

MITCHAM COMMON CONSERVATORS

A meeting of the Conservators was held at the **Mill House Ecology Centre Windmill Road** Mitcham on **Wednesday 12 March 2008** when there were present:

Mr P Harper (Chairman)
Councillor R Bailey
Councillor J Leach
Councillor B Mansfield
Councillor I Munn
Mr M Welbank

In attendance

Mr A Banfield – Clerk
Mr M Boyle-Warden
Mr P Moorhouse – Assistant Warden
Mr M Smith-London Borough of Merton
Mr R Auld-Investment Advisor (Item 7)

1. **Apologies for absence** Received from Councillor A Caldara, Dr D Coleman, Councillor T Harris, Mr P Hopson, and Ms D Hyatt.
2. **Minutes.** The minutes of the meeting held on the 12 December 2007 were approved and signed by the Chairman.
3. **Matters arising**

(1) Land Registry (Minute 5(8)) Mr Welbank requested an update on progress on this matter. The Clerk informed the Board that meetings with the Land Registry have been held and the process examined. The Board's Solicitor is also involved. In order to progress registration it may be necessary to walk parts of the Common. The cost of the registration is included in the draft budget for 2008/2009.

(2) Thames Water (Minute 5 (7))_Councillor Bailey requested an update on the allocation of monies from Thames Water in connection with the Pollution Incident along the River Wandle. The Warden reported that £250,000 of this money has already been allocated to the Wandle Trust. The Warden will be attending a meeting on the 17 March when he expects to ascertain details of the allocation of the remaining £250,000. A further report on this matter will be made to the next meeting of the Board.

(3) Proposed Traffic Signals at Croydon Road/Carshalton Road (Minute 9) The Chairman reported that further correspondence on this matter has been received from the London Borough of Merton. This correspondence has requested that the Board review its previous decision not to support the proposal to remove the Roundabout at this location and replace it with traffic lights. This alteration to the arrangement of the junction is to form part of the London Cycle Network (LCN) funded by TfL, with the London Borough of Merton acting as agent.

The Board further discussed the matter and confirmed its previous decision that it was unable to support the proposal. However, if the London Borough of Merton, in conjunction with TfL, after consultation with Members and local community/resident groups decide to go ahead the Board will consider voluntary transfer of land. The Common will actually benefit from an increase in land based on the existing Proposals.

RESOLVED The Clerk will write to the London Borough of Merton with the decision of the Board.

(4) Mitcham Golf Club (Minute 11) The Clerk reported that a letter has been received from the Mitcham Golf Club requesting that the Board review the timescales in the existing license, which expires in 2011. The Golf Club has requested that the Board consider aligning the timescales in the two agreements. These being between the Mitcham Golf Club and the two landowners i.e. (a) the Conservators for the Golf Course and (b) the new owner of the land on which the Clubhouse and Car Park sit.

The Board has already resolved that a consultant will be appointed to assist the Board in considering this matter. The Board has also agreed that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman will have delegated authority to meet the representatives of the Mitcham Golf Club to discuss this request.

Subject to progress a report will be submitted to the next Board Meeting.

4. Report of Director of Environment and Regeneration

(1) Assistant Warden. The regrading of this post was noted. In response to question from a Conservator the Warden stated that this matter was not placed in the confidential section of the agenda, as it did not contain details of the precise salary figures involved

(2) Friends of Mitcham Common The Friends have suggested that their poster display entitled "The Green Hills of Mitcham" be upgraded to a permanent display for use at Exhibitions/fairs etc. This work is at a cost of £600, to be included in the 2008/2009 Estimates. The Chairman has, subject to Board approval, agreed this request.

RESOLVED A sum of £600 be included in the 2008/2009 estimates to upgrade the Friends of Mitcham Common's display.

(3) Volunteer Activity. Report noted

(4) Management Plan. The Warden reported on the plan by reference to the Tables A & B attached to the report.

Table A

Item 1 User Survey. The Warden will report in detail on the User Survey at the Seminar

Item 2. Ground Invertebrates (Spiders) (Report attached for information of Conservators). The Warden explained the background to the survey, which was for information of Conservators and others. He proposes another spider survey in 2010.

Mr Weldon commented that the author of the report has also undertaken work of this nature elsewhere including on Burnham Beeches. Councillor Bailey suggested that a copy of the report be sent to the Natural History Museum. Councillor Munn complimented the Warden on the report, which he found very interesting.

Item 13. Higher Level Stewardship. The Warden has had difficulties in arranging a meeting with Natural England to progress this matter. He expects the meeting to be held late March or April. A further report will be submitted to the Board in due course on this matter

Table B

Item (1) User Survey. The collated raw data from the survey will be sent out to Conservators in time for it to be considered before the Seminar.

Item (5) Acid Grassland Restoration The Warden has written to the Mitcham Golf Club on the matter. A positive verbal response has been received.

Item (9) Mill Green. One of the projects identified in works associated with the Wandle Valley regeneration is the possible improvement of the Beddington Carrier, on Mill Green, by naturalising the banks. The project has the support of the Environment Agency. Members also referred to other projects, not necessarily on the Common, and in particular one to reintroduce water voles at a couple of sites on the Wandle. These projects could receive financial support from Councils (Section 106 monies) and Thames Water.

Item (10) Mtcham Common Website. The Warden proposes deferring the review of the website until 2009. The site has only been running for 2 years, but has had approximately 10,000 hits.

(5). Management Quarterly Work Plan It was noted that this was posted on the website

(6). New Projects.

Item (1) Byelaws Signs The Warden reported that the existing Byelaw signs are 20 years old. He proposes to bring new designs to Board for approval in the next year with a view to a possible funding commitment to install new signage in 2009/2010. The Chairman asked if the Byelaws themselves are in need of updating. The Clerk reported that an update had been carried out a few years ago and there did not appear at this time to be a need for an update. However the Clerk will circulate copy of the existing Byelaws to all Conservators for information. In the event that any Conservator has any comments these could be raised at the Seminar.

Item (2) Map of Easements/Way Leaves etc. The Warden also reported that it is his intention with the Clerk, to map all existing easement/way leaves etc so that a comprehensive pictorial record can be made of these. This proposal will involve a detailed examination of the records of the Board.

Item (3) Interpretation Boards There are 16 of these Boards on the Common. 15 have been used satisfactorily. However one on the path leading to Beddington Park had been constantly vandalised. It is Warden's intention to remove this board and not replace it. This action was noted.

(7). Bidder Memorial Railings. The Warden reported that the spikes have been removed.

5. Report of the Clerk

(1) Open Day 2008 The Clerk reported on a recent meeting with interested parties on the Open Day. There was support from these groups for an Open Day to be held again. The date agreed is Saturday 12 July

(1.1) Programme. A number of events have been planned as follows:

- (a) A series of guided walks from the Ecology Centre to various parts of the Common.
- (b) A total of 3 large exhibitions in the grounds of the Centre to include the London Borough of Merton, TfL and one other (tbn)
- (c) Three or more table top displays in Centre to include the Conservators, Friends and "nature" display, or similar, for children
- (d) In addition the Fire Brigade and the Police, with motorbikes, may be present

(1.2) Publicity As there is more time available this year it hoped to publicise the event and receive more local support as follows:

- (a) There will be an article in the local "Green" Guardian, which will be arranged by London Borough of Merton
- (b) The Friends will asked to expand their current leaflet distribution system to cover wider area, with a financial contribution from the Board
- (c) There will be number of banners around the Common in the week leading up to the Open Day

(1.3) Update. A further report will be submitted to the Board in June on progress.

(2) Conservators Seminar The Clerk reported on the progress in setting up the Seminar. The draft programme attached to the report was discussed and agreed. It was agreed to go ahead with the Seminar on Saturday 12 April. The Clerk will circulate the programme to all Conservators.

RESOLVED A Seminar for Conservators will be held in the Ecology Centre on Saturday 12 April 2008

(3) Easter Fair 2008 The Clerk reported on an application by Messrs. M Hammond and Sons to hold an Easter Fair this year on the Fair site. This application is in accordance with the existing agreement between Messrs. M. Hammond and Sons and the Conservators. The Officers have agreed the details with the company. The Fair will go ahead as per existing arrangements

In addition Messrs. M. Hammond and Sons has requested that the Board consider agreeing to the operation of a Fair around the Christmas period. The dates proposed to be approximately November to January for 2 weeks. Details have not been finalised but the proposal would appear to be the provision of a normal Fair with additional Christmas attractions, perhaps a market. Draft details have been submitted.

The Board discussed this matter. Whilst expressing interest the Board instructed the Clerk to write to other Fair operators who have provided Fairs on the Common in the past to give them the opportunity if they wish to submit a proposal. This matter to reviewed at June Board meeting.

RESOLVED. The Clerk ascertains what interest, if any, there is from local Fair operators to providing a Christmas Fair in 2008.

(4) Merton Local Development Framework. Report Noted.

(5) Filming on the Common Report Noted

(6) Beddington Landfill Site (The Gun Site) The Clerk reported on works on this site, with reference to the attached photograph. A ditch has been dug along the northern boundary of the site, apparently to prevent the riding of motorbikes in the area. No consent was requested for work. The Clerk has written to SITA, the responsible party. Although a reply has been received it is not satisfactory.

The Clerk has written again to SITA. If a suitable solution to the problem is not offered to the Officers by the 26 March it is recommended that matter be referred to the Planning Service of the London Borough of Sutton, the responsible local authority

RESOLVED

If within 14 days of the Board meeting a satisfactory reply is not received from SITA the matter will be referred to the London Borough of Sutton for action.

(7) Mitcham Junction Station Improvements-Footpaths Report Noted

(8) Dates of Meeting 2008/2009 The draft programme of meetings of the Board for 2008/2009 was submitted

RESOLVED

The programme of meetings of the Board for the 2008/2009 is approved.

6. **Budget** A Statement of Income and Expenditure to the end of February 2008 Was submitted.

7. **Investments.** The details of the Board's Investment portfolio previously circulated by the Boards Investment Advisor were noted.

The Board's Investment Advisor, Mr Richard Auld was present. He gave a general overall view on the performance of the Board's portfolio relative to the market as whole. Overall the Board's portfolio has preformed well considering the current difficult trading conditions. Detailed figures will be circulated.

It was Mr. Auld's view that the Board may wish to take a view on the percentage of its investments in one stock. This stock is Rio Tinto, which accounts for 8.5% of the portfolio. After debate it was delegated to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to consider the reinvestment of part of this money. Mr. Auld will circulate details.

RESOLVED

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman have delegated authority to review the Board's holding in Rio Tinto and take any action they think necessary on the reinvestment of part of the value of the stock.

8. Draft Revenue Estimates 2008/2009. The Revenue Estimates 2008/2009 were submitted. The London Borough of Merton has prepared these. The Officers explained details of the Expenditure and Income sections. The Chairman requested that after approval and submission to constituent authorities that a figure of £2,500 be identified for the employment of a student in the summer period.

RESOLVED

The Revenue Estimates for 2008/2009 be approved, and details forwarded to the constituent authorities.

9. Wandle Valley Regional Park The Clerk spoke to the report. In general the project has continued to receive support from stakeholders, particularly the four local authorities within which the River Wandle is situated.

The draft boundary of the park has been discussed. With reference to the map attached to the report the Clerk requested a view as to boundary of the Park. In particular he recommended the boundary be that encompassing the entire Common. This was agreed and the Clerk was instructed to write Groundwork with the decision of the Board.

Councillor Bailey raised his concerns about the governance of the Park. At this stage there appears to be no indication of how the project will be administered. The Clerk was instructed to bring these concerns to attention of constituent boroughs, being Croydon, Merton and Sutton. A copy of the letter also is sent to the London Borough of Wandsworth.

RESOLVED

1. The Board support the proposed boundary of the Wandle Valley Regional Park, which includes within it the whole of Mitcham Common.

2. The concerns of the Board regarding the governance of the Regional Park are brought to the attention of the constituent boroughs, with a copy sent to the London Borough of Wandsworth.

10. Sutton LDF The submission made by the Warden, on behalf of the Board, with agreement of the Chairman, was noted

11. Grazing on the Common Received a report by the Warden on the feasibility of grazing animals on the Common. The Warden at the request of the Chairman prepared this report. During discussion examples of other Commons where grazing is practised were identified including Burnham Beeches, Walton Downs and Old Lodge Farm in Sutton. The

latter in connection with Roundshaw Downs. It was suggested also that Deen City Farm could be contacted for advice on the subject. After debate it was agreed to keep watching brief on the subject

RESOLVED. A watching brief will be kept on the matter and reports back provided as and when appropriate.

12. **Friends of Mitcham Common** No representative present.

13. **Any Other Business** (a) The Chairman reported that he would be meeting the London Borough of Merton's Head of Service for Regeneration and Leisure on the 2 April 2008, to discuss matters of mutual concern.

(b) The Chairman also has now received a letter from the Lead Member for the Environment at the London Borough of Merton suggesting to a meeting at a convenient time to discuss litter, road sweeping etc.

(c) The Evening Standard has contacted the Chairman to add comments about the Common in the property page in that newspaper

(d) The Clerk reported that Mr. Peter Hopson, representing the London Borough of Corydon has written to him stating that he will not be seeking nomination to Board for the next year.

RESOLVED.

A letter of thanks will be sent on behalf of Board to Mr. Hopson thanking him for service to Conservators

(e) The Clerk reported that the contract as a Consultant to the Board held by the former Clerk, Mr G. Norris, expires at end of the month. The Board instructed the Clerk to write Mr Norris and thank him again, for all his work for Conservators over the years.

RESOLVED.

A letter of thanks be sent on behalf of the Board, by the Clerk, thanking him for all services to the Board,

14. **Date of Next Meeting** Wednesday 11 June 2008.