

MITCHAM COMMON CONSERVATORS

A Meeting of the Conservators was held at the **Mill House Ecology Centre, Windmill Road, Mitcham** on **Wednesday 11 June 2008** when there were present:

Councillor R Bailey
Dr D Coleman
Mr P Harper
Ms D Hyatt
Mr D Loughborough
Councillor B Mansfield
Councillor D Neil Mills
Mr M Welbank

In attendance

Mr A Banfield – Clerk
Mr M Boyle – Warden

1. **Appointment of Chairman.** **RESOLVED** that Mr P Harper be appointed Chairman of the Board for the ensuing year.
(Mr Harper in the Chair)

2. **Appointment of Vice Chairman.** **RESOLVED** that Councillor Timothy Godfrey be appointed Vice Chairman of the Board for the ensuing year.

3. **Appointment of Conservators.**

London Borough of Croydon Councillors T Godfrey, T Harris and S Hoar, and Mr D Loughborough are appointed until May 2009. Councillor Hoar is returning as a Conservator, and Mr Loughborough is a new Conservator.

London Borough of Merton Councillors B Mansfield, I Munn and D Neil Mills, and Mr P Harper are appointed until May 2009, Councillor Neil Mills is a new Conservator.

London Borough of Sutton Councillors R Bailey and J Leach are appointed until May 2009, and Dr D Coleman and Ms D Hyatt are appointed until May 2010.

Corporation of the City of London Mr M Welbank is already appointed until April 2009.

The Chairman welcomed the new, and returning, Conservators to the Board.

4. **Apologies for Absence** Received from Councillors T Harris, S Hoar, J Leach and I Munn.

5. **Minutes of last Meeting** The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 12 March 2008 were approved and signed by the Chairman

6. **Matters Arising**

3(1) Land Register. The Board was updated on the progress of the project to register the Common on the Land Register. The Warden has undertaken considerable work in identifying the boundary of the Common. Before the submission of the plans, and supporting information, to the Land Registry it will be necessary for a search to be made of the Board's historical records. A submission to the Land Registry will be made before September 2008

3(2) Thames Water. The Warden reported on a meeting held by Thames Water on the 17 March 2008. The purpose of this meeting was to update local groups on the distribution of the £250,000 identified earlier this year for improvement projects on and around the River Wandle. Thames Water intend to distribute the money at a rate £50,000 per year. They anticipate that this sum of money will be allocated, in relatively small amounts, to projects with matched funding already identified. The Warden's view is that these sums of money are likely to be too small to be of benefit to the Conservators.

4(2) Ground Invertebrates (Spiders) The Warden reported that he had not yet forwarded the report concerned to the Natural History Museum. However he will do so in the near future.

5(3) Christmas Fair 2008. No application has been received from any Fair Operator to operate a Christmas Fair on the Common this year.. It is normal in these cases for a request to operate a Fair to be received at any time in the year. In the event that such a request is received, before the next Board meeting, it is recommended that delegated authority be granted to the Chairman, and the Officers to process the application. Any application must be submitted by the end of August to enable the Police to be in a position to allocate adequate staffing resources to police the event. Any application will have to comply with Board's existing criteria...

RESOLVED The Chairman, and Officers be authorised under Delegated Authority to consider any application, to operate a Fair on the Common in the 2008/2009 Christmas Season.

7. **Report of the Clerk**

1. Redhouse Road. Discussions with Officers from Sutton Council have taken place regarding this road. The Sutton Officers have made positive proposals to resolve or reduce the problems of rubbish dumping in this road. The situation will be kept under review.

2. SITA Landfill. The Board's Officers have met representatives of SITA (operator of the former Landfill site) and Days (who owned the Landfill site) to discuss reinstatement of the ground opposite the Common. At the meeting SITA undertook to consider this request and report back to the Officers. The situation will be kept under review.

3. Open Day. Preparations to hold the Open Day on Saturday 12 July are proceeding well. Two major exhibitions, one each from Merton Council and Transport for London, will be set up in the Ecology Centre car park. Within the Centre itself there will be two tabletop displays provided by the Conservators and the Friends. Further offers of help on the day are expected from the Police and Fire Brigade. The Clerk outlined details of the publicity for the Open Day.

The Chairman instructed the Clerk to circulate all Conservators to ascertain who will be available to assist at the Open Day, particularly in staffing the stand.

4. Police Motorbikes. The Chairman has written to local Merton Borough Police Commander to ascertain the current position on purchase of the motorbikes, as previously reported to the Board. A reply from the Borough Commander was tabled. The Clerk will review the situation in early July and report back to Board on the outcome of that review.

The Report was noted

8. **Statement of Income and Expenditure up to May 2008.** Report noted.

The Clerk identified in the Statement the absence of income from the 2008 Easter Fair. The Fair fell into the 2007/2008 Financial Year and the fee income was received in March 2008. The 2008/2009 accounts will be adjusted to take into account this difference.

9. (a) **Investments.** The details of the Board's Investment Portfolio previously circulated by the Board's Investment Adviser were noted

(b) **Transfer of Business.** The Board has received notification from its current Investment Advisers, Insinger de Beaufort, that its "Private Client Division" will be transferred to Charles Stanley and Co Limited with effect from the 27 June 2008.

Existing clients of Insinger de Beaufort have been invited to transfer their business to the new company. Following a discussion on this invitation the Board resolved to transfer its business to the new company as requested, but to review the its position in the next financial year.

RESOLVED. The Board will transfer responsibility for administering the Investment Portfolio from Insinger de Beaufort to Charles Stanley and Co. Limited with effect from the 27 June 2008

10. **Spring Inspection 2008.** Councillors R Bailey and B Mansfield had given their apologies for this meeting but were not listed. Their names were therefore added to the list of apologies for absence.

The report identified the route taken by the party on the Common for the Inspection. The route included the Golf Course, the Gunsite and the area around Aspen Gardens. Comments on Aspen Gardens are contained in Item 18 of these

minutes. During the Inspection, whilst walking through the Gunsite, evidence of the use of the Common and adjacent land for off-road motor biking was seen.

Certain access points on the Gunsite, marked as A, B and C on the map attached to the report were identified as requiring repair and replacement. There is a metal barrier at A. It was agreed, on site, that this barrier served little purpose and it will therefore be removed. The Warden has made recommendations on changes to the access points and ground repairs at points B and C. These changes involve removing the existing metal barriers and installing kissing gates at each point. Work to repair the bund and ditch at each point, as necessary, will also be carried out.

RESOLVED. The Warden is authorised to remove the existing metal barriers, and install kissing gates, at points B and C as marked on the Gunsite map. Work to repair the bund and ditch in each case is also authorised as necessary.

11. **Mitcham Common Environmental Trust- Funding Application**

The application relates to a project to fund work to desilt the Seven Islands Pond. The work will be funded by a Landfill Tax Credit grant from Viridor Waste Management.

It is planned to commence work at the pond in October 2008. The question of the removal and relocation of the fish was raised. The Warden explained that contractors will be appointed and they will be advised that the Friends of Beddington Park may wish to purchase the fish. The Warden will keep Ms D. Hyatt informed.

The Report was noted

12. **Wandle Valley Regional Park.**

It was noted that discussions on the future of the Wandle Valley Regional Park are continuing. Groundwork UK is coordinating the various aspects of this work with the support of other interested parties. The Conservators are represented on the Steering Group, and a number of its sub-committees. The recent establishment of LAW (Local Authorities along the Wandle) Group has helped in providing leadership to the process

Wandle Valley Spatial Vision and Implementation Plan. Groundwork UK is producing this document with input from a number of other stakeholders... It is intended to produce the final document for presentation to interested parties in due course.

WVRP Boundary. A map of the proposed boundary of the Regional Park was submitted to the Board. This map showed that Mitcham Common, in its entirety, is included within the proposed boundary. This proposed boundary also more clearly identifies the “core area” and an “area of influence”. This map will form part of the “Vision” document.

The Chairman expressed his satisfaction that the discussions on the proposed boundary of the Regional Park had taken into account the submissions of the Board's representatives on the Steering Group.

The Next Phase Although clear evidence of progress has been made there remains the financial problems of funding the project. Groundwork UK is making a bid for financial support through their normal funding routes

Councillor Neil Mills, who represents Merton Council, on the LAW Group, stated that the LAW Group are aware of the funding difficulties and discussions on the matter are on going.

The next meeting of the Steering Group will take place on Wednesday 16 July. This meeting will be followed in the early evening by a presentation given by Groundwork UK on the final version of the "Vision" document. All interested parties will be invited to the presentation. The Clerk will arrange for invitations to the presentation to be distributed to the Conservators.

The Report was noted

13. **Friends of Mitcham Common.** No representative of the Friends was present at the meeting
14. **Date of Next meeting.** Wednesday 10 September 2008
15. **Date of Annual Common Inspection.** This date of the Inspection has already been agreed for Sunday 14 September 2008. Invitations to the local MP's, Mayors and other Civic Guests will be sent out within the next fortnight.
16. **Any Other Business.**

Former Members of the Board. **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that a vote of sincere thanks be recorded to those former members of the Board who for various reasons had not been re-appointed to the Board for the ensuring year, for their services, and they be informed accordingly.

IN COMMITTEE

17. **Mitcham Golf Club.** The Clerk introduced this item and referred to the previous report received by the Board at its meeting on the 12 December 2007 (Item18). This earlier report gave details of a possible request from the Mitcham Golf Club for a review of the timescales in any new Licence for the Golf Course The current Licence expires in 2011.

The Golf Club has a Lease on the Club House and Car Park, parts of the Golf Course, not owned by the Conservators, from a private landowner. The Golf Club has been in negotiations with this landlord to agree a new Lease.

As result of these negotiations a new Lease for the Club House and Car Park has now been agreed between the Golf Club and their landlord with a commencing date of the 1 April 2008. The term of this Lease is 40 years.

The Board resolved at its January meeting to sympathetically consider any request from the Golf Club to agree to a Licence with a term to run concurrently with the Lease. In addition it was resolved to appoint a Consultant to assist the Board in its deliberations on the new Licence, including details of the new Licence Fee. The Consultants report was attached to the main report

A formal request has now been received from Mitcham Golf Club to harmonise the timescales in the Lease and any new Licence. As the Licence expires in 2011 it recommended that the Board agree in principle to a 37 year Licence commencing in 2011. The Club has requested that a break option in its favour be included in the Licence for consideration by them in 2028. The Board will reserve its position on this request and instruct the Board's Solicitor to advise it on the legal position.

The draft Licence will be submitted to the Board before proceeding further.

RESOLVED.

1. The Board agree in principle that a new Licence is negotiated with the Mtcham Golf Club, in accordance with the terms contained in Consultant's report.

2. The new Licence to be for a term of 37 years commencing on the 1 April 2011,subject to legal advice on the request by the Mitcham Golf Club for a break option in 2028.

3. The draft Licence to be submitted to the Board for consideration before final agreement between the Mitcham Golf Club and the Board.

18. **Report of the London Borough of Merton's Director of Environment and Regeneration.**

1.Environmental Stewardship. Following a meeting with Natural England the Warden has been advised to apply for Higher Level Stewardship (HLS). The Common already receives money under the Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) category. The HLS could pay for additional management to "acid grassland" areas on the Common. The Warden confirmed that the work would focus on the annual mowing of grassland but would also involve limited felling of trees, but only where there is encroachment on acid grassland. If the application is successful the work will be carried out in various areas of the Common, including the Golf Course. Before submitting an application it will be necessary to meet with the Golf Club to agree the details.

Subject to agreement with the Golf Club, a report with further details of the project will be submitted to the next meeting of the Board. Any application to DEFRA and Natural England must be submitted by December 2008.

The report was noted.

2. Aspen Gardens. As part of Spring Inspection, reported elsewhere on this agenda, the area around Aspen Gardens was visited. Some of the residents of Aspen Gardens were found to have encroached on the Common. This encroachment has taken the form of clearing the ground to grow vegetables and erect structures.

These encroachments are specifically prohibited by the Bye Laws. It was recommended that a letter be sent to all residents of Aspen Gardens bringing their attention to the Byelaws and requesting them, if they are responsible, to cease the encroachment on the Common. In the event that the problem persist it may be necessary to proceed with enforcement action in appropriate cases.

RESOLVED.

1. A letter be sent to all residents of Aspen Gardens informing them of the situation and requesting them, if they are responsible, to cease the encroachment on the Common.

2. In the event that encroachment continues enforcement action against the responsible persons be authorised.

3. Friends of Mitcham Common. The Chairman and Warden have recently met with the Friend's and agreed to provide support to the group in their efforts to recruit new members. The Friend's are confident of persuading new members to join the Committee

4.. Management Plan: Quarterly Work Programme. The report was noted

5. Beehive Bridge. The Board agreed to a request from the Warden that this matter be considered as a late item. .

Merton Council has allocated £110,000 for capital projects to improve the street scene environment. The Warden was successful with an application for money from this budget to repair and/or replace (as required) the post and rail fencing on both sides of Commonsides East at Beehive Bridge. The cost of this enhancement will be in the region of £20,000 to £23,000.

The report was noted

19. Seminar The Board reviewed the Notes of the Members Seminar held at the Ecology Centre on Saturday 12 April. It was agreed the Chairman and Officers will meet in due course to consider the recommendations contained in paragraph 6 of the notes of that meeting. Following this meeting a costed programme will be produced for the Board to consider.

The Warden confirmed in answer to a question that any benches on the Common would be made from hardwood from a sustainable source. The benches will not be cut out of fallen trees. The trees on Mitcham Common are not suitable for this purpose.

RESOLVED. The Chairman and Officers will provide a costed programme, to undertake the recommendations of Paragraph 6 of the Notes of the Members Seminar at the next meeting.

Meeting closed at 8.30pm.