

MINUTES OF MEETING NO. 2 OF THE NOMANSLAND JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

held in the Hewitt Room, The Memorial Hall, Marford Road, Wheathampstead on Thursday 4th December 2008 at 7.30pm.

Present:

Councillors N. Page, G. Clark, J. Turner, K. Rirsch, J. Churchard

Officers in Attendance:

Mr. J. Green – Senior Parks and Green Spaces Officer – Client Services (Culture and Community Development);

Mr. A. Laurie – Hertfordshire Countryside Management Service (CMS);

Mr. M. Lovelady – Head of Legal and Democratic Services;

Mr. R. Shwe – Head of Culture and Community Development

Administrator

Mrs. I. Casper

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr. J. Shardlow

Mr. R. Sweetland – Commons Ranger

2. REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

None.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

None.

The Chairman apologised for the delay in arranging the meetings. Meetings are now schedule to take place on 1st Thursday in the month.

4. NOTES OF MEETING HELD ON 30 JULY 2008

The notes of meeting No. 1 held on 30 July 2008 were confirmed.

Cllr. Rirsch asked if he may make a comment on the notes. The Chairman noted that Standing Orders limited discussion of Minutes to their accuracy, which had just been confirmed. However he was happy for Cllr Rirsch to make a statement.

Mr. Lovelady advised that discussion of minutes is at the discretion of the Chairman and that he can have Matters Arising on the agenda if wished. The Chairman invited Cllr. Rirsch to make his statement.

Cllr. Rirsch stated that he has been a member of this committee for 4/5 years and thought the committee had been well run and worked well with high regard and respect for CMS members and officers from the District Council. When the issue of grazing came up he had listened to concerns and was disappointed at the way it was handled. He commented that the last meeting had not been handled well and put it at the feet of the District Council.

He expressed concern about the way the vote to elect the Chairman was handled. He had not been able to Chair the meeting and there was deadlock,

certain members gave ground and after the election of the Chairman, certain members ungraciously voted in the Vice Chairman from the same group. Members of the public had been allowed to talk although not an agenda item. Mr. Green was not allowed to talk and we have a situation where the committee is split. Cllr. Rirsch then stood down from the committee. Cllr. Turner stated that unfortunately the process caused the problem. There is an even number on the committee.

Mr. Lovelady explained the difference in the process, at District Council the last Chairman does not Chair the first meeting of a new committee.

Cllr. Turner stated that therefore the situation was inevitable, even numbers do not make a good committee.

The Chairman hoped the committee could now move on.

Cllr. Churchard commented that she had very much wanted to be a member of this committee, but had been very upset after the last meeting, and feels there is no point in being here and does not want to stay on the committee. She then stood down.

Mr. Lovelady then stated that he had given the correct advice.

It is a Joint committee with two members from each Council. Clearly the first item on the agenda for the municipal year is to elect the Chairman for that year. The Vice Chairman does not carry on, you start afresh. In the event the Chairman cannot be agreed the committee will not meet and could be abandoned. St. Albans District Council had not acted inappropriately. Yes, certain members did concede graciously so the meeting could go ahead.

Mr. Rirsch and Mrs. Churchard left the meeting at 7.46pm.

5. **NOMANSLAND FLYERS MODEL FLYING CLUB**

Mr. David Culver, from the Nomansland Flyers Model Flying Club gave a presentation to the committee on the background, and present situation, of the Club. The membership has gradually built up to about 40 adult members. One of the main activities of club members is to teach new members to fly safely. Mr. Culver thanked Jon Green and officers from the Environment Department at the District Council for all the help they had given to the Club. The Club has a good relationship with walkers and horse riders. The Club operates under a temporary consent and would like additional easements.

1. That silent and electric model flying during daylight hours be allowed on a permanent basis.
2. That I/C model flying times be extended by one hour to 7.00pm.
3. That up to three I/C models be allowed to fly at the same time.
4. That the brambles be cut back.
5. Signage update.

Jon Green reported that he had great sympathy with the flyers but the additional easements would have to be taken away and looked at for Environmental Health and Health and Safety implications.

Alex Laurie confirmed the brambles could be cut back now.

DECISION

1. Temporary consents to be extended until the next meeting.
2. The whole range of easements to be reviewed and results brought to the next meeting.
3. Brambles to be cut back.
4. Signage deferred.

The Chairman paid tribute to the work done by the Nomansland Flyers Club and to their attendance at meetings of the Committee over the years. He asked whether it would be more appropriate for the club to be represented within, rather than outside the Management Committee. The Chairman proposed that the Committee co-opt a member of the Model Flying Club.

Mr. Lovelady advised that the committee are not allowed to co-opt. Nomansland Joint Committee is made up of representatives of three councils, Wheathampstead Parish Council, Sandridge Parish Council and St. Albans District Council. Users of the common have a self interest and as such would have a conflict of interest. Groups can be permitted to make representations to the committee.

DECISION

Mr. Lovelady to confirm that the committee functions under the rules of St. Albans District Council.

6. ACCESS TRACK TO AMWELL FARM

An application had been made to Wheathampstead Parish Council as the landowner, by a resident of Little Amwell to surface the lane from Amwell Farm to the triangle at Down Green Lane. The Chairman read out the specification. A letter had been sent to all 18 properties on Nomansland giving details of this proposal and inviting comments.

The Chairman read out the letters received. Two were from residents of the area and had no objections to the application. Jon Green wrote expressing concern about the common being used for vehicular access.

The Chairman informed the Committee that since the original application had been made, one member of the group proposing the works had withdrawn. The remainder of the group approached Wheathampstead Parish Council for financial support, which had been declined. The Chairman confirmed that as a result the request had lapsed and no action was needed.

7. ACCESS PATH TO SANDRIDGE/HEARTWOOD FOREST

A plan of the area was circulated.

A new kissing gate has been installed by the Woodland Trust to give access between Nomansland Common and the proposed Heartwood Forest of the Woodland Trust. It is difficult for users of Nomansland to locate this kissing gate. The Chairman asked that officers clear a path along the line of the parish boundary between Ferrers Land and the Kissing gate. Public footpath signs are also needed in Ferrers Lane.

DECISION

The Chairman to liaise with Julian Thornton (HCC) re. signposting of the path.

Heartwood Forest

The Chairman noted the ambiguous form of the wording in this item 7 and queried whether there was a preference between the two options among members between Sandridge Forest and Heartwood Forest. Cllr. Turner suggested writing to Sandridge Parish Council and asking their views.

Jon Green pointed out that the Forest was on private land and the name was a Woodland Trust decision. Alex Laurie proposed that the Woodland Trust be invited to the next committee meeting. The Chairman reminded member's that the remit of this committee is to manage Nomansland.

DECISION

After discussion the proposal to invite the Woodland Trust to the next meeting was not taken up.

8. PROJECTS. Budgeting for development

The Chairman was concerned that committee members had not seen the budget for this committee. For transparency and accountability he thought the committee ought to go through some kind of budget exercise annually.

The Chairman was concerned about the limited number of parking spaces on the Common especially with the proposed Heartwood Forest attracting more visitors to the area. There are not enough car parking spaces on the north side, especially for elderly for local residents who prefer easy walking. The barrier at the Cricket Club closes off the majority of parking space; that area could be open to the public with CCTV linked to the Pavilion. To improve the Pavilion car park and/or the main car park would be expensive. The Committee would need to set aside money for projects such as good quality car park re-surfacing suitable for commons. Applying for grants is difficult without knowing the monetary situation. Mr. Shwe suggested that in the case of large projects the funding would be provided from capital funding.

Jon Green drew member's attention to the management plan. The management plan dictates how the budget is spent. When the committee approve the management plan it is approving the budget. Car Parking should be added into the management plan. Cllr. Clark thought there should be an element of flexibility to accommodate different views of successive committee members. Jon Green informed the committee that the plan can change, items can be added; it is not set in stone.

DECISION

Committee members to read the Management Plan for review at the next meeting.

9. PROPOSALS FOR WINTER/SUMMER WORKS

Jon Green circulated maps showing the areas of the proposed works.

Map 1. Three areas hatched in red. These areas to be thinned to allow regeneration of heath land. 40 trees will be removed; the process will leave a number of standard trees. These will have more space and be better specimens. The general aim is to create a more varied area of habitat.

Map 2.

Chippings to be spread over the old Victorian bottle dump.

Wood to be cut and stacked in the car park for people to take away as firewood. Explanatory signs to be erected.

Posters have gone up to explain the proposed works to the general public.

A GPS plan was circulated denoting damaged trees. This work has been programmed in and the trees will be removed before Christmas.

The committee discussed remedial works needed on tracks/paths; areas of dense scrub requiring clearance; increasing numbers of tree stumps which need grinding/killing off. Some paths are being churned up by horses; signs could be used to try to divert horse riders to a particular area.

DECISION

Chippings to be laid on some of the muddy tracks/paths.

When reviewing the Management Plan readdress stump grinding process.

10. **PROGRESS REPORT**

The Senior Parks and Green Spaces Officer report on works emerging from the Management Plan.

1. Winter management has been put out to quotation to carry out the year 1 work in the agreed management plan. This will consist of thinning trees to conserve and enhance the important areas of heathland still surviving under the tree canopy, and carrying out pruning work to trees being retained in these areas so as to ensure their longevity. All wood less than 30cm in diameter is to be cut up and staked in car park (at the far end by the log barrier). This wood will be marked as free fire wood. Wood over 30cm in diameter will be left in situ.
2. Areas thinned and opened up over the last few years are showing very good signs of heathland recovery. For example the area cleared in 2006 near to Wheathampstead Road is regenerating very well, with heathland species carpeting the area, though rabbits are keeping them close mown and the woodland area alongside Ferrers Lane, thinned last year, has heathland indicator species starting to flourish.
3. **Harpenden Common**
In October Harpenden Town Council took some heather cuttings from Nomansland Common to help re-establish heathland on Harpenden Common. The work was supervised by the Nomansland Common Countryside Ranger and they trimmed the seeding tops of a small amount of heather.

11. **RANGER'S REPORT**

The Countryside Ranger has been carrying out general litter picking duties and keeping the paths open. He has been in contact with the Police over some small trees being cut down by vandals on the area south east of the cricket ground. Some management works have been carried out, with the Ranger coppicing Gorse, and he will be cutting down brambles on the woodland edge of the area behind the climbing tree.

14. **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Meeting No. 3 – Thursday 2 April 2009

Meeting No. 1 – Thursday 2 July 2009

There being no other urgent business, the meeting ended at 9.15pm.

(signed)

CHAIRMAN