

**St Catherine's Hill & Town Common Management Steering Group
Minutes of Meeting, Tuesday 14 January 2014 – 2:15pm
Christchurch Civic Offices**

Present:

Robin Harley (CBC) – RH, Chris Gordon (WCRA) – CG, Gary Powell (ARC) – GP,
Jade North (UHP) – JN

1. Welcome and Introduction

1.1 RH welcomed the group.

2. Apologies

2.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Margaret Phipps (CBC/HPC), Clive Sinden (CBC), Peter Holloway (CBC), Amanda Collins (SBW) – AC, Nick Squirrell (NE) – NS and Cllr Sue Spittle (CBC) – SS

3. Minutes of meeting on 14 November 2013

3.1 These were agreed as a true and accurate record

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Under 4.4 CG pointed out that the Gun Club now fire on 6 out of 7 days. This used to be only 3 days and Tuesday was always a quiet day. There appears to be no regulation. It was appreciated that there is other shooting on site (e.g. deer and fox culling) but that this had a distinctly different sound. While the Gun Club is part of the hill it would help neighbourly relations if the noise wasn't so constant.

5. Felling Licence Application Update

5.1 RH explained that ARC and CBC have now received consent for felling from the Forestry Commission. This meant that along with SembCorp, works could now proceed on site.

5.2 JN asked if there had been any flooding as a result of the recent heavy rainfall. RH replied that existing water issues had been exacerbated but he was not aware of any actual flooding of properties. All on-site ponds are now full.

5.3 CG said that WCRA would like to know if an assessment had been done along the back of properties and if there was a report to this effect. RH said that there was no report but of course the on site drainage had been (and was being) regularly checked at key run off points. As a result some work had been necessary to ensure good flow – including the unblocking of a drainage pipe and the digging out of debris from ditches.

5.4 GP said that ARC had cut side channels into the gravel path on the track from Sandy Lane and that these were being monitored. RH said that there had not been a major change in the dipwell readings which suggested that ground water change is quite gradual. He was aware that some properties on the Hill do not have surface water drainage and that this would have an impact locally.

6. Interpretative Plinth Update

6.1 CG circulated documents relating to the plinth and showed the example stone top. He had now received a quote from the supplier and it was affordable based on the agreed level of funding, coming in just under £2,500. He therefore intended to proceed with arranging the installation. Those present were happy with the proposal.

7. Implementation of Year 1 Felling Proposals and Publicity Update.

7.1 RH, CG and GP had met a prospective contractor on site, Landmarc, as agreed at the last meeting. GP has used them before and found them reliable and professional. They are also available to do the work. This job is small-scale for them and they are largely a machine based operation. Another contractor with a similar set-up (Alaska) had no availability to do the work.

7.2 The meeting went well but it became clear that actually carrying out the agreed work was quite complex, particularly in terms of extraction and selective felling to avoid marked trees. CG pointed out that in some circumstances it may be necessary to substitute marked trees. GP agreed that there needed to be a high level of flexibility. There were also issues to resolve in terms of dealing with arisings. As expected, burning would need to be considered in some areas but there would need to be conditions in place, taking into account wind direction.

7.3 The blocks at the far north end of the site were very difficult to access and on steep ground which added further complications. Extraction would require making a route across heathland and long vehicle movements. RH did not favour this route and was keen to look at other options.

7.4 The contractor was confident that everything was possible but stressed that the weather needed to remain dry. Given the complexities the contractor would prefer to work on a day-rate basis, as a whole job quotation would have to include a large amount of contingency, in case the work is not so straight forward. It was agreed that as this is the start of a long project, it was sensible to trial methods in the first year.

7.5 Those present all agreed that given the above and recent very poor weather conditions it was sensible to delay the contracted element of the felling works until the situation on the ground improved. This would give time to consider alternative extraction routes and RH had an idea of creating a new route at the NW end of the site. CG felt that this could potentially be made into a future fire access. All agreed that a recommendation should be made to the Group as a whole to delay the works until September 2014 and there should be a meeting to look at this potential access on the ground. RH agreed to circulate this view and to arrange a date to meet on site. GP agreed to talk to Landmarc and get them back to look at the proposed access.

7.6 RH said that whilst the contracted work should be delayed, there was no reason not to proceed with in-house works and even extend them to cover additional small-scale works. GP agreed and said that this was another example of there needing to be flexibility. It had taken a long time to get the felling licence and it was agreed that further slippage in terms of time should be avoided if possible. JN pointed out that if works started in September, there was only really a loss of

about 6 months. GP said that it was not work taking risks at the very start of the project and those present agreed. In addition there were no capital payment forthcoming from NE and by delaying, earmarked funds for year 2 could be accessed after April.

7.7 RH said that there had been a fair bit of publicity both through WCRA, on site posters, on-site management walks (with a further walk due in a few days) and an article in the Courier. This had generated some interest but no significant concerns.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 RH said that given some of the work was on Scheduled Ancient Monuments, he had contacted English Heritage about consent for the works.

9. Date of next meeting

9.1 RH proposed the site visit for 28 January at 11am and he would circulate this date asap