

Minutes: Meeting / Friends of Woolwich Common Group

Date: 7th May 2019, 7pm

Location: Cricket Pavilion, Barrack Field, London SE18

Attendees:

Carolyn Roberts **(CR)** - Co-chair
Alexis Bailey **(AB)** - Co-chair
Jeremy Ellis **(JE)** - Co-chair
Gaye Rose **(GR)** - Treasurer
Chris Allen **(CA)** - Secretary
John Braybrook **(JB)** - Major, Station Quartermaster, RA Barracks, MoD
Patrick McFeely **(PM)** - R A Barracks, MoD
David Gardner **(DG)** - Councillor, Woolwich Common Ward
Ivis Williams **(IW)** - Councillor, Woolwich Common Ward
Mark Wilkins **(MW)** - Site General Manager, QE Hospital
Jenny Sherrell **(JS)** - Local Resident
Judith Stephens **(JS)** - Local Resident
Gary Stephens **(GS)** - Local Resident

Discussion:

MW - Update on efforts from L> (QE Hospital)

Litter and maintenance

- There have been meetings with suppliers & contractors
- Within next 3 weeks there will be a one-off phase of grounds maintenance – to kerbs, grass, shrubs- Bulk of this work is between the car parks – due to the brambles there
- A team of litter pickers will pick from Haha Road through to Shooters Hill Road before any cutting
- There is some fly-tipping – which will be dealt with
- There will be on-going monthly management, and as contracts are re-negotiated the responsibility for the maintenance will be on the contractors.

Bins and signage

- 20 litter bins will be added to the car park, to be emptied twice a week (initially)
- 20 cigarette bins to also be added
- 18 additional signs and notices to be put up (will take between 6-8 weeks)

Communication

- Staff to receive communication about smoking in the area.
- **AB** communicated with staff regarding smoking, disposal of rubbish and joining the group.

Bus driver toilet facilities (lack of)

- The trust have communicated with TfL. In 6-8 weeks time TfL plan to fund and install a toilet

Circular Way

Preparation for presentation to Council / Highways Committee

JS counted cars at various time slots, for several sections of Circular Way, briefly summarised:

- a) Small section (Academy Road side) seems to be used consistently by residents of Woolwich Estate (7 - 8 cars).
- b) Larger section (through to HaHa Road) seems to be largely commuters or local workers, with volumes significantly reduced at weekends.

Action: CA to type up / graph Jenny's tally sheets.

JB had sent evidence of flytipping to Satti Heir, RBG Enforcement Officer, but has not received a response.

Action: DG to chase on response.

DG expanded on the procedure for taking the petition forward:

1. The petition has been submitted to the Highways Committee, which will probably meet in July.
2. This would result in an answer to Council meeting at end of July (likely to be last Wednesday in July, at 7pm).
3. The group will be given a chance to respond

There are 2 constraints which could affect the final decision:

1. The result of a formal public consultation
2. Cost

Ideally the plan would be to turn it into cycle path, ie re-landscape it, however it would be cheaper to simply stop access with bollards.

There is a strong argument to increase green space and reduce flytipping.

Agreement amongst group to keep the pressure on.

At meetings the group should cover different aspects (environment, flytipping, anti-social).

Preference to have big group turn up, with a couple of speakers.

At the Council meeting there will be an opportunity to address the Council, (2 - 5 min).

Action: All – to collate evidence of flytipping prior to meetings

Action: DG – to confirm dates of meetings when known

JB – when meeting Satti Heir had been asked if the Group would fund CCTV for Circular Way, rather than the Council or other authorities. The Group clearly responded that this would be impossible from a voluntary group with no finances.

Litter Picks – Collection Points

4 collection points agreed with JB:

- 1 & 2: Either end of new cycle path
- 3: Gates by Menage
- 4: Just north of Bus Stop on Academy Road: Royal Garrison Church (Stop A)

JB requested that larger items should be photographed along with longitude/latitude co-ordinates.

JB confirmed that it would be possible to recycle rubbish from the picks if the group separated the rubbish themselves and put the recycling in clear bin bags. To be left along with the non-recyclables. JB requested we be aware of what can/cannot be recycled (eg used pizza boxes cannot).

GR raised issue about Council not supplying bags (even though they were given to the Council free by Keep Britain Tidy) for the Great British Spring Clean, because they would be used on MoD land.

Action: GR to forward complaint email on to DG to re-raise with the Council.

New bins around Common perimeter

There are 4 new bins - 2 in stadium road, 1 at each end of the cycle path.

Agreement to keep the pressure on (eg with photos) and re-raise the request for further bins in Autumn, due to currently restricted budget at RBG. No known precedent for partnerships with local businesses (eg Co-op on Shooter's Hill) to sponsor bins.

Benches in Common

DG - the benches (burnt out) in the Common were going to be replaced a couple of years ago.

Action: DG – will chase Tim Jackson about this

The group requests any replacement be an appropriate (rustic/wood) style.

Signage

JB – MoD has purchased 12 signs, with 6 more ordered to be placed at every path entry point on the common. Wording on the signs are dictated by military by-laws. Some concern amongst the group that wording not in keeping with conservation area signage.

JB confirmed that patrols do happen on the Common and if a dog is off the lead, the owner's name and address will be taken.

Motorbike riders have already been approached, and registration plates taken.

Art project

The art piece created from litter from the Common will be exhibited at the ArtFix exhibition near Woolwich Library, from 18th May for 1 month.

Pesticide use

Glyphosate (or similar) used around verges / trees around the edge of the Common, Academy Road and military roads.

JB stated this was not the MoD contractors.

Action: CR to send email about chemicals and impact to DG to take it up with Council

Ecological management / Japanese Knotweed

GR/CR - Japanese knotweed found in 10 patches in the common.

JB – Contractors have been engaged and will need do their own survey, there are guidelines to follow to destroy or remove it.

Action: JB – to update group at next meeting on progress.

JB – confirmed:

- there is no floral or bramble management, only to cut it back if it impacts pathways.
- grass is cut once a year after nesting period - Oct / early March
- If the group were to cut/beat back the brambles – JB's team would not be able to dispose of cuttings.

The group expressed a wish to work together on ecological management plans.

Action: JB – to share with group the management plan/schedule, including post-Olympics state.

Cycle path

CR highlighted that the earth which has been used to create banks alongside the path was too nutrient-rich resulting in growth imposing into the acid grassland.

DG suggested that the Council would like to plant trees along the cycle path.

General agreement in group that there would be a need to take advice from ecology experts around the impact of this.

Action: Committee – to organise another meeting to discussion this.

Tree & wildlife surveys

GR - John Denton has partially completed a tree survey for the group, which will be published widely when completed. The findings are exciting, including finding Dutch Elm on the Common. John also aims to complete a butterfly survey, and there are 2 bird-watchers from the Greenwich Wildlife Advisory Group who would like to help with bird surveys.

JB – The MoD also completes a 5 yearly tree survey of the Common.

Allotment

JB - The allotment found on the Common is planted by an elderly gentleman and looks to be a one-off.

MoD & Group agree that it should not be forcefully stopped, although it cannot be more widely condoned.

CR suggested that there could be an area allocated to showing how to grow / have projects which could be valuable for local schools etc. JB would take this up with the DIO.

Maps

The maps and naming created by the group, initially for helping with litter picks and logistics, were agreed to be OK to publish more widely through social media.

Presentation regarding unauthorised vehicle access to Common

JB & PM presented plans to construct bunds around the lower half of the Common, of a design to stop unauthorised vehicular access.

- Minimum long-term environmental impact
- Minimum on-going maintenance
- Constructed using the Royal Engineers as a construction exercise, therefore at no cost
- Access will still be possible through current paths

Agreement in the Group that this would be an excellent plan.

AOB

JB – raised awareness that there is an increase in drug taking and vandalism around the area now that the weather is warmer. Please be aware, and call emergency services if this is seen rather than confronting.

AB raised issue of drainage along HaHa Road.

Action: DG to take up with the Council

JB raised the need for a crossing between St Georges Church and the Barracks.

Action: DG to raise, although the road is TfL owned, not Council owned.