

NORTH HINKSEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE RECREATION AND AMENITIES SUB-COMMITTEE, HELD ON THURSDAY 16th SEPTEMBER 2010, AT 7.00pm, IN THE SEACOURT HALL, BOTLEY.

Present: Councillors: The Chairman, Councillor S. Elliott and Councillors E. Batts, Mrs. B. A. Newport, Mrs. A. Schlichting, P. C. Stevens and S. Woodward.

Others: Dr. Curt Lamberth, Dr. Judy Webb, Councillor Mrs. Hammett, Dr. Carter, A. Pritchard, Mrs. Carr, Dr. Davey and A. J. Stone (Parish Clerk)

1. **APLOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There was an apology from Ann Berkeley (Consultant).

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **LOUIE MEMORIAL COPSE AND FENLAND – DRAFT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME**

The Chairman, Councillor S. Elliott introduced Dr. Curt Lamberth and Dr. Judy Webb who together had compiled the draft management programme. Dr. Lamberth addressed the meeting by stating that the programme produced was a very descriptive management plan. It was more prescriptive than would normally be for some plans as this was the first one that had been prepared for the copse and fenland. The plan prepared was personal to the Louie Memorial copse and fenland area and in their view there should be no debate on what needs to be done, as it should not be open to negotiation, although it was accepted that there may be some little things that might need tweaking. The report leading into the programme contains a considerable amount of back ground information which will help the Parish Council in any future decision making.

As the copse and fenland was a public open space there were a number of problems which had and would probably continue to arise, namely,

- the introduction of alien species of plants shrubs etc.,
- dog faeces,
- vandalism
- soil compaction and erosion.

and these issues would continually need to be addressed.

Dr. Lamberth then produced a map where he had indicated where works etc. would need to be Undertaken and advised councillors that they needed to draw up their own version, to enable them to understand what needed doing and where, but as important an historic record for different councillors, generations and future use. He suggested that it should be produced on a larger map if possible.

Dr. Lamberth also emphasised the following important points:

- i). Doing nothing in the fenland was not an option.**
- ii). However, doing nothing in the copse was an option.**

The Chairmen, Councillor S. Elliott reminded the meeting that the Council needs to prioritise the work that could be done as funding would be a problem. Dr. Lamberth informed the meeting that initial tree work would be expensive, but once done tree works costs would reduce.

Dr. Judy Webb informed the meeting that the Louie Memorial fenland was an ancient, historic site and the habitat in it was rare, hence the need for an ongoing programme of correct maintenance. The copse and associated woodlands were not that old, much having sprung up over the last 50 years.

Dr. Webb answered questions from Councillors Mrs A. Schlichting and P Stevens by informing the meeting that other good examples of fenland could be found at Cothill, Dry Sanford and Lye Valley (the nearest access being Girdlestone Road) and more local ones were at the Hinksey Heights Golf Course and Chilswell Valley Farm.

The fenland needed cutting and councillors were grateful of the offer of help from Dr. Webb, who commended the Parish Council for their excellent approach in having works undertaken to protect the fenland and copse areas.

Dr. Lamberth informed the meeting that management plans were sometimes done in a prescriptive manner, but it was not always necessary to follow them rigidly, as it was possible just to do parts of the

plan as circumstances dictated e.g. you could cut grass but not rake it up. It needs someone who understands what they are doing; don't do what you don't need to do. The Parish Clerk thanked Dr. Lamberth and Dr. Webb for the excellent advice they had given during the whole project and the supervision of the resultant works. He also asked if both Curt and Judy would be available to walk the area to ensure that the map that will be produced by the Parish Council includes all the relevant details and sites. Both agreed to do so subject to availability.

Councillor Mrs. B. Newport reminded the sub-committee that they needed to assess what could be done, and then decide what help the Council needed. She hoped that the practice of planting alien (garden plants etc.) would stop as they take over from the natural wild plants. It was also hoped to plant native 'English' bluebell bulbs, which would be obtained from a reliable source. Councillor Mrs. A.

Schlichting asked about the ongoing problem of dog faeces and how best to deal with it. Dr. Lamberth had dealt with the problem by originally putting up notices which helped, then he adopted the policy of spraying round them with fluorescent paint which further helped to reduce the problem. The best way was to educate dog owners to pick up and take away their dog faeces, but this will only work if dog owners are willing to listen. Dr. Webb had found that many faeces were found in the long grass in the lower field as she believed dog owners encouraged their animals to go there as it was away from the children's play area. Unfortunately, this does not help as it messes up the biodiversity of the long grassland area.

Dr. Webb reported that the fungi in the copse were probably the best showing for at least 20 years. Regarding the grassland edges identified to remain uncut until after the seeding season (August), the grass should be cut as a hay cut, then the hay raked away. The area should then be cut short along with the other grasslands at the final gang mower date of the year. Dr. Webb had visited the pond and discovered that the substances visible on the water surface were in fact the result of iron oxide seeping from the soil. This was a process that was a natural phenomena as a characteristic of fenlands and the brown substances on the surface were harmless. There had been a series of alien plants put in the pond (red waterlilies) which needed removing as did the domestic plants that had been planted on the pond banks. Most of the domestic plants had now been removed as well as some of the waterlilies. **It was UNANIMOUSLY AGREED that Dr. Webb would arrange for the OCV to remove any alien species and then move some natural species from the fenland to the pond area, including yellow archangel plants and the Parish Clerk to arrange for a notice explaining the position.**

Dr. Lamberth reported that the area of new fenland was re-growing on the surface, but the bald patch (wet) where children had built hides etc was growing slower. The erosion system was working well as even after the heavy rain there had only been the loss of one clump. He was concerned that if people down the hill redirect rain water into their element of the stream in their back gardens it would cause further flooding problems for people whose properties were further down the hill. The reported bricks etc. put in the pond were not a problem and he would take them out at his next visit. There was a slight leak around the structure of the hydrology works which it was hoped would seal itself up. This was the result of the poor quality of ground and rubble that the works were built in. If the leak did not become self-sealed then Dr. Lamberth would address the problem.

The Chairman, Councillor S. Elliott asked councillors to vote on whether to accept the management plan, subject to the proviso that there was available funding in place and if not Council would have to prioritise the tasks that could be done within the funding available. Councillors UNANIMOUSLY AGREED to ACCEPT the management plan subject to available financing and RECOMMEND to Council that they ACCEPT the plan under the same conditions.

Councillor Elliott then thanked Dr. Lamberth and Dr. Webb on behalf of the sub-committee for coming to the meeting, answering questions and explaining issues.

Both left the meeting at 8.10pm.

4. HYDROLOGY WORKS

The item concerning alien plant species (domestic) in the pond and the pond surrounds was discussed in item 3 above.

5. BUDGET REPORT

The Parish Clerk introduced the budget and monitoring statement, which councillors discussed budget heading by budget heading. Council has AGREED at its AGM in May 2010 the following carry-forwards into 2010/2011 for the Playing Fields budget: