

# The Conservators of Therfield Heath and Greens

The Therfield Regulation Trust  
c/o Royston Golf Club, Baldock Rd, Royston, SG8 5BG  
Registered Charity No. 277881  
Chair: Clare Swarbrick

Temporary Clerk Lynda McCormack  
Email:clerk@therfieldheath.org.uk

## Summary Minutes for Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> August 2020 at 7:00 pm Black Barn, Thrift Farm

In attendance : Clare Swarbrick (CSw), Clive Hall (CH), Colin Smith (CS), Neil Guttridge (NG), Ben Harrop (BH), Robert Law (RL)

- 1.10/20 **Apologies for Absence:** John King
- 2.10/20 **Declarations of interest:** CSw and CH declared an interest in item 9.08/20 ii
- 3.10/20 **Heath and Greens Maintenance (Vincent Thompson (VT) attended by invitation for this 30 mins section)**
- i. Meeting with Natural England : CSw said that there had been a constructive meeting and discussion with the following items identified for action.
  - ii. Priorities and schedule of maintenance in next 12 months:
    - a) Lankaster, Sun Hill and the Gallops: Positive response to the proposal to cut and collect before end of August. However, this would not now go ahead until the first week of September because of the weather.
    - b) Ragwort: This is a problem on Two Hills and the Rifle Range. Volunteers (wearing gloves) will be needed to remove ragwort which then will be taken away and destroyed.
    - c) Chalk tracks - urgent repairs needed before the winter: Paths from the Golf Clubhouse to the Rugby Pitch and the area around the 16<sup>th</sup> are getting wider as people avoid the rutted sections. The paths to the monuments also need redressing. BH offered to take this forward with guidance.
    - d) Tor Grass (near 15th): Spraying has considerably improved the situation. To keep on top of this it needs to be part of an annual programme and dealt with in March and April.
    - e) Ash dieback: This is becoming a problem around the Two Hills area and may need to be budgeted for. There is an issue with overhanging branches from trees on neighbouring land and a letter needs to be written to the landowner regarding this.
    - f) Signage: The bird signs are still up and need to be taken down. CSw said that a draft sign for Church Hill had been prepared. The Conservators were keen to see the draft. Any sign could be erected on the boundary of the Herts and Middlesex reserve.
    - g) Boundary Trees (including felling of dead tree behind 7th green, near 8th tee): The recent storm has caused damage to the trees and urgent action is now required. It was agreed that the two trees should be felled as soon as possible. Clerk to advise Natural England and arrange retrospective permission.
    - h) Now there is no grazing on the heath, there was a discussion around the additional maintenance required. It was felt that it was unlikely that anyone would be found to graze the land and so a scarifier would be the solution.
- 4.10/20 **Approve the minutes**  
The minutes of the meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> July were approved
- 5.10/20 **Matters arising** not covered in the agenda: none
- 6.10/20 **Major items to agree**

- i. Management Plan: The proposal from Maydencroft was discussed at length. It was felt that a plan for the management of the land is needed but that there were concerns regarding the scope and cost of the Maydencroft proposal. Oakbank Game & Conservation Ltd had produced a report which covered much of what the Conservators need to do to improve the SSSI. The Maydencroft report could be of assistance in building a case when applying for funds. However it was unanimously agreed to reject the Maydencroft proposal in its present form. It was agreed that CSw, CH and BH would go through the management plan in detail - alongside the earlier Oakbank report. It was hoped that this would lead to a working plan. Additional support could be commissioned where required.
- ii. Sun Hill Common (Asset of Community Value). The Conservators reviewed the documents provided. The Conservators fully supported and accepted the proposals. It was also agreed that the goalposts could be reinstalled providing that any Covid-19 requirements were taken into consideration.
- iii. Hay Green: CH reported on a meeting that he had with a landowner who has erected gateposts to prevent vehicles using his land a turning circle. The Conservators view was that the gateposts are not acceptable as they give the impression that this is not part of the common. A possible solution is the exchange and de-registration of this part of Hay Green for an equal or slightly larger part of the field fronting onto Hay Green if this solution got the backing of the Parish Council and residents too.  
The owner of land on The Grange would like to have a driveway constructed to mirror that of neighbours. However, access would be over the Conservators' land. It was agreed that the owner needs to seek consent from the council and reopen negotiations with the Conservators.
- iv. Local Nature Reserve and the Local Plan. CH explained that, if the Local Nature Reserve status still exists then there is a bylaw requiring the Conservators to approve the use of any pesticides on the land. The existence to the Local Nature Reserve had been raised with NE and their response is awaited.
- v. SSSI mitigation strategy: This issue has been raised as a result of the objection to the Gladman planning application. The Inquiry into the NHDC emerging Local Plan means that a meeting will likely take place with various parties including, Natural England, Conservators and NHDC.
- vi. Stake Piece Road. CSw had reported that the walk with Natural England had resulted in the discovery of fly tipping at the rear of a property on Stake Piece Road.
- vii. Green Recovery Fund. CSw said that, if approved, an application could lead to funding for a person to act as a warden for a period of 18 months. The criteria for the fund would be published on the 1<sup>st</sup> September.

7.10/20 **Finance**

- i. CSw reported that the accounts would need to be signed off in the next few weeks.

4.10/20 **Events Permissions**

- i. The Clerk reported that the request from Royston Army Cadets was being considered by Natural England.
- ii. An application for permission to sell Christmas Trees over the weekend of the 5/6, 12/13, and 19/20th December has been made. The Conservators agreed to this.
- iii. John Lawson's Circus would like permission to come in 2021 from the 23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> September. The Conservators agreed to this.
- iv. Royston Runners have advised that 30 or so club runners would still like to run the Harvest Trail route (now cancelled) on the previously planned date of 20<sup>th</sup> September. The Conservators agreed to this but permission from Natural England must be sought.
- v. The Friends of Therfield Heath are planning a Bear Hunt on the 4<sup>th</sup> October similar to the Easter Egg Hunt. The Conservators granted permission for this.

9.10/20 **Any other business:**

- i. CSw reported that interviews had been held for the post of Clerk and that, subject to satisfactory references, Carol Fossick had been appointed.
- ii. BH and CS advised that they would be member of the cricket club to discuss the return of cricket to the Heath. The Conservators supported the return in principle and hoped a suitable agreement between the parties concerned could be reached.
- iii. CM advised that Affinity Water Ltd had requested permission to replace the Golf Club Water Meter. This was not on the SSSI and so permission was granted.
- iv. CS said that the tennis club had been in touch regarding long grass outside the perimeter fencing and that a tree root that has grown though under the court.
- v. BH advised that he is still looking into a solution to the problems with the bins.
- vi. The Temporary Clerk was thanked for her work.

10.10/20 **Date of next meeting** 24<sup>th</sup> September 7pm