

CROWTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE TRUSTEES OF WALTER RECREATION GROUND AND CIRCLE HILL HELD ON FRIDAY 1 JULY 2022 ON MS TEAMS AT 9.30AM FOLLOWED BY A SITE MEETING AT THE WALTER RECREATION GROUND AND CIRCLE HILL WOODS

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| Present: | CPC Cllr Mrs G Robertson (joined 10.18am) Cllr S Sever – in the Chair Cllr C Thompson Mrs M Saville – Administrator Mrs J Robertson – Assistant Admin Mrs L Turkington – Project Officer | WWPC Cllr J Cannon Mr P Metcalf Mrs K Hughes Cllr S Turtle |
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Apologies accepted: Mr M Dodd

- 1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/2023
Nomination: Cllr S Sever, CPC
There being no further nominations, Cllr Sever was elected Chairman for the ensuing year.
- 2 CHAIRMAN’S DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE FOR 2022/2023
The Declaration of Acceptance of Office, will be signed in the Parish Office.
- 3 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN FOR MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/2023
Nomination: Cllr J Cannon, WWPC
There being no further nominations, Cllr Cannon was elected Vice Chairman for the ensuing year.
- 4 VICE CHAIRMAN’S DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE FOR 2022/2023
The Declaration of Acceptance of Office, will be signed in the Parish Office.
- 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 23 September 2021 as circulated, were taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.
- 7 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2021
 - 1 Min 7.1 – Woodland Update
Mr Dodd was not available to provide an update on the repairs to the raptor box and the installation of additional raptor boxes.
 - 2 Min 7.2 – Wildflower planting
CPC’s Project Officer is working on a holistic range of plans for the trust sites. Currently the footpath installation and pre-emptory works are taking precedence due to the urgent health and safety nature of the project in order to prevent further accidents and injuries. Other plans such as wildflower planting will be a focus later in the year.
Cllr Turtle informed trustees of a wildflower project taking place at Wisley RHS Gardens which could potentially be a resource for information. It was also noted that BFC had designated a wild flower area adjacent to South Hill Park.

7 (cont)

3 Min 7.3 – Photograph collage display

The Administrator has obtained some photographs of the Berkshire Conservation Volunteers capturing their work in the woods, and of the recent Queen’s Green Canopy planting. These have been sent to CPC’s webmaster to add to the trust area of the website.

4 Min 7.4 – Green Flag application process

CPC has now appointed a new Project Officer – the Green Flag proposals can therefore be revisited, although some of the hurdles (i.e. no designated safe crossing or entrance/gate into the sites which is one of the requirements for an application) may prove insurmountable.

See minute 14 below re. Local Nature Reserve (LNR) designation, which may be more appropriate for the trust land, in terms of ecology, habitat and management, than Green Flag. Further research would be required to ascertain if a site which is a designated LNR would also benefit from Green Flag status or whether LNR alone would demonstrate the site is appropriately well managed for the habitats within them.

5 Min 7.5 – Cherry Laurel

Berkshire Conservation Volunteers (BCV) undertook further Laurel clearance work on 25/26 June on the southern boundary abutting a residential property close to the New Road cut through at Circle Hill. The laurel is being removed in tranches as there is a significant amount to clear and this will have an impact on light and privacy for the neighbour. CPC’s Project Officer has liaised with the neighbour to ensure that no complaints arise about the clearance works.

6 Min 7.6 – Japanese Knotweed

There have been no further reports of Japanese Knotweed since the update in September 2021.

7 Min 7.7 – Berkshire Conservation Volunteers

The BCV team has continued to visit the woodland to carry out agreed works including the Queen’s Green Canopy Woodland Trust planting, laurel clearance, footpath overhang clearance. The Administrator has assisted in promoting the BCV activities such as the tree planting which has led to more local volunteers participating in activities.

8 Min 8.1 – Charity Commission and account filing

All necessary documentation and accounts required to remain legally compliant have been filed with the Charity Commission. Post filing, an error was discovered, and the annual return resubmitted. The end of year accounts for 2021/22 were included with papers for the meeting for information purposes.

9 Min 8.2 – Appointment of trustees for the 2021/22 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 2021/22 have remained in post for the 2022/23 year:

- Cllr Gail Robertson - CPC
- Cllr Clifton Thompson - CPC
- Cllr Simon Sever - CPC
- Mark Dodd – Wellington College

WWPC’s appointed trustees for 2022/23 are:

- Cllr Janet Cannon - WWPC
- Cllr Seona Turtle - WWPC
- Katy Hughes – WWPC Clerk
- Phil Metcalf – local resident

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

7 (cont)

10 Min 8.3 – Repair and maintenance work

Further fences have rotted away on the perimeter of Circle Hill and the barrier at the entrance to Circle Hill on the Bracknell Road, which prevents children or cyclists exiting the woodland running/cycling into the road, has rotted and fallen down. Quotes are being obtained from Richard Smith for the repair works and the quotes will be sent to trustees for approval in due course. The initial fencing works were delayed from the last financial year due to budgetary constraints.

11 Min 8.4 – Rats

The Administrator has not received any further reports relating to rat or other vermin on Trust land.

12 Min 8.5 – Environmental Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

New bins have been installed at various locations at both sites (4 at Circle Hill and 2 at the Walter Rec.), it is too early to tell if they have had an impact on littering although the locations were selected in the litter hotspots (including the bench on Circle Hill where youths gather) in order to encourage responsible disposal of litter. Some of the bins are still being used for domestic waste with cleaning fluid bottles deposited in them.

Other criminal damage has occurred at Circle Hill such as graffiti on a tree of a sexual nature which has been reported to Police. The grounds contractor for the trust has been asked to remove this using a portable jet wash.

Despite both parish councils leading the set up and operation of a Crowthorne Community Neighbourhood Action Group and the involvement of both borough Councils, the Police, youth workers, Churches Together amongst others, Crowthorne as a whole continues to be impacted by ASB. The Police are closing cases before they are fully resolved deeming them to be low level and due to lack of Policing resources.

13 Min 8.6 – Bench relocation request

The Administrator has not received any further reports of ASB at the bench which a resident has asked was relocated.

14 Min 8.7 – Footpath 22

This was covered under minute number 12.

15 Min 13 – Tree works

All of the tree works identified in the last Tree Survey as requiring work have been attended to.

A query was received from a Trustee about the frequency of tree inspections and work on trust land, in particular, if the intervals between inspections could be extended. Advice was sought from tree surveyors, BFC, Mark Dodd and the trust's insurers. Although it is possible to 'zone' trees so that those which are in less accessible areas and therefore less likely to cause injury or damage to people or property if they fall, can be inspected less frequently, there is only one small section of trees at Circle Hill which fall into this category. All others fall into the profile of trees and settings that require annual inspections. It would not lead to any cost saving to zone the trees as those which would require less frequent inspections are easily and inexpensively included in the annual inspections.

CPC and WWPC's groundstaff visit the site regularly to litter pick and empty bins – they are also encouraged to 'look up' and be observant of any emerging problems with the trees which may need urgent attention before the annual inspection and follow up works.

The Administrator will arrange for the annual tree survey later this year.

16 Min 14 – CIL Funding for 6 litter bins

As reported above, 6 litter bins have been purchased and installed via co-funded CIL payments from CPC and WWPC. The locations were carefully chosen to be in the known litter hot spots and in locations where dog walkers are likely to have bagged dog waste to dispose of. One complaint has been received about the removal of one of the bins but there have been no other concerns raised and the bins are being well used. There have been no reports of littering at the bench on Circle Hill since the installation of a bench in that location.

17 Min 15 – Queen’s Green Canopy

The trust was successful in its application for a tree pack from the Woodland Trust for the Queen’s Green Canopy and the Berkshire Conservation Volunteers and local residents undertook the planting on the jubilee weekend in June. The planting coincided with a week of heavy rainfall so was timely. Advice on the most suitable tree pack for the location was taken to ensure that they suit the native woodland they are planted in.

8 ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

1 RHS In Bloom Award

The trust was awarded an In Bloom achievement award in October 2021. News of the award and a copy of the certificate were shared with Trustees and also shared on social media to promote awareness of the sites and the fact they are managed to a very high standard by the trust, trustees, both parish councils and external volunteers.

Much of the work compiling and submitting the application had been undertaken by CPC’s former projects officer – the Administrator wrote to inform her and thank her for her work in gaining the award for the trust.

2 Cllr Doreen Dye

The Trust learned of the death of one of its long serving trustees in November 2021. Cllr Doreen Dye had served as a trustee with a huge passion, interest and knowledge of the trust’s land and the flora, fauna and ecology therein. The Administrator sent on condolences to Cllr Dye’s family on behalf of the Trust.

CPC has resolved to plant a tree at Circle Hill in memory of Cllr Dye and as testament to all of her hard work and dedication and subject to the agreement of the trustees would like to choose a tree suitable for the setting. Trustees agreed to this request and suggested a Hornbeam tree as this was a favourite of Cllr Dye. She was also known for her love of butterflies and was very passionate and knowledgeable about them, therefore any plants which attract butterflies would be welcomed too.

3 Duke of Edinburgh (D of E) volunteers

Several Edgbarrow students have undertaken their volunteering element of their D of E awards by litter picking in the community and have focused on identified ‘hotspots’ which include Circle Hill and the Walter rec. They volunteer for a 12 week period, using CPC issued equipment, and log their collections on photos story board reports and timesheets which are then signed off by the Administrator as D of E Assessor.

4 Fencing

Mr Metcalf stated that it had been previously discussed not to replace the fencing around the woodland as it is regularly knocked down. The Administrator clarified that a lack of fencing would be contrary to the management plan of the site and could lead to an increased risk of fly tipping. There would also be a risk of additional paths being created leading into the woods by users who would be able to access the site from many different points.

5 Removal of a tree from trust land

It has been observed that a neighbour may have recently removed a tree from one of the entrances on trust land. This is being investigated and will be reported back to Trustees.

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 CONFIRM THE APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES FOR THE 2022/23 FINANCIAL YEAR

Appointment of trustees for the 2021/22 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. The Trustees confirmed the appointment of the following Trustees for the 2022/23 year:

CPC's trustees appointed trustees for 2022/23 are:

Cllr Gail Robertson - CPC

Cllr Clifton Thompson - CPC

Cllr Simon Sever - CPC

Mark Dodd – Wellington College

WWPC's appointed trustees for 2022/23 are:

Cllr Janet Cannon - WWPC

Cllr Seona Turtle - WWPC

Katy Hughes – WWPC Clerk

Phil Metcalf – local resident

The Charity Commission has been informed of the current trustees' details.

It was noted that Katy would be leaving WWPC later in the year and therefore another trustee will be appointed from WWPC. Katy was thanked for her work and valuable input during her time at WWPC.

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

The Trustees reviewed the circulated Terms of Reference and approved them with no changes.

12 TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2022

The Trustees received and noted the Annual Accounts for year ending 31 March 2022.

13 TO REVIEW QUOTATIONS AND APPOINT A CONTRACTOR TO UNDERTAKE FOOTPATH INSTALLATION WORKS AT THE WALTER RECREATION GROUND

The paths in the WRG have always been well used and this has increased further over the lockdowns when locals were walking and exploring more. This increased use has

continued post-covid and the paths are showing considerable erosion especially on the steep section path.

A number of accidents have been reported on this steep section due to the tree roots that are now exposed and forming trip hazards.

A path would significantly reduce the possibilities of slips and trips on site. The site will look smarter, and routes currently formed through high footfall will be formalised. The site would become more accessible to those who are infirm or pushing pushchairs, using mobility scooters etc.

A site visit with Andrew Fletcher WBC supported the idea that a surfaced path would be suitable. The site meeting was also attended by various WWPC and CPC Cllrs, both parish Clerks and Mark Dodd (Trustee) and WBC Borough Cllr Angus Ross.

Adequate, external grant monies are available to complete this project with no impact on the Trust's annual budget. £10,000 was awarded by The National Lottery Community Fund to improve this overused unmade path to match its usage, remove hazards and promote sustainable transport by providing a safe route to shops, amenities and schools. The trust also had a grant from BFC via Involve for £3,333 towards the footpath.

It was unanimously RESOLVED to proceed in principle with the installation of a 145m surfaced path at the Walter Recreation Ground and to appoint contractor H to undertake the work at a cost of £9,225 + vat. Other preparatory works and path closure barriers need to be undertaken and installed which will lead to the total project cost falling in line with the grants received.

WWPC members advised on the size of the most suitable scalplings having had some work done recently and also advised to request that the materials used are filtered.

The CPC Administrator and Project Officer were thanked for securing this grant funding.

14 TO CONSIDER AND DETERMINE A PROPOSAL TO APPLY FOR LOCAL NATURE RESERVE STATUS FOR THE WALTER RECREATION GROUND AND CIRCLE HILL

Local authorities can create local nature reserves (LNRs). Town and parish councils can create LNRs if the district council has given them the power to do this. The Trust will need to request the power to designate the sites as LNRs from WBC and BFC.

Managers of LNRs need to care for and protect its natural features. They must also make the land accessible for any visitors. It is not a formal requirement that the LNR is open to the public but land managers should aim to make at least part of it publicly accessible. Both trust sites are fully accessible to the public so meet this recommendation.

The trust might wish to consider new signage to reflect any new designation.

The trust already manages the sites to a high standard as evidenced by the recent 'In Bloom' achievement award. A LNR designation will add to this and is likely to be well received by the public who are very protective of this green space in the centre of the two parishes and will make it easier to secure future funding for projects on the site.

Funding applications may be helped if the sites are LNRs. The process of declaring LNRs, will in itself, create a renewed interest in the sites and promote them.

Advice from Mark Dodd (Trustee) and Grounds and Gardens Manager at Wellington College has been sought. Mark is a long serving trustee with extensive knowledge of both the trust's land, and Wellington College's management of its own LNR. His advice is:

'Realistically there are no real changes that are required to the way we look after the site(s) and more than anything it is a designation which gives greater potential for funding and protection in the future.'

'The main elements of work such as keeping footpaths open, litter picking, tree management etc are all tasks we are carrying out anyway as responsible trustees and custodians of the land. The resources required for this work shouldn't change at all and where councils are having funding cuts and greater pressure placed upon them that will be a reassurance.'

The Trustees unanimously AGREED to the request to declare the Walter Recreation Ground and Circle Hill as Local Nature Reserves (LNR).

15 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

None

16 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS

- Woodland footpath update
- Planting of British wildflowers
- Green Flag application status
- Future promotion and public awareness

Meeting closed 10.30am following which the trustees proceeded to the Walter Rec. and Circle Hill for a site visit.

Signed

Dated