements on the Common  
Countryside Management Service (CMS) and St. Albans District Council (SADC) Officers have looked at access points coming into and within the Common. SADC Officers and CMS met the Hertfordshire County Council Countryside Access Officer and the Highways Area Manager to discuss crossing points on the B651. After a positive meeting it was agreed that there should be one crossing point over the B651. These proposals are with the local Police for their comment.
- (vii) The CMS Volunteers spent a day on the Common in June to remove redundant way marking posts, old bollards and signs.
- (viii) Nomansland Flyers  
Due to works carried out at the southern boundary, a member of the Nomansland Flyers asked whether the pit area could be moved from the current position next to the runway to an area by the hedge line. The movement of the pit area would reduce the health and safety risk of having people close to the takeoff strip. The Nomansland Flyers cleared a small area of bramble roots etc. so that it could be maintained by the Council's grounds maintenance contractor. This new area will be on a trial basis for 1 year.

A member of the Nomansland Flyers has been requested that the two silver birch trees at the eastern end of the runway be removed as they inhibit landing and taking off.

A member of the Nomansland Flyers has requested an additional runway at approximate right angles to the existing one. Officers have advised the Nomansland Flyers that this action would comprise the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and would potentially affect other users of the Common.

This item was discussed and Nick Sherriff informed the committee that to cut more meadow would contravene the grant with DEFRA.

It was brought to the committee's attention that the by-law may be being encroached upon. Planes are flying out of the allocated area, particularly north and high especially on Saturday afternoons.

### **ACTION**

The silver birch trees will be looked at on the Annual Inspection with a view for them to be put into the Winter Works Schedule.

### **RESOLVED**

1. To Note the report.
2. Next year the Annual Inspection to take place before the committee Meeting.

## 11. **RANGER'S REPORT**

The Countryside Ranger sends his apologies, but has submitted a written report for the meeting.

Nick Sherriff presented the report.

The following works have been carried out on Nomansland in recent weeks.

- General patrol and litter picking across the entire Common.
- Dumped rubbish removed from Ferrers Lane car park.
- Overgrown paths cut back.
- Small fallen tree removed which was blocking a path/bridleway near to Amwell Farm.
- Pest Control.
- Clearing broken glass and bbq materials from the Dry Valley area and also from the area near the Model Aircraft take off strip.
- Dealing with a mini motorbike and the Parent of a child who was riding the motorcycle and liaising with the Police.
- On 29<sup>th</sup> June a fire had been lit in Dry Valley Bottom. The Ranger contacted the Police and Fire Brigade. At the scene the Ranger found several teenagers, three tents and a car. The car had entered the Common just off Down Green Lane. The youths extinguished the fire themselves. The Fire Service arrived within a few minutes and checked that the fire was out and all was safe. The youths apologised for lighting the fire.  
The Police did not attend the incident.

### **ACTION**

- (a) The gap where the car entered the Common will be filled in by SADC contractors.
- (b) 'No Camping' signs to be updated.

### **RESOLVED**

To note the report.

## 12. **BRUSHWOOD**

The Chairman agreed to take a question from a member of the public about brush wood lying around in the wood. This is thought to be one of the biggest fire hazards; youths make camps/tepees with the wood. Members discussed this item and thought a compromise should be sought that still enabled youth to enjoy the woodland.

**ACTION**

- (i) The problem of the brushwood to be looked at on the Annual Inspection
- (ii) The Ranger to be asked to keep an eye on the situation.
- (iii) Administrator to bring this matter to the attention of the local PCSO.
- (iv) Illegible signs to be replaced, (Note: this is part of the Interpretation Project).

13. **TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE**

Cllr. Page was concerned that the Terms of Reference of the Committee published on SADC web site had changed, and the wording subject to the retention of budgetary and policy matters by the Leisure Committee, had been added.

Members discussed this item and agreed that further investigation was needed.

**RESOLVED**

- 1. Terms of Reference of the Committee to be on the next agenda.
- 2. A legal Officer from SADC to be in attendance for this item.

16. **REQUEST FOR A PARTY/BBQ TO BE HELD ON NORHT SIDE OF THE COMMON**

The Chairman agreed to take an item of other business as a written request had been received to hold a party/bbq on the north side of the Common.

**DECISION**

This item to be dealt with by Wheathampstead Parish Council and SADC Safety Advisory Group.

14. **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Meeting No. 2 – Annual Inspection August 5, 6.30pm Ferrers Lane C.P.  
Meeting No. 3 – Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2010

The meeting ended at 9.36pm.

**(signed)**

**CHAIRMAN**