

Friends of Palewell Common & Fields

Minutes of Meeting held on 8th November 2012 at 5.30 p.m.

Present: Andy Sutch (Chairman), Jacqui Pattison, David Evans, Dhun Kenny, Rikki Marks, Bernard Adams, Angela Howorth.

1. Apologies for absence: Francis Rowland. Members thanked Francis for his huge contribution to the success of Friends of Palewell Common and marked his departure with a card and token gift. The Committee wish him well in his move to Teddington, he will be greatly missed.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th September 2012: The Minutes were approved.

3. Planning - progress with Montessori Application 12/1308: The Planning Application is still under assessment so nothing further to report. Members understood that there is now a waiting list for the Montessori and emphasised that FoPC's objection was only an extension of use into evening hours.

4. Beverley Brook: AS confirmed that it was very important to retain the tree cover screen and protect the view across the Common. AS asked David Evans whether he had any experience of poor water quality. DE said that whilst the water level had been high there had been no unexpected events.

DE explained the plans for Beverley Brook in Richmond Park which, in summary, were not dramatic the main aim being to provide refuges for fish so as to protect them when the water level rises. In the document The Environment Agency and Thames 21 propose putting large old tree trunks in the upstream water course which would be firmly secured and behind these they would create safe enclaves, mostly towards Robin Hood Gate. The second proposal is to alter the big gulleys where the roads drain into pen ponds, these have large manhole covers. Thames 21 propose to dig these out into shallower 'V's' to make further refuges. The third most interesting fact in the report is that the Brook near Palewell Common is 60% in shade and bats have been seen, it is therefore not appropriate to do anything at the Palewell Common end of Beverley Brook. The Environment Agency has been clearing the brook.

AS will draft a reply to Debbie Leach of Thames 21 and it was agreed that DE will summarise the Report which could then be circulated to local schools to keep them updated and informed.

5. Parking of vehicles:

i) Recent parking of residential van at the Common: The committee agreed that it had taken too long to move a residential van which had been parked at Palewell Common for some time and lived in. DK also expressed concern at the parking of a considerable number of white vans in several roads in the area; this could become a serious problem if it was not dealt with by the Council.

ii) Borough Review of Parking: The Committee discussed the matter and agreed that they were not in favour of the Borough extending the CPZ south of the Upper Richmond Road. DE felt strongly that the hours restricting parking in the present CPZ should be reduced.

6. Boules - Safety and an additional piste: BA reported safety concerns and one player was hit by a golf ball and suffered considerable bruising, fortunately he was not hit on the head. BA said there is inevitably a small risk to Boules players and to others from the golf pitch and putt course. RM said that this was raised at the time of the installation of the boules pistes. DK said that there had been protective nets but these had blown down in the storms of 1987 and the Council had decided they were too expensive to replace. The Golf Course has Public Liability Insurance the Committee wondered if they could be persuaded to replace the protective nets. AS reported that the Golf contract had yet to be awarded but it would be helpful to have detailed specifications for any netting.

DE suggested strong fencing be erected to protect the boules pistes, BA preferred the thinner netting option. DK would like the operator of the golf course to take responsibility and put in preventative measures especially as there is evidence of balls leaving the course and there are increasing numbers of young people using the dog free area.

BA has put up laminated warning notices to ensure that people are aware of the problem.

BA had identified three possible sites for further boules pistes and provided a map showing the sites. (Appendix 1).

The Committee discussed the possible options for providing more capacity for boules, the site outside Pistachios was rejected, the site adjacent to the east perimeter of the golf course and that east of the playground were possible the latter being the long term favoured option. It would need to be fenced in but it would provide space for further expansion in the future.

BA had had discussions with Michael Powell (who had built the existing pistes) who said it was not possible to move the current pistes, so BA would like to protect them at present.

DE commented that the least impact would be to add a third piste to the existing site, if that was allowed.

AS asked BA to arrange to meet other Committee members to measure the proposed sites and report back. To be arranged for Monday.

The cost of building three new pistes was discussed and BA said we should budget for approximately £1,200. AS hoped to get a donation of £300/400 towards costs from the local Sports Council. It was also possible that MESS might contribute to the costs and hopefully the Council might supply the topping. The Committee should expect to provide possible funding of £700.

7. Cricket: AS confirmed that if we were to have two squares on Palewell we would need to erect netting on the northern boundary of the new pitch but LB Richmond are unlikely to do anything about a second square before April 2013. Sheen Common CC was increasingly interested in a pitch at Palewell but able to provide less finance than Richmond CC who want a higher spec ground. Members were encouraged by the interest from RP Academy and agreed the improvement of the existing square and the addition of a synthetic wicket. BA sought capacity for more casual use of the pitch and that it should be available for use by visiting teams. RM asked at what stage we would be able to improve the square to ensure it would be ready for next season. We should put signs up to stop people using the square, roping off the site would be a statement of intent.

Finances: DE confirmed a cash in bank balance of £1,716, permitting modest expenditure - up to £100 was available to rope off the existing square and it was hope LBTuT would meet BCTV costs.

8. Palewell Management Contract: AS confirmed that the Council had, through outside advisers, gone through the stages of 'expression of interest' and initial assessment for grounds maintenance and golf and tennis contractors. He thought LBRuT might engage major tennis/golf operators, investment was required in the region of £70,000 for the tennis courts alone. He confirmed that once contractors are appointed the Friends of Palewell Common will have a meeting with them. JP commented on letters in the local press about the contracts to be awarded. It was agreed that appointed contractors be invited to a Friends Committee Meeting in January 2013 and a wider public meeting be set up perhaps at the AGM on the 8th or 15th May 2013.

9. Woodland Clear up and future dates: RM thanked all helpers for their role in today's clear up. Work had been done on the pond and a glade area had been cleared to let light into the woodland, she hoped that it might be possible to plant English bluebells in this area. We need to keep brambles and ivy out. RM confirmed that the Council approved the removal of some ash trees and commented that the Council will have a lot of work in clearing ash trees and costs are high. There are plans for coppicing and RM confirmed that Simon of BCTV will need notice of this. The Committee agreed that plans should be made for a further Clear Up Day in February/March. RM will contact Tasha Hunter to see if she can help with the supply of bulbs and arrange a date for planting and possibly more work on the footpaths. AS informed the committee of a meeting of the London Wide Friends Groups.

10. Any Other Business: RM informed the Committee that Janet Bostock would be interested in joining the committee, she is extremely knowledgeable about plants, trees and fungi and would be a huge help in improving the woodland. RM proposed her appointment and JP seconded the motion, the Committee agreed.

BA reported that LG would continue to organise Boules meetings with a short gap at Christmas. AS suggested that some photographs of Boules players be taken and put on the website.

RM raised the problem of access to loos/toilets for members of the public using the Common. Some of the BCTV helpers today had had problems, signs suggest that they are for café users only. To be raised with LBRuT.

RM informed the Committee that a local resident, Mrs. Payne, had expressed concern at the number of cyclists on the common and on the sports pitches and of the potential damage they were doing. To be discussed.

AH confirmed that she now has the notice board key.

11. Date of Next Meeting: 23rd January 2012.

