

CROWTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE TRUSTEES OF WALTER RECREATION GROUND AND CIRCLE HILL HELD REMOTELY ON MS TEAMS ON MONDAY 26 OCTOBER 2020 AT 11.00AM

Present:

CPC Cllr Mrs G Robertson Cllr S Sever Cllr C Thompson Mr M Dodd Mrs M Saville – Administrator Mrs J Robertson – Assistant Admin Mrs M Pentek – Project & Events Officer	WWPC Mr P Metcalf – in the Chair Cllr J Cannon
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Apologies accepted: Cllr D Dye

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, this meeting was held remotely on MS Teams. The meeting was recorded to enable the preparation of accurate minutes and will be deleted once the minutes have been formally approved.

- 1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR MUNICIPAL YEAR 2020/2021
Nomination: Mr P Metcalf
There being no further nominations, Mr Metcalf was elected Chairman for the ensuing year.
- 2 CHAIRMAN’S DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE FOR 2020/2021
The Chairman agreed to complete and sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and return it to the Administrator for countersigning.
Action: Mr P Metcalf
- 3 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN FOR MUNICIPAL YEAR 2020/2021
Nomination: Cllr Mrs G Robertson
There being no further nominations, Cllr Mrs Robertson was elected Vice Chairman for the ensuing year.
- 4 VICE CHAIRMAN’S DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE FOR 2020/2021
The Vice Chairman agreed to complete and sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and return it to the Administrator for countersigning.
Action: Cllr Mrs G Robertson
- 5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Mr Metcalf declared an ongoing interest as a resident of Circle Hill Rd.
- 6 APPROVAL OF MINUTES
The minutes of the meeting of the Trustees of Walter Recreation Ground and Circle Hill held on 19 November 2019 as circulated, were taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

7 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2019

1 Min 3.1 – Bike Jumps

This was an agenda item covered under minute number 15.

2 Min 3.2 – Woodland Update

An update was not provided and therefore will be carried forward to the next meeting.

Action: Mr Dodd to provide an update on the repairs to the raptor box and the installation of additional raptor boxes.

3 Min 3.3 – Hedgehog Homes

The additional works to extend the roofs of the hedgehog homes and the addition of stilts was undertaken by Mr P Newman using materials sourced from generous donations of roofing felt from the community. The Administrator and a Duke of Edinburgh volunteer working for CPC installed the new hedgehog homes in the area of the woods abutting Circle Hill Road as advised by Harper Asprey. The homes are now deep in the under growth as brambles have grown over them so it is not possible to check if the homes have hedgehogs in them.

4 Min 3.4 – Wildflower planting

Due to the Covid pandemic, the VE 75 event where children in the village were to be given small packets of wildflower seeds to sow, including poppies, did not go ahead.

The yellow rattle seeds gifted to the trust by Wellington College were sown at Circle Hill and Mr Robins (regular contractor who maintains the trust land) has been asked to check on these and report back on progress. If the yellow rattle has taken it will be possible to sow some of the wildflower seeds gifted by Squires for the VE day event as there is a surplus as the community event did not take place.

5 Min 3.5 – Publicity about insect homes at Circle Hill

The insect posts were installed as advised, along the woodland pathways. Some publicity about them was shared on social media feeds and local residents have posted photos of their visits to see the insect posts.

6 Min 3.6 – Photograph collage display

The Administrator has not yet contacted the Berkshire Conservation Volunteers to request any photographs they can share capturing their work in the woods.

Action: Administrator

7 Min 3.7 – Green Flag application process

The Administrator has not been contacted by volunteers for a working group to progress the Green Flag application for Circle Hill and the Walter Recreation Ground, although this may be due to the impact of Covid and the difficulties of volunteers meeting. Trustees were reminded to let the Administrator know if they were able to help. The Administrator is seeking the assistance of CPC's Project Officer with a view to carrying out any pre-emptory works for the Green Flag application, including a site visit on 21 October. This will be progressed as and when time allows. At present officer is time is having to be prioritised for other projects which are critical during the Covid pandemic.

8 Min 3.8 – Cherry Laurel

The contract for the removal of cherry laurel and nearby rhododendron was awarded to Wildscapes. They have advised that due to the pandemic, and because many trees and bushes have held onto their leaves, the works have been delayed. The works are now anticipated to take place in November. The stumps left after the initial removal works will be treated with a spray of glyphosate and blue dye. The stumps will also be visited and checked again in the spring for any regrowth to be treated.

9 Min 3.9 – Japanese Knotweed

An update was not provided and therefore will be carried forward to the next meeting.

Action: Mr Dodd to update on the Japanese Knotweed treatment/injecting program.

10 Min 4.1 – Berkshire Conservation Volunteers

The BCV team has continued to visit the woodland to carry out agreed works during the pandemic, focusing on clearing footpaths to ensure that the public were able to continue to use the woodland for their daily permitted exercise.

11 Min 6 – Aerial footpath map

The Administrator has not managed to obtain drone footage of paths as the tree canopies obscure the views of any paths.

8 ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

1 Delayed AGM

The timing of the AGM this year has been delayed by the Covid 19 pandemic.

2 Appointment of trustees for the 2020/21 financial year

Crowthorne Parish Council and Wokingham Without Parish Council appoint 4 trustees each to the Walter Recreation Ground and Circle Hill Woods charitable trust each year.

CPC’s trustees from 2019/20 have remained in post for the 2020/21 year:

Cllr Gail Robertson - CPC

Cllr Clifton Thompson - CPC

Cllr Simon Sever - CPC

Mr Mark Dodd – Wellington College

WWPC’s appointed trustees for 2020/21 are:

Cllr Janet Cannon - WWPC

Cllr Darren Latimer - WWPC

Cllr Doreen Dye - WWPC

Mr Phil Metcalf – local resident

The Charity Commission have been informed of the current trustees’ details.

9 TO ENDORSE THE APPOINTMENT OF THE CLERK AND STAFF OF CROWTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL AS THE ADMINISTRATORS OF THE CHARITY

In line with the Charity Commissioners scheme dated 14 January 1975, for the Walter Recreation Ground: The charity to be administered by the staff of Crowthorne Parish Council.

It was RESOLVED to re-appoint the Clerk of Crowthorne Parish Council and Crowthorne Parish Council office staff as administrators of the Walter Recreation Ground and Circle Hill Charity.

10 TO REVIEW THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE WALTER RECREATION GROUND CHARITY

The Trustees reviewed and approved the circulated Terms of Reference.

11 TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2020

The Trustees received and noted the Annual Accounts for year ending 31 March 2020.

12 TO NOTE THE HALF YEAR ACCOUNTS AND COMMENT ON THE PRELIMINARY BUDGET FOR 2021/22

Trustees noted the half year accounts. Thus far it has been a relatively expensive year with regards to tree works and as a result there is a slightly overspend in this area but there is an

underspend in other areas (ie Green Flag application). It was suggested that funds could be moved around to cover the cost of the tree works from areas where there was an underspend.

Mr Dodd stated that trees were increasingly under pressure as a result of very dry springs and pests/disease, therefore this was an area that could expect more work going forward. It would be prudent to either increase this budget item or have contingency funds to cover emergency tree works.

Trustees therefore agreed to increase the budget for tree works from £3,000 to £4,000 and to move funds from the unused Green Flag item to cover the overspend.

13 TO RECEIVE, NOTE AND AGREE THE ANNUAL TREE SURVEY AND FOLLOW UP WORK

The tree surveys on trust land this year took place during the global pandemic when the trustees had not met.

The tree inspection report was reviewed by Nick Robins Forestry (regular contractor who maintains the trust land) and the Clerks of both WWPC and CPC. Mr Robins provided a quotation for the recommended tree works which the Clerks for both Parish Councils reviewed and approved via the financial regulations governing each Parish Council. All of the information was copied to the trustees too to ensure transparency and to enable them to comment and raise any queries they had. The subsequent approvals were then reported back to each Parish Council.

As the tree works were required for health and safety reasons and because Mr Robins' quotations and time scales for undertaking the work were felt to be competitive, the works were awarded to him.

The trustees were requested to approve the findings of the tree survey and works retrospectively in order that compliance is demonstrated if the expenditure is queried by the Charity Commission or during any audit process.

It was therefore unanimously RESOLVED as follows:

- a) That the trustees agree the tree survey findings and recommendations from Tree Assessments UK in the report dated 22 July 2020 (redacted document was circulated).
- b) That the trustees agree (retrospectively) to incur the fees of Nick Robins Forestry to undertake the remedial works advised by Tree Assessments UK as quoted:
 - Walter Recreation Ground - £985.00 plus VAT
 - Circle Hill - £2,785.00 plus VAT

14 TO CONFIRM APPROVAL FOR EXPENDITURE ON EMERGENCY TREE WORKS AND CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGE WHICH OCCURRED DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC

The following incidents occurred during the Covid pandemic:

- Incident a) – a storm overnight on the late May bank holiday weekend damaged a tree branch at the Walter Recreation Ground which fell onto a neighbour's property causing damage to the roof. A full incident report and costings were sent to trustees who agreed on a without prejudice basis that the trust should pay for remedial works and emergency tree works to make safe a further 'hanging' branch. The matter was reported to the trustees and trust's insurers.

- Incident b) – arson damage at Circle Hill woods was reported to the Administrator by Mr Dodd (Trustee). Advice was received that the fire damaged wood should be removed urgently to discourage the deliberate lighting of other fires in the location as the woodland was tinder dry at the point the damage was found.
- Incident c) – Mr Metcalf (Trustee) discovered tree branches tangled in BT lines and contacted Mr Robins to undertake the work to disentangle and remove the branch as the Administrator was on leave.

It was therefore retrospectively unanimously RESOLVED to approve the cost of emergency works undertaken at Circle Hill and the Walter Recreation Ground during the pandemic, as follows:

- a) Tree works and building repairs from storm damage: £495 tree works and £200 roof repairs – May 2020
- b) Removal of fire damage wood and clearance works from arson – undertaken during a maintenance visit: £50 - August 2020
- c) Removal of willow branches tangled in BT lines reported by Mr Metcalf: £150 – August 2020

It was noted that the resident whose property had been damaged (incident a) had thanked the Administrator for the swift action taken to remedy the situation.

15 TO CONSIDER ADVICE FROM BFC ON INFILLING EXCAVATED HOLES AND AGREE PROPOSALS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF INFORMAL BIKE JUMPS AT CIRCLE HILL

Trustees referred to communication received from BFC which they felt gave sound advice on managing the informal bike jumps which were continually being built at Circle Hill.

The purchase of top soil was discussed with the possibility of asking Berkshire Conservation Volunteers to move it to where it is needed and/or possibly to request youth engagement with this task. It was agreed to purchase 2 x 1 tonne bags and to allocate £450 in the budget for this purpose.

It was unanimously RESOLVED as follows:

- a) That trustees agree to follow the recommendations of Stephen Chown from BFC concerning the infilling of the excavated holes with top soil, the removal of ramps which are stacked logs covered in soil and leaving left over top soil to enable cyclists to build new ramps but not excavate new holes to obtain soil in doing so as the excavated holes pose a trip/fall hazard.
- b) That £450 is allocated in the budget for the purchase of top soil; 2-3 bags initially.
- c) That the Berkshire Conservation Volunteers are requested to undertake the infilling and compacting works and also request for some youth engagement with the task.

Action: Administrator

Cllr Sever volunteered to take pictures of volunteers on site.

16 TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE FINDINGS OF A BUTTERFLY SURVEY UNDERTAKEN BY MR DODD (TRUSTEE) AT CIRCLE HILL WOODS

Mr Dodd emailed the Administrator on 10 August 2020 to report that he had undertaken a

butterfly survey and spotted the following butterflies: Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Large Skipper, Speckled Wood, Holly Blue, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Peacock, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper and an Emperor Dragonfly feeding on flies it caught along a footpath.

Mr Metcalf agreed to compile a list of birds in his garden which would give a good indication of birds at Circle Hill.

Action: Mr Metcalf

Mr Dodd also visited the SANG at Buckler's Park which is situated in reasonably close proximity to Circle Hill Woods and reported seeing a Grayling butterfly at Buckler's Forest. He has advised that the habitat created by the SANG really is helping them there. Further to this the Administrator introduced Mr Dodd to the Ranger at Buckler's Park as part of the Crowthorne Neighbourhood Plan is the creation of green networks and corridors. The Administrator, on behalf of CPC, is therefore trying to link up those with responsibility for maintaining and monitoring biodiversity and habitats in the Parish in the hope that this is helpful to this objective.

17 TO REVIEW PROGRESS AND AGREE NEXT STEPS ON THE WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN FROM 2014-2024

Trustees reviewed the objectives set out in the Woodland Management Plan 2014 - 2024. The objectives stated were:

- 1 Removal of non-native flora.
- 2 Increase number of broad leaf trees.
- 3 Create habitat suitable for wildlife.
- 4 Ensure interest, education and safe access for the public.
- 5 Create areas for insects, especially bees and butterflies.

Update on objectives:

1 Removal of non-native flora

Berkshire Conservation Volunteers have undertaken a steady program of removal of holly, cherry laurel and rhododendron and eco plugs inserted into stumps to prevent regrowth.

Wildscapes have been contracted this year to undertake removal of the remaining areas of cherry laurel and rhododendron. They will also spray with glyphosate to discourage regrowth and revisit in Spring 2021 to remove any regrowth and spray again.

2 Increase number of broad leaf trees

Some planting of broad leaf species was undertaken at the outset of the Woodland Plan.

Wildscapes have advised the planting of rowan (*sorbus aucuparia*) which are native as these have good flowers and berries for birds during the winter. They have also suggested a few smaller, interesting trees such as spindle or guelder rose that are similar to the rowan. These would all be good smaller, specimen trees that are easily cared for and found roughly in the local area. Cllr Dye and Wildscapes have both advised leaving the areas recently cleared for a year or two before planting to allow any toxins to leach out of the tree waste. Scott's pines were harvested at the start of the Woodland Plan period with all formal licences required for felling obtained.

3 Create habitat suitable for wildlife

A considerable amount of work has gone into achieving this objective. Bird boxes, raptor boxes, bat boxes, hedgehog homes and insect posts have all been located throughout the woodland. On the advice of Cllr Dye and Harper Asprey, some areas of brambles have been left to grow (away from footpaths) as these provide valuable habitat for insects which in turn provide food to mammals and birds.

4 Ensure interest, education and safe access for the public

Various local schools and groups have proactively sought permission from the trustees to use the woodland for educational purposes. Crowthorne C of E School has regularly held 'Forest School' learning activities in the woodland which trustee representatives have also attended and encouraged.

Mr Dodd has attended Crowthorne Summer of Fun events with information boards and activities (building insect posts) to raise awareness of the woodlands in the parish.

Unfortunately, there has also been considerable anti-social use of the woodland with arson taking place in the summer of 2020, large volumes of broken glass on the old skateboard ramp, litter, underage drinking and evidence of drug use. Although these are ever present problems in woodland which is accessible by the public, this has been a particular problem this year (in common with other areas in the parish) which may be due to children and youths being out of school for 6 months and unable to attend activities such as cinemas and other organised youth activities because of school closures and other pandemic restrictions.

5 Create areas for insects, especially bees and butterflies

Areas of brambles have been allowed to grow away from footpaths on the advice of Cllr Dye and Harper Asprey.

Insect posts were donated by Wellington College and installed on the footpaths to encourage insects and add interest.

A wildflower sowing program commenced in 2019/20 with the introduction of yellow rattle to prepare the ground for further wildflower sowing. Boxes of wildflower seeds were gifted by Squires Garden Centre for the children of the parish to sow in their gardens at the VE 75 event. The event was unable to take place due to the pandemic. The seeds can therefore be sown at Circle Hill if the yellow rattle has taken.

Alder buckthorn was gifted by Wellington College and planted in 2019 to attract insects, butterflies and pollinators.

A recent butterfly survey by Mr Dodd has established that several different types of butterflies can be found at Circle Hill and other nearby forested areas in the parish.

The Crowthorne Neighbourhood Plan is pending referendum and includes a commitment from the parish to establish 'green wildlife corridors' to facilitate the movement of all types of wildlife through the area safely. Different land managers in the parish have been introduced to each other to enable them to work on this common goal which it is hoped will also encourage pollinators, insects and bees to move through the landscape.

Mr Dodd agreed to compile list of suitable trees for Circle Hill with input from Cllr Dye.

Action: Mr Dodd

Mr Metcalf stated that he could hear an owl most nights and asked whether an owl box should be provided. Mr Dodd agreed to organise this.

Action: Mr Dodd

18 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Mr Metcalf stated that he had 2 bat boxes in his shed should they be required.

19 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS

- Woodland footpath update
- Planting of British wildflowers
- Green Flag application status
- Future promotion and public awareness
- Approval of budget
- List of trees from Mr Dodd/Cllr Dye

Meeting closed 12.05pm

Signed

Dated