

TUNBRIDGE WELLS COMMONS CONSERVATORS

Minutes of a meeting held in Committee Room A on Thursday 21 March 2013 at 2.00pm

PRESENT: Cllr Barbara Cobbold (Retiring Chairman)
Neill Buchanan
Mungo Chapman
Peter Freeman
Ian Marshall
Cllr James Scholes
Cllr Victor Webb

APOLOGIES: Sarah Bird
Nathan Dickinson
Andrew Gower
Chris Jones
Cllr Catherine Mayhew

ATTENDING: Rodney Stone (Clerk)
Geoff Levitt (Treasurer)
Steve Budden (Warden)
Julia Woodgate (Support Officer)
Jennifer Blackburn (Rusthall Parish Council)
John Barber (Friends of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons)

OBSERVING: Maria Simmons

MINUTES

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

In accordance with the third schedule of the County of Kent Act 1981 it was noted that the Conservators are required at the first meeting held on or after 1 January each year to appoint a Chairman for the ensuing year.

RESOLVED – That Chris Jones, representative of the Manor of Rusthall, be appointed as Chairman until the annual meeting of the Conservators in March 2014.

In the absence of Chris Jones, Cllr Barbara Cobbold was asked to act as Chairman for the meeting.

2. **MEMBERSHIP**

The under mentioned Conservators were appointed by the bodies specified to serve for the period indicated.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council:

Cllr Barbara Cobbold)	
Cllr Victor Webb)	one year term ending
Cllr Catherine Mayhew)	31 December 2013
Cllr James Scholes)	

Freehold Tenants:

Mungo Chapman)	
Peter Freeman)	1st year of three year term until
Ian Marshall)	31 December 2015
Neil Buchanan)	

Manor of Rusthall:

Sarah Bird)	
Andrew Gower)	3rd year of three year term until
Chris Jones)	31 December 2013
Nathan Dickinson)	

3. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2012 were considered, approved and signed by the Chairman.

4. **MATTERS ARISING**

a) **Harmony Street**

Concern was raised that there was no solid foundation under the mesh that had been laid on the grass where cars park. The Warden pointed out that the mesh is designed to sit on soil so that the grass can grow through it, although he was concerned that bad weather had made it difficult to replace the soil over the top, which was leading to the mesh lifting and being damaged. He was also concerned that the grass would not grow now the whole stretch was being used constantly for parking, and agreed with a suggestion that short areas could be successively cordoned off to allow the seed to germinate.

RESOLVED. To review the progress at the next meeting, once the seed had been sown.

Concern was also raised that people had begun parking further up the road, on the bend, and this was considered dangerous, as well as causing damage to the Common.

RESOLVED. To install temporary posts to protect the Common and request KCC to introduce double yellow lines. Proposed by Ian Marshall, seconded by Mungo Chapman, carried by 5 votes to 1 with 1 abstention.

b) Rusthall Verges

The Warden confirmed that the verges would be reseeded shortly, following reinstatement work after the gas main was renewed.

c) Section 106 payment

It was confirmed that the office will be submitting a proposal towards the end of the year for spending the allocated £18,000 in mitigation for the new hospital site development. The money should be available in the spring/summer of 2014.

d) Educational Project

John Barber of the Friends informed the Conservators that they had submitted five funding applications and were waiting to hear the outcome.

e) Troughs

The acting Chairman confirmed that she had arranged volunteers to plant up the trough on Tunbridge Wells Common.

5. **WARDEN'S REPORT**

The Warden reported that bad weather has prevented the restoration work from taking place around Brighton Lake but, apart from this, the work programme has been mostly completed.

The wildflower volunteer planting day was cancelled due to bad weather, but the supplier was planting the plugs himself.

The work to restore the Terrace Walk has been carried out, although the path is still very wet because of the weather.

He also agreed to clear part of the asphalt path adjacent to the garden centre which was very boggy.

The planned work to push back the roadside trees has been completed, which will allow access to inspect the trees that remain.

He was asked to investigate the clearance work that has taken place around the Mount Edgumbe Hotel; the clearance of hollies was agreed with the hotel owners, who paid for the work, but the Warden was unaware that some trees had also been cleared.

He informed the meeting that the recently planted saplings were a mixture of elder, oak, rowan, hazel, field maple, hawthorn and hornbeam. The stand of more mature trees are Scots Pine.

6. **FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

The Treasurer submitted Financial Statement No 4 2012/13 showing total payments of £35,541.46 and receipts of £1,970.01.

RESOLVED – that the report be approved.

7. **SALARY REVIEW**

RESOLVED – to increase the salaries of the Warden and Support Officer by 2%, with effect from 1 April 2013.

8. **CASTLE ROAD**

The Conservators agreed that the erosion of Castle Road by vehicles driving onto the Common to pass the parked cars was a problem that needed a short term and a long term solution. KCC have made it clear that any application for yellow lines to remove parked cars at the top of the road would be considered in the normal process, and cannot be expedited.

RESOLVED. The Warden to meet Steven Noad of KCC to agree the edge of the road. Tree trunks to be placed 450mm from this point on both sides of the road as a temporary measure.

RESOLVED. A formal request to be made to Nick Baldwin of TWBC for yellow lines as a permanent solution to the problem. This request to be forwarded to KCC and the JTB. The request should include accurate measurements.

RESOLVED. To accept the offer of a temporary infill of the eroded edge to prevent damage to vehicles until a permanent solution is implemented. This would be on the basis that the Conservators were not giving up that part of the Common for road widening.

9. **FREEHOLD TENANTS' PROJECTS**

After discussions with the Warden, the Freehold Tenants have proposed funding five projects in 2013:

- a) Clearance between Wellington Rocks and Castle Road. This would open up a classic view across the Lower Cricket Ground and create a new path;
- b) Two stands of Scots Pine. They have already been planted due to approach of spring;

- c) A new pond and wetland area where water has begun to collect adjacent to the bunds created by the last clearance. This would provide new habitats and supply water to the reptiles who have begun to recolonise the area;
- d) Clearance of the central portion of the valley between the Tarry Path and the open heathland near Rusthall Road, creating a new path linking the Tarry Path to the village;
- e) A new path to the Marlpit Pond with an all weather surface.

RESOLVED – to approve the proposed projects with a vote of thanks for all the good work of the Freehold Tenants.

10. WORLD WAR ONE COMMEMORATION

The Conservators noted the information that the current proposals include erecting a bell tent on the Lower Cricket Ground for a week in the summer of 2014. This would be manned at all times by volunteers in WW1 soldiers' uniforms who would provide information and answer questions. This would be repeated in 2016, with a possible re-enactment of the Battle of Jutland.

11. RUSTHALL BONFIRE

RESOLVED. To grant permission for a bonfire on 26 October 2013 on a similar basis to 2012 and subject to the same terms and conditions.

12. RUSTHALL CRICKET CLUB

Last year the Conservators granted the club permission to display advertising for their sponsor on match days only. They have now found a sponsor and wish to display an advertising board permanently on the side of the pavilion

RESOLVED. To refuse permission for permanent advertising of any sort.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Beacon signs

The owners of the Beacon have continued to add temporary signs to the post holding their main sign, despite being asked repeatedly to remove them.

RESOLVED. To implement the procedure under the encroachment policy to have all additional signs removed.

b) Pepenbury

RESOLVED. To allow a poster to be displayed for a maximum of two weeks at the end of the drive to St Pauls, to advertise the charitable concert being given there on 18 May 2013. Permission was not given for a banner to be displayed.

c) Wedding Reception at Linden Park Cricket Club

RESOLVED. To allow a marquee to be erected on the cricket ground and the wedding reception to take place there on 5 October 2013 under the terms outlined to the officers, as the groom is a long-standing member of the club.

d) No 1

RESOLVED. To allow a poster to be displayed on the Common to advertise the No 1 Summer Fair on 20 July 2013. The poster to be there no longer than one week.

e) Rusthall Fete

RESOLVED. To allow signs advertising the Rusthall Fete to be displayed on the verges on Langton Road. The signs to be there for no longer than one week.

14. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

15-16 Eridge Road – gone to appeal. Repeated concerns about verge and stated the Conservators' entitlement to a portion of the s106 payment.

Received but not commented on:

The Forum – temporary installation of art project
38 The Pantiles – change of use from residential to D1
Pigeon Wood and Heathgate Cottage – Tree Preservation Order
Summerhill House, 73 London Road – relocation of gate post

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on 4 July 2013 at 2.00 p.m.