

Runnymede Borough CouncilChertsey Meads Management Liaison GroupTuesday, 1 March 2022 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillor D Cotty (Chairman), Councillor M Nuti, V Baldwin, R Deacock, G Drake, K Drury, N Johnson, H Lane, D Mead, M Nichols, B Phillips, M Ray and T A Stevens

Members of the Committee absent: J Denton, I Girvan, F Harmer, J Hearne, G James, C Noakes, J O'Gorman and D Turner

Advisors Present: Mr C Dulley and Ms J Harper

1 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Liaison Group held on 31 August 2021 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

2 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Isobel Girvan, Fran Harmer, Jane Hearne, Cynthia Noakes and Jim O'Gorman.

3 **Membership of the Management Liaison Group**

The Group welcomed new member, Mrs Valerie Baldwin, who had been appointed as a residents' representative. At the last meeting it had been agreed to go out on a recruitment drive to attract new members. This was done via social media, posters on site and on display at the Council Offices, and a press release.

The response had been very good, resulting in 10 people coming forward for 5 vacancies. The Group considered all the nominations and it was agreed to make the following appointments:

Ms Sarah Hall – Local Horse Riders Representative
Mr Toby Athersuch – Local Dog Walkers Representative

There were other volunteers who the Group wanted to appoint which would necessitate amendments to the Group's Constitution which could be done under delegated authority. It was suggested that a member of the Conservation Volunteers be changed to a person with an active interest in conservation, and to amend a member of the Environment Agency to a person with an active interest in the Environment as neither organisation had appointed or attended any meetings for some years. This would accommodate two of the volunteers with relevant experience and expertise in these areas, Mr J Alexander and Mr P Bickford.

There was also a vacancy for a member of Surrey Bird Club. [After the meeting they were approached to see if they had a replacement for Hugh Evans, who had retired, and if not to suggest that the definition be widened to a person with a love of nature, as this would accommodate another of the potential members].

It was agreed to follow this up with an email to Group Members confirming the details and to contact the other people thanking them for their interest and to put them on a waiting list and invite them to events such as the litter picks.

4 **Update on Actions from the Last Meeting**

The Group was provided with updates on the following five topics since the last meeting:

Moorings – To date the overstaying moorer, despite indications that he would move on, had not. Officers would continue their efforts in this regard and an update would be provided in due course.

SANGs Leaflets – Officers confirmed that the vandalised dispenser would be replaced and replenished accordingly.

UK Power Networks (UKPN) Proposal – The Group was advised that colleagues in Legal Services were waiting for some technical information from the design engineer, so as to be able to conclude negotiations on the wayleave for a new power cable to be installed at Dumpsey Stump. It was understood that it might impact on the Esso Pipeline plans and UKPN had been advised to contact them to discuss further and prior to the engineer's next site visit to review all elements of the scheme before proceeding. The latest position would be taken forward to the next meeting.

Bridge Repairs – The Group was pleased to note that progress had been made with Surrey County Council's Rights of Way Officer. A meeting on-site had taken place and the County Council had made contact with the landowner. Replacement railings could be installed at no cost. It was advised that the original railings were to prevent aircraft rather than pedestrians from falling in the river.

Boardwalk Extension – Officers were thanked for the extension to the boardwalk. It was confirmed that it deliberately fell short of the road edge. It was agreed to look at installing some hard standing, and cutting the reeds to improve sightlines. Warning signage was already in place on the back of the existing sleepers.

5 **Management and Maintenance**

The Group reviewed the management and maintenance issues discussed at the meeting with reference to the latest copy of the Management Plan.

Height Barrier – The Group agreed that since the new barrier had been installed there had been no reported failures. However, Safer Runnymede did sometimes have difficulty when CCTV coverage was interrupted. For safety reasons, they were instructed to leave the barrier open at these times. It was reported that owing to perhaps not understanding how the barrier works that some users had difficulty with it.

SANG Projects – The Group was pleased with the progress made with a number of projects funded by SANG monies. These included new finger posts, various new signage, repainting of picnic benches, road markings and tarmacking of the unofficial unsurfaced passing place. Officers agreed to confirm whether the more robust signs about BBQs were fire proof. Officers confirmed they had also gained authority to address drainage problems in the second car park with a new surface, bee bumps and a shingle trench. A new lockable gate would be installed under the barrier to discourage anti-social behaviour caused by dangerous driving in the car park. It was asked whether CCTV could be installed as an extra measure to combat anti-social behaviour. The group agreed this would be welcomed, resources permitting.

Memorial Benches – The second of two new benches was due to be installed shortly near the beach area.

Tree Funding – The Group was pleased that the long awaited tree screen consisting of some 1,200 young trees had been planted. Mr Phillips was thanked for his contribution

and he confirmed that the trees seemed to be in good shape. The Council's Tree Officer in Green Space was thanked for his work to get funding for this from Surrey County Council's Treescapes Fund.

Esso Pipeline Proposal – The Group was advised that formal confirmation of entry on to the site had not yet been received. However, informal conversations with Esso's agents indicated that work was likely to be carried out later in 2022. Members were directed towards the official pipeline website for the current plan. [Southampton to London Pipeline Project \(slpproject.co.uk\)](http://slpproject.co.uk)

Neospora – The Group was very sorry to hear that a virus affecting cattle had been found by the farmer who took the hay cut from the Meads. The virus resulted in livestock being infected by neosporosis which could cause a pregnant cow to abort or produce unviable calves being born. This serious virus was caused by dogs who were a definitive host of the parasite. The high levels of dog excrement on the Meads was a real problem. Therefore, the Council and Natural England had given the farmer permission to chain-harrow the least botanically sensitive areas of the Meads (where the Chertsey Show was held) to try and disperse the excrement earlier in the season and reduce the risk of further infection. Members agreed that information posters alerting dog owners to the problem was necessary to try and change behaviours and stop people allowing their dogs to foul the Meads. In addition, it was confirmed that the known commercial dog walkers would be written to. The Group noted that if hay continued to be so contaminated that the farmer would need to be paid to dispose of hay that was unusable.

6 Annual Work Programme

The Group reviewed progress with the Annual Work Programme which had been updated to reflect work that had or had not been completed as well as future works.

Some of the high priority areas included the annual mowing regime on the grassland, monitoring and maintenance of the reed bed, removal of invasive species such as privet, clearing vegetation around the Bourne, managing public use of the Meads through litter clearance and regular bin emptying, and habitat monitoring in liaison with Surrey Wildlife Trust.

The maintenance of the reed beds was an outstanding issue which members sought to prioritise and which would be discussed with the farmer that took the annual hay cut. It was agreed that the expanse on the opposite side of the road to the boardwalk should be tackled, but that weather conditions had prevented a proper cut back and re-introducing cattle grazing was currently too problematic. Opening up the western pond was suggested as another area in need of attention.

7 Events

The Chertsey Show would be taking place, subject to the usual permissions being in place on 10 – 11 August 2022. Much also depended on when the Esso Pipeline work started and how it might affect the show. However, the Chertsey Show's Organisers had to date little success with obtaining a definite answer. It was understood that work had commenced in Spelthorne and Chobham. Officers confirmed that the overflow car park would not be possible this year.

A date for the summer site visit would be advised once Dr Denton was able to confirm a date to lead an invertebrates walk.

Dates of Sunday 10 April 2022 (to coincide with the Great British Tidy) and Sunday 16 October 2022 were agreed for the litter picks. Both would be between 10am and 12 noon meeting in the first and second car parks respectively and including the children's play area

which Officers had been assessing for repainting of some of the equipment.

8 **Any other Business**

The recent storms had caused damage and more debris in the Bourne but it was agreed that in recent months the amount of litter on site had reduced and there were more visitors since Covid 19. However, there was a worrying report of people on social media suggesting it might be an idea to scatter wild flower seeds at the Meads which the Group agreed was definitely not to be encouraged and could affect the site badly.

An issue regarding a failed conifer on the border between Hamm Court and the Meads was discussed. A temporary BT line being installed would be brought to the attention of the Tree Officer in Green Space. [After the meeting, Officers confirmed that the BT engineers had agreed to cut a hole through the foliage to enable easy installation of the new cable.]

It was asked whether any of the tree screen could be registered for the Jubilee. Officers confirmed that they had been with Surrey County Council.

It was confirmed that SANGs monies was held centrally but that Chertsey Meads had benefited the most so far. Cattle grazing could be looked at in this regard in the future.

Monitoring the site for Otters and bats was a project to be undertaken.

The Group was thanked for their tribute to Dennis Wheeler, a much loved and never forgotten individual, whose love of the Meads and local knowledge was highly valued.

9 **Dates of Future Meetings**

The dates of future meetings were noted: Tuesday 6 September 2022 and Tuesday 28 February 2023, to be held at the Civic Centre in Addlestone.

(The meeting ended at 8.32 pm.)

Chairman