

**St Catherine's Hill & Town Common Management Plan Steering Group
Minutes of Meeting, 4 October 2012 – 2.30pm
Civic Offices, Christchurch**

Present: Paul Atwell (UHP) – PA
Amanda Collins (SBW) – AC
Chris Gordon (WCRA) – CG
Yvette Greatrex (HPC)
Robin Harley (CBC) – RH
Peter Holloway (CBC) – PH
Jenni Jones (FSCH) – JJ
Gary Powell (ARC) – GP
Dick Preston (FC) – DP
Nick Squirrel (NE) – NS

Apologies: Cllr Sue Spittle (CBC), Cllr Tavis Fox (CBC), Clive Sinden (CBC),
Cllr Margaret Phipps (HPC), Matti Raudsepp (CBC)

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 RH, stand-in Chairman, thanked everyone for attending. CG was welcomed as the new representative for West Christchurch Residents Association.

2. Minutes of meeting on 12 June 2012

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true record.

3. Matters arising

3.1 None.

4. Management Plan Update

4.1 RH explained that the amendments to the draft plan had been circulated in August. CG asked for a copy of these and RH agreed to send on. RH said that the plan was due for formal adoption on 31 October 2012 by CBC.

4.2 RH asked if ARC now have approval. GP said that they had full approval but were still waiting to hear back from the Malmesbury Estate as the lease of the land expires before the end of the Management Plan. JJ asked how long was left on the current lease and GP said 5 years. DP said that this will usefully coincide with a review of the progress of the Plan.

4.3 RH agreed and reminded the group that HLS funding from NE runs until 2018. NS said that while funding was in place until 2018, nothing was decided beyond that. However, with or without funding the statutory obligation on the landowner to maintain the habitats would remain. Discussions on a replacement funding stream are likely to take place in 2014 to agree to new or bridging funds post 2018.

5. Terms of reference

5.1 As previously agreed, to help progress the formation of the new steering group prior to formal Plan adoption, a useful first step would be to agree revised Terms of Reference. PH presented some revised wording, based on

the original Steering Group Terms. **PH** agreed to circulate the revised wording, for agreement at the next meeting.

6. Work Programme for Year 1

- 6.1 RH circulated a letter from Ron Allen, the hydrologist, which states that the Steering Group should be commended for developing such a comprehensive plan. In conclusion, he considers that the proposed scheme is reasonable and accords with his hydrological recommendations. Monitoring had been discussed with him during a site visit and RH showed a map with 10 suggested locations for dipwells and some background information. RH explained the rationale for the locations, including a control site on the plateau that will remain wooded. NS explained the flow monitoring points. JJ asked if dipwell D6 will be to monitor the nearby retention pond. NS explained that the dipwell would be there to monitor any changes in ground water level while the retention pond would be there to collect surface water.
- 6.2 RH mentioned that during the meeting with the hydrologist, the gravel track from Sandy Lane to the Gun Club was inspected as he had seen water flowing down during heavy rain. Existing side drains which had become blocked over years were identified and it was agreed that these could be reinstated relatively easily to divert water into the adjacent woodland and reduce the problem. CG said that this would be a very good step to gain residents' support prior to any felling works.
- 6.3 CG and JJ queried the ditch management at the perimeter of the site. RH clarified that existing functional drains would be maintain. He reminded the group that the hydrologist had warned against restoring ditches which are currently dry as this may create a problem where one doesn't exist. However, the hydrologist may recommend specific works related to proposed felling works and once the first felling licence is drawn up, this will be clearer and ditch management works can be prioritised.
- 6.4 CG suggested that ditch management should take place prior to dipwell installation. NS felt that this was not necessary as dipwells will have little effect on drainage across the site. RH said that it was important to prioritise dipwell installation so that baseline information could be gathered. CG asked who will monitor the dipwells. RH said that this had been discussed before and it was agreed that this should be kept in-house, rather than employ university students or volunteers.
- 6.5 DP asked if monitoring of dipwells will include weather data. All agreed that this was important and RH said he thought there was a weather station at the airport. CG offered to help with monitoring. AC agreed and RH thought it would be useful for everyone at some point to be involved.
- 6.6 RH said that one of the next tasks is the production of the work programme. With this in mind, he would aim to produce a gantt chart for the next meeting.

7. Introduction to felling licence

- 7.1 DP produced some notes for group members relating to the felling licence process. He strongly advised that licences are applied for, at least initially, on an annual basis. NS questioned how this affects the horizon in terms of what the end point of felling works is expected to be. DP replied that the management plan sets the horizon and that licence applications fit within that 10 year framework. The annual approach is good because people can gauge how the works have gone each year and trust can be built. RH said that one advantage was that this meant less marking of trees on site and less for the group to have to consider at once.
- 7.2 The group agreed that this approach would build confidence. CG pointed out that this also allowed flexibility for following years based on how the first year had progressed. YG agreed that this would assist perceptions over the long term objectives of the plan.
- 7.3 RH asked how the application process worked once the FC had received the paperwork. DP replied that there were a number of stages:
- Site looked at
 - Reference would be made to the Management Plan
 - Application placed onto the public register
 - FC consults with statutory and appropriate bodies (28 days)
 - Responses to above looked at
 - FC make decision on application and grant or refuse
- 7.4 DP said that since the applications would be following an agreed plan and approved plan that had been signed up to, there should be no reason to not issue a licence. This doesn't remove the opportunity for objection but objections would need to be very strong or based in fact.
- 7.5 Both CBC and ARC would need to apply separately because a licence is issued to the land owner.
- 7.6 YG asked what would happen if the ARC lease is not renewed. DP answered that the Malmesbury Estate would have to apply for any subsequent licences.
- 7.7 RH asked about Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs). DP replied that the FC are the competent authority for four types of projects under EIAs:
- Afforestation of land
 - Deforestation of land
 - Quarrying of materials for forestry purposes
 - Road construction for forestry purposes
- 7.8 DP said that various thresholds apply (e.g. for deforestation, any area larger than 0.5 hectares should be put forward for EIA determination. The FC have decided that in the case of this site, provided the Plan is being adhered to, because it has been through a full consultation, there is likely to be no need for an EIA. However, this situation may change later in the project.

- 7.9 DP therefore advised that application to ask for a determination on the EIA should be submitted alongside the felling licence application. The EIA determination could cover a 5 year period, i.e. apply once but over several felling licences.
- 7.10 NS asked if additional areas were added, would that affect the EIA. DP responded to say that an additional EIA determination would be needed for any additional area but not anything already covered. JJ asked what happened if things did not go to plan (e.g. impact to houses) but the EIA was in place. It was agreed that this would be an issue for the Steering Group to deal with at the time.
- 7.11 NS asked if one EIA determination could cover the whole site. DP replied that each landowner would need to apply separately but the content could be identical.
- 7.12 NS suggested that for the next meeting it would be useful to have some draft work programme proposals for the first 5 years and an idea of which areas would be covered in the first felling licence. These could be visited in the meeting. This was agreed as a sensible next step.
- 7.13 GC asked over what time period NE would want to finance initially. NS said that he would like an idea of costs over the first 3 years and that he would need an idea this year. The method of funding within HLS would still need consideration (e.g. part of full payment) but as capital works were not possible at the start of the project, that earmarked money should be available now.
- 7.14 DP said that part of the felling licence application would require the marking of trees, so that members of the public were clear on what was proposed. Marking could be off all trees to be felled or trees to be retained within a defined area. It is usual practice to mark whichever is the lesser number of trees.
- 7.15 RH pointed out that in w-wh-o areas, there would be a need to get to the middle stage by [felling] year 5 and so these would have to be started early on. In addition, where areas exceed 0.75 hectares on the plateau, there is a hydrological requirement to do this work in stages. There is also a need to consider what is operationally feasible from a contractors point of view (e.g. with regard to extracting timber from a block) and areas where works are likely to cause a nuisance.

8. AOB

- 8.1 NS said it would be useful to start thinking about fencing for grazing and to bring ideas to the next meeting.
- 8.2 JJ asked GP about the bridleway across the A338 and the feasibility of a green bridge. NS said that there would not be the money as it would cost over £1 million.

- 8.3 CG asked at what point would the group appoint the contractor? DP replied that the group would not appoint a contractor but it would be the decision of the landowners, not least because they would be paying for the works. GP said that small works would be carried out in-house and that a number of contractors would be considered for larger scale works. DP suggested that supervision and specification would both need to be tighter going forward to negate issues of the past.
- 8.4 AC asked NS about what will happen with the trees on water company land. NS suggested that he, GP, RH and PH should meet with her on site prior to the next meeting.
- 8.5 Date of next meeting was agreed for Tuesday 22 November at 11am.