



**Dacorum Environmental Forum
Full Meeting Thursday 14.05.2015**

MINUTES

Attendance

Name	Organisation
Gruff Edwards	Chair DEF
Steve Wilson	Vice Chair DEF
Andrew Williams	Leader, D.B.C
Chris Ridley	DEF
Mike Ridley	DEF
Paul Harris	Green Party
Michael Nidd	PERA/CPRE Herts.
Cllr William Wyatt-Lowe	DBC/HCC Councillor
Alan Johnson	DEF
Dennis Harvey	DEF/ Population Matters
Steve Brown	Population Matters
Helen Haran	Population Matters
Davina Malcolm	Population Matters, Kimpton Environmentalists

Apologies

Emma Norrington	DEF
Siva Niranjana	DEF/WHAG
Cllr Fiona Guest	DBC
Cllr Garrick Stevens	Berkhamsted Town Council

Meeting started at 7:30pm

1	Apologies See above
2	Minutes of the Last Meeting held No corrections suggested. GE thanked Chris Ridley for producing them.
3	Matters arising
3.1	Halsey Field (Roman Snails etc.) CR reported that on 26/2/15 DEF were informed by the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) that the owner of Former Halsey School Playing Fields, Herts County Council (HCC) had been formally notified that the site had been selected by the Local Wildlife Sites Partnership as a Local Wildlife Site, and subsequently that HMWT had sent the “owner/land manager” the survey report including a full plant species list and

	<p>management suggestions.</p> <p>On 18/3/15 CR sent a letter on behalf of DEF to the landowners HCC, regarding the way forward and possible DEF involvement and support, requesting information as to what next steps and longer term action were advised by the HMWT report and pointing out also the opportunity for the site to become a valuable educational resource for schools.</p> <p>In her response of 8/4/15, Sarah Bell, Senior Estates Officer at HCC, said that the Hertfordshire Wildlife Sites Partnership had been asked for a copy of the report by the current manager of the site, Richard Fyfe of Lambert Smith Hampton.</p> <p>On 30/4/15 Richard Fyfe provided DEF with a copy of the report. While the report contains a number of management recommendations, the most urgent of which is to prevent the site reverting to woodland, Mr Fyfe's covering E-mail says that there is no HCC funding for such management at present.</p> <p>Within DEF, it was suggested that getting some key supporters would be a good place to start – e.g. the Chilterns Conservation Group (formerly Hemel Hempstead Conservation Volunteers), local schools, local residents' groups or the DBC community team (possibly utilising their Youth Offending Team).</p> <p>In terms of funding, amongst suggestions from within DEF were the Locality Budget (via an HCC Councillor), "Awards for All" (from the Lottery fund) or the Chapman Charitable Trust. Both Sarah Bell and Richard Fyfe have agreed to the idea of DEF asking the Chilterns Conservation Volunteers to help with the management of the field, and Richard suggested that "as momentum gathers pace it might be appropriate for the County Council to grant a licence agreement to the DEF to recognise the permission that would be given to carry out work on HCC's land."</p> <p>Dennis Harvey agreed that the Chilterns Conservation Group would probably be very interested in this project, and would incorporate it into their programme, if contacted. Helen Haran suggested organising a local group who would be interested in this project, and Dennis agreed such a group would encourage local interest.</p> <p>GE said that this was a good basis for moving forward on the project. The first step would be to clarify any matters surrounding a licence agreement and HCC permission.</p> <p>3.2 LA3 Housing GE reminded the meeting that all the LA Master Plans are still subject to Examinations in Public by an independent inspector. According to the latest (Nov 2014) notification received these were anticipated to take place in "Autumn/Winter 2015".</p> <p>3.3 Consultation on Bus Services. As agreed at the February DEF meeting, following Paul's presentation, Paul Harris and Steve Wilson convened to draw up a response to HCC's consultation on behalf of DEF, and this was submitted by letter in time for the 10th April deadline.</p> <p>DEF's response pointed out that buses represent an excellent opportunity to reduce the number of vehicles on the road and reduce carbon and other emissions. It opposed the proposed cuts to subsidies on bus routes after 7.30pm and on Sundays, saying that at the very least a late evening bus should be available on all routes to allow people to get home. It also called for real time running information at bus stops across the network.</p>
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<p>3.4</p>	<p>The full text of DEF’s response will be sent out with these minutes</p> <p>Update on Pavement Parking GE said that there had been no response from the Chief Inspector of Dacorum Community Safety Partnership, to whom the issue of the unsatisfactory response from the police Safer Neighbourhood Team in February 2014 was passed by Corporate Services at Herts. Constabulary in November 2014, after it had again been raised with them by Mike Penning MP following correspondence with DEF.</p> <p>He said that the issue had been raised recently in the Hemel Gazette by two readers, one of whom was a mobility scooter user who regularly found her way blocked by parked cars and who was forced to divert onto the road.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Election of Chair and Vice Chair Dennis Harvey proposed Gruff Edwards for Chair; Paul Harris seconded. William Wyatt-Lowe proposed Steve Wilson for Vice Chair; Mike Ridley seconded. There being no other nominations, Gruff and Steve were elected for a further year.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Litter in Dacorum MR started the discussion by showing some photos of litter: outside Asda and Iceland on 2 separate occasions, local litter in an alleyway in Gadebridge, and bags of dog poo hung on the post of a missing dog-poo bin in Gadebridge.</p> <p>Gruff went through the possible smart targets in the document ‘DEF – Litter and Flytipping – a framework for discussion 14/5/15’ one by one, and AW responded as follows:</p> <p><i>Suggested target 1: Additional budget specifically to address this problem</i></p> <p>Andrew Williams said there can be no extra money to address the litter problem, as the County as a whole has had a 15% reduction in its budget this year.</p> <p><i>Suggested target 2: Prioritise litter clearing over grass mowing, to encourage wild flower growth.</i></p> <p>AW commented this is difficult, as grass mowing does not happen throughout the year so mowers are contracted in for the summer months. MR suggested that some of the money spent on contractors should be re-allocated to litter clearance. AW said that many complaints are received when citizens perceive that the grass isn’t mown frequently enough. Grass cutting has already been reduced to once every 6 weeks on Amenity Greens, and the mowers should pick up the litter before they mow. Steve Wilson and Chris Ridley both said that the mowers often fail to do this and their machines often cut up the litter and make the situation worse.</p> <p>It was suggested that cutting paths in long grass can be an alternative to mowing the whole area, and CR remarked that, although people are understandably upset when an amenity green directly in front of their house is not mown, mown paths in long grass can look very attractive in larger area, for example in a section of a park. D H asked was this not down to education? If people are told why some areas of grass</p>

are left long e.g. for insects, bees etc. they will learn to accept this.
AW said that people like areas of wild flowers when they are specifically planted.

AW also informed the meeting that Julie Laws has now stood down as the DBC Environment Portfolio Holder, and another councillor is about to take on the responsibility for Clean Safe and Green.

Suggested target 3:

**Replace litter bins reported missing within 2 months*

**Install litter bins when requested by Street champion volunteers within 2 months*

AW said that perhaps some litter bins are deliberately not replaced, but agreed that when a request for a new or replacement bin had been received it should either be provided or a reason given. At the moment several hundred new bins are replacing the old bins, and these are more enclosed, to prevent animals scattering the litter. GE said that feeding bags of collected rubbish into the new “letter box” style bins could be a problem. AW said that use of bins by volunteers meant that their contribution to litter clearing could not be quantified.

SW asked if there were any proposals to make shops clean up their litter.

AW replied the Council has no powers to insist that private companies tidy up.

WW said it is up to the public to complain to the company about the litter outside their shop. However, MR pointed out that the Local Authorities have the power to pursue private companies through the courts if they are causing a public eyesore on private land. GE pointed out that McDonalds asks their own staff to litter-pick on and near their premises.

When AW was asked how often litter-picking takes place, he explained that there is a hierarchy: Gadebridge Park is cleared on a daily basis, while a country road only once or twice per year. Highways are only cleared regularly if they are in an under 30MPH zone. A log is kept when an area is cleared of litter.

Suggested target 4

** Aim for a 2 week response time for Street Champions to be enrolled and supplied with equipment.*

** Increase publicity about Street Champion scheme in next Dacorum Digest and in subsequent editions.*

** Organise 2 Street Champion events in each neighbourhood per year.*

CR said that she had to apply 3 times before she was finally made a street Champion, and sent the appropriate equipment.

GE said that he wanted the “Street Champions” scheme to work, and that prompt responses from Clean Safe and Green to Champions’ reports of more difficult litter items they encounter would encourage more to participate in the scheme. He asked would it not be reasonable for a litter problem to be addressed within the week, or at most a fortnight, if it were reported by a Street Champion. It would be good if Street Champions could see that their complaint had been responded to, by going on line. He had personally never been able to get through to Clean Safe and Green via DBC’s voice-recognition and menu-driven system behind the main telephone number, which is currently the only available way of monitoring the status of a report.

AW said that DBC did not have the expertise required for an online report tracking

	<p>system.</p> <p>WW explained that street champions do different things in different areas. Some are happy just to clear their street, while sometimes a mass litter-pick is organised in one area. It is sometimes necessary to email Clean Safe and green if a lot of litter has been picked, to arrange for its collection. He said that responding promptly to Street Champion requests might be to the detriment of overall efficiency.</p> <p>CR suggested more communication would be good, so that Street Champions were told of litter-picking events in the area.</p> <p>Davina Malcolm thought it would be a good idea for events to be organised so litter-pickers could meet together.</p> <p>Gruff pointed out that there were areas where it was unsafe for the Street Champions to operate, for example on A41.</p> <p>AW said this road is going to be even more challenging in the future, as the lane closures necessary for the litter clearance cause too much congestion, so the highways agency are going to insist on night-time maintenance in future.</p> <p>There are plans to put notices along the road, asking people to take their litter home, and pointing out the cost of clearing it, which is not inconsiderable.</p> <p>There are also plans to check waste carriers that aren't enclosed to make sure their load is secure.</p> <p>PH asked whether signage 'Please take care of ...' could be extended to other places e.g. the park?</p> <p>Helen suggested creating a 'Rogues Gallery' of litter offenders, but Steve pointed out taking photos of minors is prohibited without written permission.</p> <p><i>Suggested target 4: Much more emphasis in school about looking after environment e.g. competition for anti litter posters in Dacorum. Winning posters used around Dacorum.</i></p> <p>AW said talks about litter are given in school, but the curriculum is very crowded, and schools do not welcome too many visits. Some litter hot-spots are targeted, and pupils from Adeyfield and Hemel schools have been involved in litter picking. Also, the posters on the new refuse bins were designed by children.</p> <p>The two or three Education Officers attached to Clean, Safe and Green are also responsible for visiting individuals who have difficulty recycling their rubbish.</p> <p>GE remarked that people often say it's youngsters who drop litter.</p> <p>S W said that teachers of PSE and Citizenship (PSE = Personal, Social {and Health} Education) are often looking for initiatives to explore. Then children can report their work/findings to the rest of the school.</p> <p>Volunteers could go into school and talk to the children about waste issues, recycling etc.</p> <p><i>Suggested target 5: Enforcement officers to be trained and encouraged to engage constructively with social groups suspected of persistent littering</i></p> <p>AW explained that evidence is gathered when fly-tipping is reported, but enforcement is difficult.</p> <p>Police will not prosecute for litter dropping, the most they will do is ask the offender to pick up the litter and put it in the bin.</p> <p>Michael Nidd said people put bags around the recycling bins at shopping centres etc. because the bins are full. These recycling bins should be emptied more often.</p> <p>AW said people often dump non-recyclable rubbish in these areas, but that dumping of</p>
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	<p>recyclables was less of a problem since the introduction of blue-top wheelie bins for kerbside collection.</p> <p>Sometimes enforcement is carried out on one day every couple of weeks, but the issue of fixed penalty notices is contentious.</p> <p>MR asked if police shouldn't prosecute people who break the law, but AW explained that the police do not consider litter dropping to be a serious offence. They have to prioritise the issues they deal with, as their time is limited. He said that DBC negotiations with the police on the issue were difficult, but continuing. GE acknowledged the recent series of successful prosecution of flytippers in Dacorum.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Population Matters</p> <p>DEF member Dennis Harvey, who is also a member of the campaign group Population Matters, who have a branch in St. Albans, spoke on the subject of Population. (Dennis's presentation will be sent out with these minutes.) In introducing the item, GE said that although the discussion of human population levels had often been avoided by politicians and by elements within the environmental movement, it had become increasingly clear that hard-won improvements in sustainability, such as carbon reduction and water efficiency can be cancelled out by increases in population, as can the chances, in Dacorum and elsewhere, of producing sustainable strategic local plans.</p> <p>Dennis explained that one suggestion is to encourage people to have smaller families, later in life.</p> <p>When GE asked what can our MP do, DH said one idea is to target more overseas aid to family planning initiatives.</p> <p>SW pointed out that the population in this country is increasing, and AW said the population in Dacorum is increasing by 1000 people per year. SW said the population in West Herts. is growing faster than most other parts of the country, and we are being asked to house ever more people. This is having an impact on the local environment, the quality of our chalk streams being one example.</p> <p>SB said that UK population growth was not all due to net inward migration to the UK. Some was due to the birth (vs death) rates in the UK. GE said that some of the current increasing UK birth rate was due to the net inward migration of recent years.</p> <p>DH pointed out that you can't put barriers up, so how do you stop people moving in to the area?</p> <p>SW suggested that there perhaps should be a regional policy, which should come from central government to create growth areas in other parts of the country. He said that we are creating problems for the future, as resources in this area are insufficient to cope with such population increases.</p> <p>Helen suggested that we should plan more carefully, so that local people can do local jobs; and also improve local family planning services.</p> <p>PH thought that better education could be a possible solution.</p> <p>DH suggested that a set of policy proposals produced by Population Matters as a template for a letter to Members of Parliament should be circulated to DEF members for comment, subject to which DEF would write such a letter to Dacorum's MP. There was a consensus for this proposal. The template letter and proposals are attached to these minutes, and you are asked to reply with comments.</p>
	<p>Any other business</p> <p>None</p>

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