

Wandsworth Common Management Advisory Committee
Annual Public Meeting 2020
Minutes of the virtual meeting held at 7pm on 10th September 2020

Present

Chris Metcalfe (Chair) (CM); Ian Mitchell, (IM) Managing Director, Enable Leisure and Culture; Inspector Stephen Biggs, (SB) Parks and Events Police; Jo Shearer (JS), Leisure & Culture Mutual Contract Manager (Richmond & Wandsworth Council)

Other MAC members: Christina Arfwedson, Rosemary Birchall, Julia Bott, Anna Bradford, Richard Fox (Secretary), Harvey Heath, Emily Jennings, David Kirk, Susy Lloyd, Mark Luboff, George Meakin (Vice chair & Treasurer), Lewis More O’Ferrall, Tom Pollak, Gwen Rosen, Derek Wright.

Apologies: Charlie Oppenheim; DNA: Justin Harris, Stuart Hill, Ben White

Introductions

CM introduced himself as the new Chair of the MAC elected in Sept 2019. He welcomed everyone (total attendees 38, or 19 excluding MAC members and guests), including Councillors Rosemary Birchall (MAC member), Peter Dawson, Adrian Flook and Sarah McDermott and Enable Head of Parks Neil Blackley.

He reminded the meeting that the MAC is a community group set up by Wandsworth Council. Its role is to advise the Council and its Contractors on matters to do with the **management of the Common** – in doing so, representing all its users. Involvement in the development and implementation of the **Management and Maintenance Plan (MP)** is therefore a key activity.

Key functions include ensuring:

- **a balance** between formal and informal recreation
- the protection and development of the Common’s **flora and fauna**; and
- the preservation and enhancement of the Common’s **natural character**.

The MAC is also tasked with promoting public interest and participation in the protection and appreciation of the Common. To this end our sister organisation, the **Friends of Wandsworth Common** was launched in May 2018, and the two organisations work very closely together.

Broadly speaking the MAC is focused on the management and development side of running the Common whilst the Friends are more focused on outreach and engagement.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence

None

2. Minutes of the APM held on 17th June 2019 and matter arising

Copies of the minutes had been circulated in advance to attendees and are available on the joint MAC/Friends website (references to the website from here on are to www.wandsworthcommon.org). The minutes were approved. Matters arising were left until the Q&A.

3. Enable LC report – Ian Mitchell, MD

IM described the huge changes and management challenges prompted by the coronavirus lockdown in March 2020. Enable's new contract commenced almost immediately afterwards, on April 1st.

- the combination of drought and increased footfall had taken a huge toll on the Common, compounded sometimes by ASB. Biodiversity areas had come under pressure, notably the Scope
- litter had increased hugely, requiring the flexibility built into contracts to be used to the full

Some normality was now returning allowing some catching up to be done.

Elements of the new contract that the team were particularly excited about were:

- Closer engagement with MAC and Friends groups and the wider community.
- Early examples were the mutual support of Enable and Friends with volunteer litter picking and the MAC/Friends volunteer effort to deconstruct dens and reduce desire lines on the Scope
- Wandsworth Council's Biodiversity Strategy would be published around the turn of the year
- A more environmentally friendly business operation, with a focus on carbon reduction and increased sustainability, consistent with the Council's WESS
- Better handling of sports bookings
- Efforts to tackle litter, including the introduction of recycling, and other ASB
- An increase in small scale, non-ticketed community events
- Engagement with local businesses e.g. Bellevue Road

4. Police Report - Inspector Stephen Biggs (SB) – Wandsworth Parks and Events Police

Insp Biggs reminded the audience that the 9-strong Parks Police team patrolled all 800 acres of Wandsworth greenspaces and enforced relevant byelaws, PSPOs and events. The force is managed by Enable but funded by WBC.

He was also able to call on a reserve team, the Council's community services team and childrens' service team (under age drinking and ASB) and also the Met if necessary. All these resources had provided huge support during lockdown, when recorded infringements had soared.

Before lockdown, most offences related to cycling and dog issues. Since lockdown social distancing violations had become a major issue.

Patrolling had increased at peak times with two dedicated officers deployed from 11am till late evening at weekends

Q&A

CM formally thanked the Council, Enable and the Parks Police for working to ensure that all of Wandsworth's green spaces could stay open throughout the crisis, despite this subjecting their teams to huge pressure to ensure that was possible.

Response to questions

Windmill nursery – Public access to toilets for users of the playground, which is being redesigned. IM said there was no detailed update but engagement with the MAC would continue

Contractor vehicle damage – this had been discussed at the MAC and a formal complaint made. Little seemed to have improved with copious photographic evidence. IM said he would follow up as a matter of urgency

Micro litter eg bottle tops, broken glass, nitrous oxide (NO) phials etc which was not picked up by routine litter picking. To be raised at next MAC.

Lack of policing on the Scope – it was acknowledged that most ASB took place after police shifts had ended. SB reiterated that if the Parks Police were not on duty then incidents should be reported to the Met (contact details below). SB confirmed that the police had powers to disperse and evict under age felons, confiscate alcohol and report incidents to parents. Use of NO could be prosecuted under bye law 32 (causing a nuisance). Most of the problems were due to non-locals.

Drug dealing and taking was an arrestable offence, but perpetrators had to be caught in the act

The best number to ring in the case of a problem was the **patrolling mobile 07500 959 442**. This switched through to the 24/7 WBC operator out of hours.

The landline advertised on notice boards 020 8871 7532 also switched through to the mobile.

If an incident was a serious one, requiring Met involvement, the usual 101/999 numbers were available. However, the Met was generally only involved in incidents bordering, rather than on the Common.

5. Wandsworth Common Management and Maintenance Plan (MMP): Report on first year of implementation – Jo Shearer (JS), Richmond and Wandsworth Councils

Immediately after the last APM, and publication of the new MMP, priorities for 2019/20 were discussed by a joint MAC/Friends/Enable/WBC project group. 10 short to immediate priorities were agreed, as follows, with the state of play as follows:

1. Renovation of the public toilets (behind the bowling green)

Following engagement with the MAC, Friends and wheelchair users of the Common we agreed a specification to improve the provision and access arrangements, notably;

- a disabled toilet provision for both M&F toilets;
- introduction of electric blow heaters and hand dryers.

There have been some issues delaying the project, however, portaloos have been installed while the works continue and we have a target date for completion by w/e 16th October.

2. Work towards commissioning a woodland management plan

It was agreed to seek funding for a specific ecological woodland management plan, and although this would not be priority for 2019/20 an opportunity has recently arisen at short notice to submit a bid for external funding. A project proposal has therefore been submitted by Enable and we are due to hear whether this has been successful or not in early Jan 2021. If successful it will fund work over 3 years to write and begin to deliver a 20+ year woodland management plan, to include community participation opportunities both in habitat management and in wildlife recording and woodland play.

3. Drinking fountain

WBC will fund the water fountains and installation. The MAC together with the Friends and Enable have identified a choice of locations. Work is being done to finalise the most feasible locations and then the programme for installation will be confirmed.

4. Parks police resourcing

Since the lockdown measures were introduced the parks police have provided a daily policing service of our parks and open spaces and increased police patrols of Wandsworth Common at peak times and weekends. Following Inspector Biggs update of activities this reaffirms the flexibility and professionalism of the team during C-19. Two e-cargo bikes have also been delivered and are in use by the team to increase coverage.

5. **Lake aeration** – It was acknowledged that the issue was complex and needed further consideration. Enable will continue to explore options which we will discuss with the steering group this autumn. In the meantime, ELC are exploring the possibility of getting power to the lake as a first step, as this might be a good project for a local business to deliver “in kind” as a corporate social responsibility task.

6. **Educational events / schools’ outreach** – following meetings with MAC/FoWC this formed part of the “interpretation Project” (see below)

7. **Air quality monitoring** – This priority would be led by the MAC / FoWC to liaise with WBC and will form part of the 2020 priority list.

8. **Neal’s Lodge** – With thanks to the Neal’s Lodge Community Project Group who have collated a briefing document which informed the Councils appointed consultants, LUC, to commence a programme to explore stakeholders’ ideas for the future use of Neal’s Lodge and Cottage. In light of C-19 we are progressing with a ‘virtual’ workshop for 8th October which will be followed up by a wider Council led ‘online consultation’ building on the ideas from the workshop. This is planned to be a 6-week consultation to allow members of the public within an agreed radius of the Common an opportunity to comment on the proposals.

9. **Litter** –During lock down the local community valued having our open spaces for exercise, play and quite reflection. Unfortunately the down side of high usage was the increase in litter which created a lot of activity. All bin locations were mapped to evaluate high demand areas for additional bins to be installed, reviewing persistent problematic areas, installation of bulk bins to accommodate the increased litter. WBC also worked with the MAC and Friends on the litter campaign encouraging people to act responsibly to reduce litter. The Friends working with Enable have introduced a successful weekly litter volunteering group.

10. **Interpretation project**

This was agreed as the top priority for joint working between MAC, Friends and Enable. Regular meetings were held throughout the autumn and winter to devise a project proposal that includes interpretation panels, an expanded programme of walks and talks, and a series of publications.

Unfortunately, the project was at the point of identifying and submitting funding bids when Covid-19 struck. Many of the funders have suspended their programmes or have temporarily refocused on C-19 priorities.

Enable are continuing to monitor the funding opportunities and as soon as a likely funder reopens a programme the group are ready to work together to submit a bid.

Next Steps - The steering group will meet in October to further evaluate the retrospective progress report and to agree priorities for the forthcoming year.

6. MAC Chair's Report – Chris Metcalfe

As well as the larger development projects underway, as described by JS, a number of smaller activities were outlined:

Playgrounds – St Marks upgraded; Windmill playground in planning stages, and options for final design of that will go to public consultation in coming months.

Electric Ice Cream Vans –The contractor with the licence for Wandsworth Common has been persuaded to upgrade to an electric van which has been used on the Common this year.

Woodland Management – Initial works have started to try and prevent long term ecological damage to the Scope and the MAC are working with Enable to develop and implement a biodiversity strategy for the Common, which will start to be implemented this Autumn.

Particular **thanks** to MAC members Julia Bott, Richard Fox, George Meakin, Mark Luboff, Emily Jennings and former member Aviva Walton for leading activities and also to Lewis More O'Ferrall, Anna Bradford and Liz Jevons for involvement in MPIG and recent Scope management activities.

Crisis Management: There has been significant focus liaising with Friends, Enable, the Council and the Parks Police to try and develop effective signage, implement social distancing and one-way routes, and deal with the huge litter issue we've had (particularly on

Bellevue Fields) and associated ASB problems, all associated with the many-fold increase in users.

Management and Maintenance Contracts: Along with other Wandsworth Green space reps, MAC were actively involved during the year inputting to the services specification for the new Management Contract that Enable successfully retained. We've also provided our initial comments on improvements we would like to see to the maintenance contracts that are coming up to tender – currently held by id verde and City Suburban Tree Surgeons. The improvements we've put forward include:

- Better litter management, and more recycling facilities
- Implementation of quality standards for sports pitches
- Improvements in the management of pitch bookings and personal trainers
- Use of more appropriate vehicles on the common to avoid damage
- Improvements in the maintenance and management of trees - tied to the introduction of a new Wandsworth Tree Strategy, which we are very supportive of;
- Greater visibility of service and contractor performance standards

Planning Applications: Little activity on planning matters during the year. We were involved with objecting to the development of Jaggard Way and supporting applications for the extension of the fence-line around the Windmill playground and an artificial wicket on the cricket circle.

I'd formally like to **thank all members** of the MAC over the last year who have given their time and effort – and considerable passion - across a number of fronts.

I'd particularly like to thank Richard as Secretary and George as Vice Chair and Treasurer.

- **Richard's dedication** to the Common is probably only equalled by his wife Julia. Richard has worked in a full-time capacity over the last year to fulfil his MAC secretarial role and his Friends Co-Chair role, and is a huge asset
- **George has been a constant support** to anyone on the MAC who has requested his help, no matter what the request is. While managing the accounts is less of an activity nowadays than previously, he continues to deal with them

7. Accounts

GM explained there was minimal activity in the account as the previous main income stream – swan and duck food sales – had been transferred to the Friends, who now managed the operation. Expenses had been minimal so the outstanding balance of £3.2k was much the same as last year. The MAC would consider what enhancement projects might be suitable for support.

8. 150th Anniversary

CM reminded people that July 2021 will see the **150th Centenary of the Wandsworth Common** Act of Parliament that made it Common Land.

A range of activities are being organised to commemorate this – co-ordinated by the Friend's Heritage sub-group.

Amongst a host of activities that you will have heard about at the Friends AGM, and hear more about in coming months, the MAC are very keen for there to be a **permanent legacy** to mark this event, and we're delighted that Ian Mitchell has agreed that Enable will fund two-thirds of the cost of planting 150 new trees on the Common. Working with the Friends – the MAC will raise the other third. There have already been some pledges, but we'll be kicking off fundraising activities in the next couple of months, and if anybody has any ideas – need to raise £5,000 - we'd be very keen to hear from you.

Q&A

Naturescope – JS said that this will be included in the consultation on Neal's Lodge. Given the proximity of the two buildings it made sense to consider their usage together.

Windmill nursery – JS acknowledged that the MAC's active engagement with playground development plans had led to a sea change in the Council's approach. The MAC will continue to press for improvements in toilet access and would table it at its next meeting. JS agreed to consider all proposals

Tree planting – IM confirmed that the 150 trees were additional to what the Common will receive as part of the Council's regular annual planting.

9. Election of MAC Members

Sue Delafons retired from the MAC in March having moved away from the area. Sue had done excellent work on the MMP and the subsequent implementation working group. She continues to be an active member of the Friends Heritage sub group.

4 members had **confirmed that they did not wish to stand for re-election**. CM thanked Tom Pollack, Ben White, Justin Harris and Stuart Hill for the significant contributions and commitment they've given to the MAC – many of them having served for a significant period of time. We will miss them, but will continue to keep them apprised about what's going on, and hopefully tap into their expertise and knowledge when necessary.

11 members are **continuing as part of their term**.

Harvey Heath, Susy Lloyd and David Kirk stand down by rotation but are **seeking re-election**

Mark Luboff and Anna Bradford were **co-opted** onto the MAC during the year and are now formally standing, and Elizabeth Jevons is also **standing for the first time**.

One new member – Susan Dark – nominated herself from the floor and was duly elected alongside the 11 continuing members and the 6 mentioned above.

The new MAC therefore consists of 18 members: Rosemary Birchall, Julia Bott, Anna Bradford, Susan Dark, Richard Fox, Harvey Heath, Emily Jennings, Elizabeth Jevons, David Kirk, Susy Lloyd, Mark Luboff, George Meakin, Chris Metcalfe, Lewis More O'Ferrall, Charles Oppenheim, Christina Potts, Gwen Rosen, Derek Wright

10. Any other business

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.00pm