

Runnymede Borough CouncilChertsey Meads Management Liaison GroupTuesday, 27 February 2024 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Management Liaison Group present: Councillors M Nuti (Chair) and J Mavi, T Athersuch, D Cotty, R Deacock, G Drake, K Drury, S Hall, F Harmer, J Hearne, N Johnson, M Nichols, J O'Gorman, B Phillips, C Noakes, M Ray, T A Stevens and D Turner.

Members of the Management Liaison Group absent: J Alexander, R Arbery, P Bickford, J Denton, I Girvan, G James, C Longman and H Wilson

In attendance: N Barrett, A Roy, M Steward and C Swatridge

10 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Management Liaison Group held on 5 September 2023 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

11 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from J Alexander, R Arbery, P Bickford, J Denton, I Girvan, G James, C Longman and H Wilson.

12 Membership of the Management Liaison Group

The membership of the Management Liaison Group was noted and Toby Athersuch and Andi Roy, the Council's Biodiversity Officer were welcomed to the meeting. The Council's External Projects Lead, Marcel Steward and the Community Development Projects Officer, Naomi Barrett were also welcomed as guests to the meeting.

13 Esso Pipeline Update

Dr Steward provided the Group with a brief update on the Esso pipeline project. The pipeline itself was complete and Esso would be coming back to grout up the old pipeline when the ground was sufficiently dry to allow them on site. There was also a snagging list of tasks to effect repairs which had been drawn up with Esso's contractors.

The Group was advised that after site visits and discussion with Esso's contractors it had been expressly agreed that the affected areas of the Meads would not be re-seeded but would be left to recover naturally. During this period it had also been agreed that these areas would not be mown.

Mr Turner drew attention to the effects the works had had on Chertsey Show and requested that a suitable crossing point and Heras fencing be used to facilitate their vehicles setting up this year's show. He also raised issues regarding the land not having been compacted properly which Dr Steward agreed to talk to Esso about. It was advised that Esso had accepted that they had been on site far longer than first anticipated and caused more disruption than expected.

Members of the Group and other residents were aware of other works that needed addressing as a result of the pipeline replacement, notably damage to the road from

vehicles parking on the verges and turning at various points, damage to the hedgerow and various materials left on site. A priority would be repairing the top of the road leading to residential properties and the Marina, and it was also asserted that the approach road to Dumsey Stump had not been completed. There were also security issues in respect of gates being left open, the height barrier being locked in the open position and missing sleepers.

The Chair suggested that a sub-committee was formed to compile another snagging list to present to Esso. This was agreed and the sub-committee would comprise the following members of the Group: Toby Athersuch, Derek Cotty, Kay Drury, Sarah Hall and Nathan Johnson.

Chertsey Meads conservation project update

Some of the Esso funded conservation project works had commenced. This involved removing scrub, pollarding and gapping up of hedgerows. Some additional funding had been requested as the original cost estimates had increased. These works had to finish before the first ground nesting birds arrived on the Meads in March and would resume when they had fledged later in the year. It was reported that more Blackthorn would be planted to encourage the rare Brown Hairstreak butterfly adding to the biodiversity of the site.

There was some concern expressed about works taking place around Fox Copse and the Cow pond where some heavy machinery had left some deep tracks in the ground. People had observed some red and white markers and asked what they were connected with. Officers would investigate further.

The Group would be kept informed of progress with when Esso would be returning to complete repairs and commence the decommissioning of the old pipeline.

14 Management and Maintenance

SANGs Update

The Group was updated with preparatory identification of infrastructure changes required to promote Chertsey Meads as a SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space). This aligned with works set out in the original Surrey Wildlife Trust management plan. For example interpretation boards, route signposting, re-routing part of the main defined walking route which was impassable in winter and some small scale habitat works. Once these were in place it would move to a maintenance phase and the SANG management plan would be reviewed.

It was agreed to ask the Green Space Team to remove the damaged sign at the entrance to the Meads. However, SANG funding could not be used for other signs deterring BBQs which had been previously requested.

Countryside Stewardship

Members were advised that the former Countryside Stewardship agreement had ended in December 2023 but that the Biodiversity Officer had taken this over from the Green space team and was exploring future funding options. For example, it was hoped that reinstating the regular reed bed cut and hedgerow creation could be funded by entering into a Countryside Stewardship higher tier agreement. The Group would be updated on whether an application for funding was successful later in the year.

Reed Beds and annual Hay Cut

Unfortunately, Officers from the Greenspace team were unable to attend the meeting to provide an update on when the hay cut would take place. This would be requested when available and the Group notified. The Group was disappointed that funding was unlikely to be forthcoming until the new financial year and a lack of resources had meant that the management plan could not be adhered to.

Potholes

The Group noted that temporary repairs to the road in the vicinity of Dockett Moorings had not been effective and a permanent re-instatement of the road was needed, although there was currently no budget to do this. Evidence suggested that some of Esso's contractors had used this area for turning vehicles making the state of disrepair worse. It was noted that the approach road to Dumsey Stump was a discussion to be had separately between the resident and Esso but that the main road could be raised with them. Dr Steward undertook to do this in liaison with Officers from the Green Space team.

UKPN works on the Meads

Members were notified that UKPN were undertaking works as part of a national upgrade to the network. Further details, including time scales and size of operation were awaited and were also subject to discussion with the Council's Legal team regarding easements and access. Officers would work with UKPN to minimise disruption and the Group would be updated accordingly. It was noted that the works in a similar way to Esso's were being done under a Development Consent Order. It was confirmed that all the work would be under ground.

The Group was advised that a resident's plan to ask UKPN to upgrade the power supply to their property had been discontinued, as the opportunity to co-incide this with Esso's project had been lost. Therefore, the prospect of having a power supply to the second car park as an offshoot 'bonus' was no longer an option.

With regard to frustrations expressed the Chair offered to write to UKPN and the local MP and provide an update to the resident accordingly.

15 Events

Litter Pick

Members looked forward to the litter pick planned for 7 April at 10am. This was being organised by the Community Development Project Officer who would be producing some posters to publicise the event. This was thought to be a good opportunity to involve local schools, Cubs and Scouts and Abbey Rangers. The Team would carry out a pre-visit to identify which areas needed the most attention. As usual, litter pickers and sacks would be provided and the rubbish collected from the first car park by the DSO.

Site Visit

It was agreed that an early evening in the Great Big Green Week commencing 8 June would be a good idea. Mr Philips suggested a revival of the orchid count, post Esso. Officers would confirm a date in liaison with Mr Philips.

Officers from Community Services were asked to arrange a separate 'open day' to promote the SANG status of the site and lead a smaller number from the group around the new walking route in due course.

Chertsey Show

Mr Turner confirmed 10 – 11 August for this year's Chertsey Show. Last year's show had been successful, despite the Esso works. It was reported that the cost of putting on the show was increasing, noting the Council's modest contribution. Mr Turner agreed to remove the Heras fencing and the large paladin that was left after last year's show when it was safe to do so.

16 **Management Plan**

An update on the Management Plan would be requested from Ms Wilson.

17 **Any other Business**

The following issues were raised:

- Height Barrier operation and CCTV functionality

[following the meeting, Safer Runnymede confirmed that the default position would return to the barrier being closed and only opened on request]

- Signage audit and a request for permanent deterrent to BBQs and fires in the picnic area
- Deer awareness signage and educating visitors to the Meads not to allow their dogs to chase the deer
- Illegal mooring – progress with enforcement and costing options to deter it
- Replacement whips were being arranged by the Council's Tree Officer for Green Space [this post is now vacant]

The group was also encouraged to respond to the public consultation on the River Thames Scheme which was underway.

Officers were asked to provide a monthly update on issues raised and progress with the conservation project.

18 **Dates of Future Meetings**

The Group noted the next scheduled meetings of the Group were Tuesday 3 September 2024 and Tuesday 4 March 2025, to be held at the Civic Centre at 7.30pm.

(The meeting ended at 9.16 pm.)

Chair