

Hazeley Heath Consultative Group 21/11/2017

Victoria Hall, Hartley Wintney

Present: Phil Maund (Hart DC, Secretary), Mike Coates (RSPB, Chair), Leigh Wallace (Hart DC), David Sexton (Mattingley Parish), Therese Abbott (Easement holders), John Collman (Naturalist), Julian Bishop (Commoners)

Apologies: Natural England

1. Minutes from previous meeting

Minutes were considered and approved.

2. Matters arising

Natural England surveys - No response from Natural England on when field units will be due at Hazeley Heath.

Bramshill crossing – LW: Two local volunteers are negotiating with Hampshire County Council to prove that this area is a historic road. This matter is now out of Hart DC's hands.

LW: May be worth starting the process to designate as a bridleway.

MC: This is important for Hazeley Heath as access to Bramshill will impact on horse-rider use of the Commons.

JB: There are historic maps of the area as an old highway. The Toll Rides Off-road Trust are unable to help with this. Will talk to the volunteers in question and update the group at the next meeting.

ACTION: JB

Naming of features – JC has produced a new map naming features and areas of the site excluding scrapes. Will try to scan and send across to MC and PM.

ACTION: JC

Mammal survey – PM: Days before the consultant was booked in for the mammal survey in the landfill area of the site, a colleague confirmed presence of harvest mice. The survey identified field voles, wood mice and yellow-necked mice. Management for harvest mice has been included in the new management plan.

Local herpetologist – PM: No contact made yet with local herpetologist regarding volunteer surveys.

Mapping of the site- MC: No work yet planned for definitive paths maps. Currently using OS maps but there is a case for accurately mapping the paths.

JC: Recent Google maps aerial photography may be helpful in this, but depends whether legal.

PM: Should be okay for non-commercial use (i.e. charity use, official documents, student papers, etc.) provided a full reference is provided, but would of course need clarifying beforehand.

PM/MC: Can produce new maps of paths by spring 2018.

ACTION: PM/MC

Interpretation panels on the Hart side – LW: The winch ramp interpretation describing historic site-use can commence next financial year. The Special Protection Area interpretation (advising on local wildlife and responsible dog-walking) is on hold due to a spending freeze for capital projects.

Newspaper for the fencing application advert – PM: The advert was placed in the Hampshire Independent.

Future monitoring – JC has tested and discussed with the Wildlife Trust the Rapid Condition Assessment and it is ready to try next year. Will send to MC and PM.

ACTION: JC

MC: RSPB ecologists happy to proceed with it and it will be very advantageous.

3. Winter works update

PM: Planned Hart winter works are as previous minutes. Winter works so far have been:

- Heather mowing in targeted strips.
- Path clearance of overhanging and encroaching vegetation, particularly the most-used paths and horse-rider routes.
- Scrub removal with volunteers and corporate groups.
- Tree removal near the winch ramp and the asphodel valley.
- Sycamore removal in the primrose wood.

MC: RSPB winter works are as follows:

- Extending fire break parallel to the police college road and down towards Crabtree.
- More gorse removal.
- More bare ground creation.
- Small block of trees either side of police college road removed.
- Scrub removal with volunteers.
- Thinning mature trees on the heath.

PM/MC: There will be a joint RSPB/Hart volunteer and team day in December, targeting scrub and trees where the land ownerships meet.

TA: What do the marks on the trees mean?

MC: Marked as potential hazards. A cross means to monitor over time and a dot means to remove.

TA: What about the trees near Hazeley Bottom opposite the bus stop?

MC: Would be the landowner's responsibility. Can contact to remind them.

ACTION: MC

DS: *Would Hampshire Council not be responsible for trees near the road?*

LW/MC: The policy isn't clear but they may do it on a case-by-case basis.

DS: What about the tall leylandii where Plough Lane crosses the B3011?

LW: Privately owned but High Hedges Act may be relevant, but not sure, will confirm with tree officer.

ACTION: LW

DS: Will find out address of property.

ACTION: DS

4. Fencing application to PINS

MC: Application submitted and deadline passed for public representations to be sent to the Planning Inspectorate. They expect to make a decision within 6 months, unless a public inquiry is required. Any objections will be sent by PINS to Hart/RSPB.

LW: There have been concerns raised from a local resident regarding safety of horses if they escape over a cattle grid. Assured resident that if there is a solution, it will be looked in to.

JB: Risk of escape and resultant injury from grids/roads/etc. are inherent as a horse-owner.

LW: The same resident raised concerns over communication issues with RSPB.

MC: All emails received have been responded to.

5. Hart management plan

PM: First draft of the management plan complete and circulated amongst Group members and Hart/RSPB staff for feedback to be received by 24th December 2017.

JC: *Why not a plan for a period longer than 5 years?*

PM: This correlates with the Countryside Stewardship and the RSPB plan format. It also allows for uncertainty following the UK leaving the EU, which is due during the plan's term. The plan can be renewed at the end of the term.

MC: The RSPB plan runs from 2014-2019 and the work plan is the same as has been previously.

6. AOB

Role of the Group in disseminating information – MC: Mattingley Parish Council have raised concerns that there is a lack of communication with local residents. The Consultative Group must represent others in the community and share information gleaned from the meetings with them.

DS: It would be useful to have a Hazeley management section in the Whitewater magazine, and perhaps in Contact.

LW: There should be a regular slot in the Mattingley Parish Council meetings for updates on Hazeley Heath, provided by the site managers. We also need to explain the role of the Group and provide contact details of members to the public through these outlets.

PM: Must be 2-way communication; residents need to feel they can contact us as site managers if they have any queries.

Role of Natural England – JC: Natural England have not been present at meetings for some time and we need to clarify their role in this group.

MC: They provide the funding for works however are not representing any particular local interests. Therefore, maybe we should extend an invitation to them to attend the meetings, rather than expect their presence every time?

TA: We need a representative from Hartley Wintney Parish as well.

PM: Will invite new Natural England representative to the site and ask HW Parish Council to provide a representative on the Group.

ACTION: PM

Councillor Southern – JC: Met the Councillor on-site and heard that he would like to change the Special Protection Area (SPA) boundary to exclude the landfill area, such that dog-walking could be prevented in the heathland during the nesting season. However, the SPA is based on the Site of Special Scientific Interest designation and we can't pick and choose which areas we protect.

MC: Similar issues have been raised elsewhere in the SPA (Thames Basin Heaths) but agrees with JC's reasons not to change the boundary.

LW: The Head of Service at Hart is aware of this and it is good that Councillor Southern cares about local issues and gets involved.

Wedgewood track – LW: A resident has requested a 'Private track' sign for their road across the Heath.

MC: This can be done but is dependent on the application to the Planning Inspectorate.

Ditch applied for in the application to the Planning Inspectorate – LW: A resident has questioned its efficacy.

MC: Should redirect water to the ponds at Crabtree, helping to prevent local flooding.

Burglaries on the Commons – LW: A resident has reported that every property on the Commons has been burgled by people on quad-bikes. They would like some road blocks moved to prevent their access.

TA & DS: Dispute the claim that every property has been burgled but DS claims there has been deer-poaching.

JB: Hasn't heard quad-bikers in some time.

MC: The road blocks can be moved but it depends where the offenders are accessing the Commons. Bollards can also affect horse-riders if placed on bridleways but this can be discussed based on advice from equestrians.

LW: Police are usually strict on poaching with fire-arms.

LW: Will respond to the resident via email.

ACTION: LW

Bramshill estate development – JB: *What is the latest on this development?*

LW: It is currently on appeal and the Hart Landscape Officer is working on it.

MC/TA: The main issues revolve around the old house as a Grade I listed building.

LW maternity leave – LW: Will begin maternity leave in January so this will be the final meeting for LW. Thanks and best wishes exchanged between all.

8. Date of next meeting

It was agreed by all present that the next meeting should be 20th February 2017 from 10am onwards. MC to book this in.

ACTION: MC