



Dacorum Environmental Forum Full Meeting – 19 April 2007

MINUTES

Attendance

Phil Pennington	DEF Chairman
Kay Völger	Dacorum Borough Council
Andy Hardstaff	Countryside Management Service
Gruff Edwards	New Conservation Society
Sylvia Davidson	Friends of the Earth
Douglas Walker	Resident
Dennis Harvey	Hemel Nature
Paul Harris	F.O.E.
Norman Jones	Ramblers Association – Dacorum Group
Jean Blackman	FOE
Richard Blackburn	Dacorum Borough Council
Norman Cutting	Berkhamsted Citizens Association
Paul Sandford	Dacorum Green Party
David Nobbs	Chipperfield Parish Council
Rudolf Kirst	Hemel Hempstead GM Action Group
Jon Forty	Resident
Hazel Johnson	W.W.F.
Alan Johnson	Gt Gaddesden Parish Council, Green Party
Cllr Elizabeth Patterson	Dacorum Borough Council and Berkhamsted TC
Martin Hicks	Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre
Roger Hands	DEF Water Group/Box Moor Trust
Cllr Bert Chapman	Dacorum Borough Council
Donald Lamb	Northchurch Parish Council
Vicki Kidney	Environment Agency

Apologies

Adrienne Gear	Community Action Dacorum
Cllr Carol Green	Dacorum Borough Council
Guy Patterson	Chiltern Society
Mike Peters	Dacorum Borough Council
Graeme Cannon	Ashridge Estate
Elizabeth Ranelagh	FWAG
Michael Blackman	Rambling Club
Sherry Robinson	Groundwork Hertfordshire
Olive Darvill	F.O.E.
Gerald Darvill	F.O.E.

Peter Thring	CPRE Hertfordshire
Marion Baker	F.O.E.
Chris Jones	Churches Together in Hemel Hempstead
Mary Dyson	Berkhamsted Lion Club
Gerald Humphries	Hemel Hempstead GM Action Group
Kath Daly	Chilterns AONB
Greta Brown	Chiltern Society
Elizabeth Goodyear	Herts and Middlesex Branch of Butterfly conservation
Judy Adams	Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust
Alistair Crosby	Woodland Trust
Mike Smith	FOE
John Porterfield	Lions Club of Berkhamsted

1. Apologies

Apologies were noted.

2. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

Phil Pennington was re-elected as Chairman. The Chairman informed members that Peter Ablett would be withdrawing as a member of the Forum and therefore would not be able to stand a Vice-Chairman. Douglas Walker kindly offered to stand as Vice Chairman for this year as there were no other offers.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 11January 2007 and Matters Arising.

The minutes were agreed.

The submissions for the Hemel Hempstead Growth and Site Allocation Consultations are available to view on the DEF website. RB explained that the next phase of the Hemel Growth paper is dependent on the regional plan. The Site allocations are still being worked through and the next stage is about 1 year to 18 months away where a subsequent consultation paper will go out.

RH informed that the Water group has their Focus for 2007 available. He emphasised that this is a working document. It was also mentioned to the Forum that the US Supreme Court have ruled that the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) have to take into account Green House Gases. This is quite significant considering the USA's historical stance on Climate change and the Kyoto Protocol.

Item 5: GE highlighted that he had sent out an email to all on the email list, information on how to contribute pages for the DEF website.

4. Waterhouse Square – Pam Halliwell, Dacorum Borough Council

Pam Halliwell gave a presentation to the Forum about the development of the Hemel 2020 Vision along with the progress of the Waterhouse Square Development. Please see the powerpoint presentation for more details. Copies of the Hemel 2020 Vision are available on request. If you would like one please inform Kay Völger and she will organise one to be sent to you. Alternatively it is

available to view on the Council website (the link is found under the planning pages).

JB asked whether the Methodist Church next to the college car park is going to be relocated. PH said yes it is. They are in discussion with the church about new provision along with many other small landowners.

DH highlighted that the area that is going to be developed is a flood plain he asked whether it is a good idea to be developing on it. PH said that the developers are very aware of the issues associated with the area. DH also asked whether a total relocation has been considered and have Gadebridge Park extended. PH said that the accommodation assessment would need to be looked at. The Civic Centre provides a lot of daytime economy to the town and relocation could potentially affect the local businesses. But this will all be looked at in the accommodation assessment.

NC expressed that he was uncertain that 14 Acres will be enough to accommodate the planned development. He asked whether the buildings will be high rise. PH said yes, but not all of it as the building needs to be sympathetic with the surroundings, where are conservation and listed buildings.

RH highlighted that the water requirement is going to increase. Has this been taken into account? PH pointed out the Sustainability of the development is very important element of the project, so it will be looked at.

CJ asked whether the Water Gardens will be lost? The answer was no, it will be enhanced. It is very much a part of the Hemel 2020 vision.

GE asked whether the environment forms part of the Master plan, and is there going to be an Environmental Impact Assessment, with a public consultation. PH said yes there is going to be an EIA which will possibly allow for a consultation process.

GE also asked where the funding for this is coming from? Most of it will be self-funded and any profit the Council gets will fund things they want, such as the Performing Arts venue. The project should be completed by 2016.

The Chairman thanks Pam for coming and updating the Forum on the progress of Waterhouse Square and looks being kept informed of further developments.

5. Managing Water Resources in the Gade and Bulbourne Catchments – Vicki Kidney, Environment Agency

Vicki Kidney from the Environment Agency (Hatfield Office) was invited by Roger Hands to give an update on the extensive work that has been taking place. The Water Group have been doing a lot of work of late and it was thought that this presentation would best inform the Forum of what has been happening

It was asked whether there has been any progress made in transporting water from the North? Some work had been done with Halcrow, but it is felt that the EA needs to concentrate its output on local improvement. There are also the CO₂ implications of pumping water from the north that need to be considered. It was also asked whether the canal systems have been looked at as a means of

transporting water from the north to the south? VK was not sure whether it has been looked at. She felt that there needs to be a focus on other means.

AJ raised that the residents of Great Gaddesden were not getting value for money in terms of the standard of the River Gade. He felt that the weirs should not be removed from the upper stretches of the river, as this will definitely let the water disappear down stream into the Thames.

VK emphasised that removal of the weirs was not the focus of the work that is being conducted. Consultation and further studies will be carried out before any weirs are removed. She apologised that the Parish were not included in the initial consultation process, but that can be rectified.

PH asked about the pipes at Grafton Water and whether any of the water from there is used in Dacorum. VK said there is an agreement to take some of the water, though most of the water comes from the River Ver. It is an expensive process to bring in water from other catchments.

PH asked whether the government listens to what the EA has to say about water scarcity. VK said that they are starting to see some changes. Developers are also starting to pilot some water studies.

JB pointed out that a water group is needed for the country.

DH asked if the EA foresee that the future counties will be held to financial ransom by private water companies? VK said that the EA has powers that companies cannot just turn the water off. They issue and can revoke licences, which are constantly monitored. Companies have to produce a report once a year under the Water Act.

GE asked why the water in Gadebridge Park stayed so long. VK said that it has to do with the water table. It is very high at present and until that drops the water will remain in the park.

BC asked whether there are any reservoirs in the pipeline for more storage in the area. VK said that they have to take long term strategic views on these issues. Storage in this area is very limited due to the high urbanisation.

The Chairman thanked Vicki for coming along and giving the comprehensive update on what is happening with our two rivers.

6. Meeting with Councillor Andrew Williams – Paul Harris

Paul Harris and other members of the Forum met with Andrew Williams, Leader of the Council on the 26th February.

The group stressed the need for all new houses to have solar panels on the roofs and subsidies for older houses. Also that each new neighbourhood could have one wind turbine.

Encouragement of cycling and footpaths merged with cyclist having the rights of way particularly applicable to pedestrianisation and links with Gadebridge Park (New Civic Zone).

Andrew Williams stated that new buildings in the centre of Waterhouse Square will be solar powered. The Group also asked for flats in the development also to be solar powered.

The Council has some say on licences for café's in the new development. The group stressed that they would like to see Fairtrade café's. Cllr Williams felt that ASDA are the likely candidates for the supermarket planned for the centre.

The group spoke about public transport and commercial companies like Arriva not interested in public welfare. The group asked that there be greater influence by Dacorum Borough Council and other Hertfordshire Boroughs to put more pressure on the companies to integrate the transport systems. In London the Mayor has a much greater say in public transport, why not here. The group asked for co-ordination of public transport and required bus services to villages.

Emphasis was put on more tree planting. Companies are obliged to see if they can share mobile phone masts.

Cllr Williams was very interested in what Woking Borough Council were doing and would look into that.

They also highlight the state of the Borough's rivers and the amount of litter.

7. Nottingham Declaration – Kay Völger, Dacorum Borough Council

Kay Völger gave a presentation about the Nottingham Declaration.

It is a commitment to tackle climate change that has been signed by the Council on the 15th February.

Below is the main body of the declaration.

We acknowledge that

- Evidence shows that climate change is occurring.
- Climate change will continue to have far reaching effects on the UK's people and places, economy, society and environment.

We welcome the

- Social, economic and environmental benefits, which come from combating climate change.
- Emissions targets agreed by central government and the programme for delivering change, as set out in the UK Climate Change Programme.
- Opportunity for local government to lead the response at a local level, encouraging and helping local residents, local businesses and other organisations - to reduce their energy costs, to reduce congestion, to adapt to the impacts of climate change, to improve the local environment and to deal with fuel poverty in our communities.
- Endorsement of this declaration by central government.

We commit our Council from this date to

- Work with central government to contribute, at a local level, to the delivery of the UK Climate Change Programme, the Kyoto Protocol and the target for carbon dioxide reduction by 2010.
- Participate in local and regional networks for support.
- Within the next two years develop plans with our partners and local communities to progressively address the causes and the impacts of climate

change, according to our local priorities, securing maximum benefit for our communities.

- Publicly declare, within appropriate plans and strategies, the commitment to achieve a significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from our own authority's operations, especially energy sourcing and use, travel and transport, waste production and disposal and the purchasing of goods and services.
- Assess the risk associated with climate change and the implications for our services and our communities of climate change impacts and adapt accordingly.
- Encourage all sectors in our local community to take the opportunity to adapt to the impacts of climate change, to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions and to make public their commitment to action.
- Monitor the progress of our plans against the actions needed and publish the result

Over 230 authorities have signed up to the declaration. The next stage to start developing the action plan. The Energy Saving Trust have developed an online tool to help authorities develop their plans. It provides a step by step approach to dealing with the potential complexity of putting an action plan together. When developing the plan consideration needs to be taken as to whether the plan is being developed for managing estates, service providers or as a community leader. The council is all three, so there will be a lot of work to do. There are five stages: Getting Started, Assessing current and likely future situations, Develop strategic approach, Prepare an Action Plan, and Implementation. All five stages are broken down into adaptation and mitigation.

8. Any Other Business

Rudolf Kirst informed the members about some European motions and wrote some letters to the MEP's. The motion was to allow 9% GMO to go unlabelled in organic foods. The vote was no and therefore organic food will remain GM free.

Andy Hardstaff informed the members that at the next meeting the Forum needs to review the progress and endorse some additions to the action plan for the Community Plan. He also informed that the Council website now has a link to the Green Space Strategy.

Kay Völger announced that this is her last meeting she will be attending. She has resigned from her job at the Council to return back to South Africa.

The next meeting of the Dacorum Environmental Forum will be on Thursday 26th JULY 2007 at 7.30 p.m. Council Chamber, Civic Centre.

Note: The Agendas and Minutes from the Dacorum Environment Forum meetings can be found on the Environment Section of the DBC website.www.dacorum.gov.uk