

Friends of Palewell Common & Fields

Minutes of Meeting held on 20th September 2012 at 6.00 p.m. in the Club Room

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

In Attendance: Debbie Leach of Thames 21, Peter Ehmann of The Environment Agency and Nicky Gill of Mortlake with East Sheen Society. The Chairman welcomed them to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th August 2012. The Minutes were approved.

5. Presentation from The Environment Agency & Thames 21: The Chairman invited Debbie Leach (Chief Executive of Thames 21) to outline proposals for Beverley Brook particularly issues about thinning tree cover.

Debbie Leach explained that they have about 14,000 volunteers and cover programmes across London; their priority is to engage local communities with their waterways and to encourage them to care for them. Thames 21 was originally started to tackle the rubbish that accrued in the Thames and to create wild life habitats. There is a Water Framework Directive from Brussels covering water quality to which the UK Government must adhere and by 2027 all rivers must be up to a 'good' status or have the potential to achieve, Beverley Brook is 'poor'. The Environment Agency (EA) develops plans involving local communities for their ideas.

The Catchment Restoration Fund - funds physical improvements to waterways to improve water quality and bio diversity.

Thames 21, with the support of the EA, is now working in partnership with The Wild Life Trust, Friends of Richmond Park (Royal Parks) and The Wandle Trust to look at the whole river

DL said that Thames 21 are seeking to improve biodiversity etc of the brook in Palewell Common and want to engage the local community with the Brook and the Common.

Peter Ehmann from the EA dealt with technical matters including flood risk and improvements to wild life and outlined basic information about water quality and flow in Beverley Brook and elsewhere in the area. There is a history of pollution in Beverley Brook as in much of South London as a result of housing built on the flood plain in the first half of the last century and the priority was then to move the river to the sea as soon as possible.

Since the 1990's there have been dramatic improvements and changes:

- Better sewage treatment
- Tougher regulation of industry
- Reduced industrialisation
- Better public awareness

Life is returning to the Brook, there are now fish, plants and other wild life, ammonia levels (a constituent of sewage which is toxic to fish) fell from 1992 to almost zero by 2002.

Beverley Brook has treated effluence from Hogsmill Kingston, but back pumping still occurs to Worcester Park. Oxygen levels - which are vital for fish - are now more stable for the fauna & flora.

The Water Framework aim is to improve water quality and flora and fauna which needs an integrated approach, working with water companies to improve water quality and working with communities as well. Studies have also shown that a nicer environment reduces anti-social behaviour. PE outlined examples of successful projects elsewhere in London.

In response to questions PE explained the data was collected at Priests Bridge, that in London whilst the whole river does not need to be of top quality there do need to be areas of refuge for fish to avoid the big flow and there was potential at Palewell to create a really good sanctuary.

David Evans said he was aware of periodic flows which represent cleaning of water plants, the water goes opaque which lasts 24 hours and then the water comes back to normal.

PE said that this should not happen. If it happens again could we please let them know, the pollution hotline number is 0800 807060, officers are on duty and there would be a Duty Officer in the area. In the Wandle they are testing pollution using volunteers to take samples.

Andy Sutch commented that improved water quality and flora and fauna make it a better amenity and we would be supportive of general improvements. However it was important to protect the vista across the Common and protect against the buildings becoming prominent. The issue of possibly changing the meander of the brook was important as it could have an affect on the games pitches.

PE said that the standards given are from expert opinion from the EA, the funding would come from a government fund and an expert panel would assess bids and award funds. Local Authorities have the obligation to ensure water quality is protected to get all pollution under control, habitat creation is essential.

AS asked whether Thames 21 would manage in Partnership for Beverley Brook,

PE said that the Department of Environment would take a step back but advise.

PE confirmed April next year, Debbie Leach said this had been moved on from the original date of October 2012.

AS repeated the concern for the aspect across the Common and the need for more detail on the removal of fences and tree cover along Beverley Brook.

The Committee confirmed that they did not support a change in the meander of Beverley Brook.

FR reminded the meeting that the site is landfill and disturbing that could cause pollution.

Both PE and DL agreed that that was an important issue.

DE said that there were more opportunities for changes to the Brook in Richmond Park, Palewell Common has much less space and more potential difficulties but was in favour of improving biodiversity.

FR pointed out that there was quite a long stretch by the golf course which could be improved, distinct zones need to be assessed.

Tasha Hunter on behalf of LBRuT is supportive and recognised the need for ongoing maintenance.

The chairman thanked Debbie Leach and Peter Ehmann for attending the meeting and presenting the proposals for changes to Beverley Brook.

DL, PE, JP and Nicky Gill left the meeting.

2. Planning:

Montessori Nursery School: AS said that the application was still being assessed, nothing appears to have been done since June but FoPC will monitor any change.

Royal Ballet School - programme of events: The Ballet School want to maximise the site, the Friends of Richmond Park are concerned and objected to proposed activities. Their concerns are:

- Access to the Park at night
- Noise levels would not be good for the wild life and light pollution
- A lot more traffic

The licensing requirement for regulated events is due to change from 31st October and whilst it was agreed that habitat in Richmond Park is the important issue - it was for FoRP to comment as the committee did not think that Palewell Common itself would be hugely affected.

3. Treasurer's Report: DE informed the committee that the balance in the Bank at the end of August was £1,747.00, he had one outstanding invoice from the tennis pro for £25.00 for our event which he will pay leaving a balance of £1,722.00

FR asked about giving donations to various concerns, after discussion it was agreed that no decision would be taken until after the BTCV dates had been confirmed. FR suggested the Committee earmark £200, AS favoured £100.

4. Join in Weekend 19th August: AS said unfortunately the weather had affected the day but it had been a success and showed the importance of The Friends being on site at least once a year. In 2013 it will have been two years since the opening of The Pavilion. It was agreed that early September is a better time for an Open Weekend; we should check the start of Kids Works as Saturday is probably a better day than Sunday and arrange other sporting events.

BA proposed that the Friends buy a gazebo, the Committee approved.

Bernard Adams said that the Boules had been a great success, there had been twenty two players, fourteen of whom had come from outside. BA said that at present two terrains are normally sufficient but we should try to have tournaments and that might require a third. There was discussion of the possible site of a third and possibly fourth terrain, RM suggested that near the orchard area was a possible site. AS asked BA to do some costings.

6. BTCV Dates: RM has had discussions with Simon and has suggested the end of October beginning of November. RM has a programme: saplings need cutting back as do the brambles. The pond area in the woods needs attention. She mentioned the possibility of coppicing and also

creating a layered hawthorn hedge. RM said there were other things we could do but we do need to be insured. FR suggested we approach the Council to put down weed killer in certain areas, RM agreed. FR suggested we get a volunteer group to meet regularly to do work. RM said her daughter works for Youth Challenge and they may well come and do some work. There was suggestion of a party/event to attract new members. A Social event in the Spring was proposed and FR suggested May Day as a date. To be discussed.

7. Cricket: AS said the principal of cricket on Palewell is important. AS had met Ian Moore (Richmond Cricket Club) it was agreed Palewell was different in nature and scale from Old Deer Park. AS also met the Borough which has a small amount of money to invest at Sheen Common but there is not room for two pitches. AS spoke to Ian Moore and Kieron Pearce (Sheen Common CC) who were keen to work together. AS has spoken to possible funders, namely Fields in Trust and London Marathon Trust. Richmond CC now have 18/20 games a season and would like some under 21's and girls. Sheen might also use the pitch - they want more juniors. Richmond Cricket Club would like a regular match each Saturday on one or both pitches from mid-day until about 6.30 p.m. and a single game on perhaps two thirds of the Sundays if a second square were provided.

Richmond Park Academy have expressed interest in mid week junior cricket.

There were serious reservations from some committee members about two pitches on Palewell Common, safety issues were particularly raised and were of real concern, particularly with the proximity to the playground. Of further concern was the removal of the use of the Common for local residents if two matches were being played on most Saturdays. FR commented that perhaps there could be one good pitch and one secondary pitch. AS was meeting both clubs later that week and LBRuT had a cricket meeting scheduled for 5th October.

8. Maintenance & Management Contracts: AS confirmed that in the contracts there will be a commitment that we, The Friends of Palewell Common, meet the new contractors, the Council is targeting 1st April 2013, external consultants will report to LBRuT before Christmas. FR asked about tennis and golf, AS said the Council is still discussing this, we have written to support local coaches acting as a consortium. FR asked if they had gone out to tender? AS confirmed that tennis and golf have applied.

9. Any Other Business:

RM informed the Committee of a van which had been parked for several days by the Common, she had reported it to the Council. AH confirmed that she had also reported it.

BA asked the Committee to support a request by Richmond Park Academy to put up a banner on the Pavilion advertising their Open Evening in October. RM and AH were against the Friends supporting advertising on Palewell Common and felt it was inappropriate. AS said he would like to assist the school, FR commented that it should be small. The Chairman gave approval.

Date of next meeting: 8th November 2012 at 5.30 p.m.

The meeting closed at 8.30 p.m.

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