

CITY COMMONS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

29th February 2012

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY COMMONS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE HELD AT MERLEWOOD ESTATE OFFICE ON WEDNESDAY 29th FEBRUARY 2012 AT 6.30PM.

Present

Members:

Barbara Newman (Chairman)

Alderman Gordon Haines (Deputy Chairman)

Chris Baguley	Kenley Airfield Friends Group
Alan Clifford	Old Coulsdon Residents' Association
Gladys Edmonds	Wickham Common Residents Association
Robin Eve	City of London Corporation
Gwyneth Fookes	Bourne Society
Keith Harris	West Wickham Residents Association
Bridget Hogan	West Wickham and Spring Park Volunteers
Malcolm Jennings	Association of Croydon Conservation Societies
Graham Lomas	Friends of Farthing Downs
Sarah Lovatt	New Hillbillies Volunteers
John Matthews	West Wickham Residents' Association
Jane McLauchlin	Croydon Natural History & Scientific Society
Sylvia Moys	City of London Corporation
Cllr Steve O'Connell	London Borough of Croydon
Phil Rathbone	Croydon Conservation Volunteers
Cllr Neil Reddin	London Borough of Bromley
Avril Sleeman	British Horse Society
Cllr Hilary Turner	Tandridge District Council
Sam Wheatcroft	Wickham Common Residents Association

Officers:

Bob Warnock	Superintendent
Allan Cameron	Head Ranger
Paul Ritchie	Head Ranger
Steve Wise	Senior Ranger
Luke Barley	Ranger
Steve Bruce	Ranger
Maria Traynor	Support Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from: Rachel Adams, Dr Ian Waite, and Mark Green.

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming Sam Wheatcroft of Wickham Common Residents Association and Graham Lomas from the Friends of Farthing Downs.

2. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF PERSONAL OR PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

The public minutes of the meeting held on 28th September 2011 were agreed.

Matters Arising

The Chairman informed the meeting that the local plans for Coulsdon and Kenley Commons had been approved by the Epping Forest & Commons Committee.

4. HEAD RANGER UPDATE

Allan Cameron reported on the Operational Team hi-lighting the following:

- Operational Team continues to be fully staffed.
- Completed year 1 of ESS programme of conservation work.
- Continued focus on gaining economies through combined tendering projects including: haymaking, tree safety and roadside working.
- Completion of significant project work which included: resurfacing Riddlesdown track, fencing at Farthing Downs, soak away constructed on Kenley Common and erosion control on Coulsdon Common.
- Pilot Green Flag Inspection in December 2012 and the submission of 2012/13 applications had been completed.
- Currently, the team were updating Health & Safety systems particularly in relation to the: appointment and control of contractors, risk assessments, safe systems of work, certificates of competency & training records, supervision and routine spot checks.

Q. What is classed as an accident?

Paul Ritchie responded an accident is an incident or occurrence where harm to people or damage to property has happened or could have happened.

Q. If Green Flag is awarded to the City of London Corporation will each site get a flag?

Allan Cameron responded yes they would.

Q. Will the health & safety have an impact on the targets you wish to achieve?

Allan Cameron responded stating he hoped that it would not have an impact fundamentally on what the team wished to achieve.

Q. Are there any direct implications to the volunteers with regard to the implementation of the health & safety systems?

Allan Cameron responded stating there will be no cuts to what the volunteers are due to do.

5. REPORTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF THE CITY COMMONS

a) Work Programme 2012/13

The Senior Rangers gave the following updates.

Farthing Down and New Hill

- Chaldon Way – North Entrance Landscaping
- Farthing Downs – Rotational Scrub cutting in three areas
- 13 Acre Bury – Scrub clearance for grassland restoration

Q. What is the impact of halo release on the yew trees?

Steve Bruce responded that we would take out the taller specimens of other species of tree so that it would thin the canopy out making it more open for the yew trees.

Q. Are there any plans to create a more accessible route from the Mead Way entrance along the boundary as it is particularly steep?

Steve Bruce responded that it will be looked at in the future for pedestrian access but it would involve significant earth works for this access to take place. An alternative route for walkers is currently available.

Q. Will the removal of the trees in relation to the bridleway have an impact on the deer on Farthing Downs?

Steve Bruce responded that we have considerable numbers of deer on Farthing Downs and New Hill and they will use other wooded areas to take cover in and the woodland work will create more open areas for browsing.

Q. Are you going to clear all the trees marked on the map?

Steve Bruce responded yes, this is scrub that has established on an area that has been designated to be restored to species rich grassland.

Q. Do we consider wildlife habitat used by deer when planning work?

Allan Cameron responded stating on Farthing Downs we only get Roe deer and they are naturally attracted to areas where we have completed scrub clearance for browsing particularly on bramble *rubus fruticosus*.

Coulsdon Common

- Coppicing Rydons Wood
- Clear new fence line route to extend wood pasture at The Grove.
- Clear fence lines and repair the fence at the Maze.

Kenley Common

- Coppice willow in July/Aug for purple emperor butterfly
- Coppicing
- Scrub clearance

Q. When is the fence at the Maze to go?

Steve Wise responded stating it is to stay for now, at a later date we will consult on the future arrangements for grazing this area of Coulsdon Common.

Q. How durable are wood chippings for surfacing?

Steve Wise responded that you have to put a base in for drainage and then put the chippings on top otherwise they are not very good.

Q. What is the rotation of the coppice work?

Steve Wise responded every 16 years.

Spring Park

- Hedge weeding with volunteers
- Pond maintenance
- Half the coppicing completed
- Links with local scout groups
- Queen Diamond Jubilee – Providing a stand to promote volunteer opportunities at a local event being organised by the Residents Association.
- Small Leaf Lime trees

Q. What further work will be involved with regard to the small leaf lime trees?

Luke Barley responded informing the meeting that there had been a subtle variation to the coppice regime to promote the small leaf lime trees and that an overriding management principle had been adopted to promote the resilience of the resource.

Bridget Hogan took this opportunity to inform the meeting of a Charcoal Burn taking place in Chaney Wood on 7th March. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Q. What has happened to the trees that were infected?

Luke Barley responded informed the meeting that all infected trees had been felled, but the majority of coppice stools had grown back infection free.

Q. Did the infection from the sweet chestnuts spread to other sites?

Luke Barley responded No, the phytophthora is found naturally in trees and woodland, and tends to be a problem when mature trees under stress such as where soils are too dry and lack nutrients like at Spring Park.

Q. Are you finding small leaf lime seedlings?

Luke Barley responded yes they are.

Riddlesdown

- Fencing project linking grazing areas
- Riddlesdown Fun Day
- Primary school visits
- Continuation of works on Famet

West Wickham Common

- New Oak Barway to be installed
- Weed heathland
- 15 oak pollards – replace the fencing around them
- Link with primary schools is being maintained

Q. Has the heather on West Wickham Common continued to progress?

Luke Barley responded stating it had and that they were very happy with the progress of restoring heathland.

Q. Has a decision been made regarding what to do with the damage on the corner of Hartfield Crescent?

Luke Barley responded stating that at the moment we are trialling timber posts on Stites Hill Road on Coulsdon Common to see if they resolve the problem of vehicles overrunning the corners of junctions. If they are successful we will install them at Hartfield Crescent.

6. KEY PROJECTS

Paul Ritchie gave the following update:

Quality – Planning & Monitoring our work

- All 7 Commons have new local plans in place to show that we are doing up to 2020.
- Making minor changes to the layout of plans for our SSSIs at Ashtead Common, Farthing Downs and Riddlesdown to reflect Environmental Stewardship Scheme (ESS) agreement.
- We have monitoring framework in place with system for tracking how meeting our targets.

Inclusion – our Visitor Survey

- Total annual visits 903,496 across City Commons

- 75-80% of visitors are physically active: dog walking, walking, cycling or running.
- Visitor profile generally close to profile of residents in our catchment areas (2km)
- People with observable disabilities – absent
- Only small increase in visits at weekends (unusual)

Environment – conserving habitats & landscapes

- Biodiversity conservation – ESS prescriptions and 10- year work programmes built into operational plans.
- We are creating Biodiversity Conservation Plans to collate all our research about wildlife
- Heritage conservation – applications submitted for Green Heritage Conservation Awards at Ashtead Common and Kenley Common.
- We are creating Heritage Conservation Plans to collate all our research about archaeology.
- We have delivered all our Local Improvement Plan objectives.

Promotion – our communication Strategy

- In light of the changes to COLC website and need for more electronic communication we are reviewing the City Commons Newsletter and What's New publications.

People – promoting our Volunteers

- 10,000 volunteer hours achieved in 2009/10
- 28% increase in volunteer hours in 2011/12
- Volunteer Leader training day October 5th 2011
- Volunteer Policy & Induction Pack has been prepared
- Volunteer Improvement Group – volunteer representatives are being sought

Q. Would any of the volunteers like to represent the volunteers on the Volunteer Working Group?

Yes, the three volunteers Sarah Lovatt, Phil Rathbone and Bridget Hogan responded asking for the invitation to be emailed to them, they would attend if possible depending on time of day.

Q. How had we got to the 28% with regard to the increase in volunteer hours?

Paul Ritchie responded informing the meeting that he had got to that figure using the volunteer hours figures provided monthly from our performance tracker.

Q. Alderman Haines enquired whether with regard to Consultation Strategy we were using the new IT software which saves a huge amount of time?

Paul Ritchie responded that we are aware of the new system and Epping Forest had used it with some success. Whilst we were ensuring we referred to the model

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) created at Epping Forest we were looking to create a more deliverable version for City Commons

Q. Have there been any archaeology publications published?

Paul Ritchie responded that there will be a project to interpret the finds of Wessex Archaeology, but we are unable to circulate the research we have in its current format.

7. FRIENDS' GROUPS UPDATES

a) Kenley Airfield Friends Group

Chris Baguley gave a verbal update regarding the Heritage Lottery Application informing the meeting that the group are very optimistic that the application will be successful although it is early days. The Friends have put together a power point presentation for any interested organisations.

Kenley Airfield Heritage Day will be on Saturday 23rd June 2012

Q. What has happened to the interpretation panels on the wing at the Tribute? The wood is drying out at the moment but will be put back out on Kenley soon.

b) Friends of Farthing Downs

Graham Lomas gave a verbal update:

Graham Lomas introduced himself as the new Chairman of the Friends of Farthing Downs.

The group was set up 5 years ago initially being very informal. This last year they have become more formal and recently had their AGM. Every month an activity has been arranged and Graham Lomas circulated a draft of the events diary for this year to everyone at the meeting. Although they had recently had two resignations from the group they had, had three new people who were interested in joining.

Q. Have you put in a bid to the Community Infrastructure Levy?

Graham Lomas responded that they have not, but he will look into it.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Q. Do we have the Fun Day dates?

All event dates will be published in the City Commons Newsletter which is soon to be published.

Q. Malcolm Jennings informed the meeting that the leaflet “Green Croydon for All” needs to be re-printed and made a request for funding of this from this group. The costs for this have been estimated at £800.00 for a re-print of 2500.

Bob Warnock responded stating he would look into the possibility of funding.

Q. Have the Open Spaces Department of the City of London Corporation been in consultation with the Green Grid?

Bob Warnock responded stating we have made a substantial contribution and once we have the report it will be made available.

Bridget Hogan passed on a message of thanks from the volunteers stating the volunteers had felt they were receiving more support and a positive attitude towards them.

Alderman Haines informed the meeting that this would be the Chairman’s last meeting and would like to thank her for all the hard work she had put in over the years.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED: That the next meeting be held at the Merlewood Estate Office on Wednesday 10th October 2012 at 6:30pm. Tea, coffee, juice and sandwiches will be available from 6:00pm.

The meeting closed at 8:30

CHAIRMAN