



**Dacorum Environmental Forum  
Full Meeting – 25 October 2007**

**MINUTES**

**Attendance**

Phil Pennington	DEF Chairman
Douglas Walker	Resident, DEF Vice Chairman
Garrick Stevens	Berkhamsted Town Council
Jennifer Habib	Chiltern Society
David Nobbs	Chipperfield Parish Council
Adrienne Gear	Community Action Dacorum
Andy Hardstaff	Countryside Management Service
Cllr Alan Anderson	Dacorum Borough Council
Richard Blackburn	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr Bert Chapman	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr Michael Clark	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr Colin Peter	Dacorum Borough Council
Lizzy Savage	Dacorum Borough Council
Peter Snow	Dacorum Borough Council
Veronica Allan	Friends of the Earth
Marion Baker	Friends of the Earth
Jean Blackman	Friends of the Earth
Paul Harris	Friends of the Earth
Alan Johnson	Green Party/Gt Gaddesden Parish Council
Hazel Johnson	Green Party
Rudolf Kirst	Hemel Hempstead GM Action Group
Dennis Harvey	Hemel Nature
Mary Dyson	Lions Club of Berkhamsted
Alex Evans	Lions Club of Berkhamsted
Gruff Edwards	New Conservation Society
Mel Matthews	Tring Chamber of Commerce
Sylvia Davidson	Water Group
Roger Hands	Water Group/Box Moor Trust

**9. Apologies**

Graeme Cannon	Ashridge Estate
John Clarke	Dacorum Borough Council
Norman Cutting	Berkhamsted Citizens Association
Cllr Carole Green	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr Fiona Guest	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr Neil Harden	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr Michael Moore	Dacorum Borough Council
Mike Peters	Dacorum Borough Council

Brian Scott	Dacorum Borough Council
Elizabeth Ranelagh	FWAG
Norman Jones	Ramblers Association
Clive Agnew	
Nigel Blackman	
Greta Brown	
Tim Hill	
John Morris	

## 10. Welcome

Phil Pennington welcomed Lizzy Savage to her first DEF meeting. Lizzy had taken over from Kay Volger as the Dacorum Borough Council Environment and Sustainability Officer.

## 11. Minutes from the Meeting held on 26 July 2007 and Matters Arising

The minutes from the meeting held on 26 July 2007 were approved.

Minute 3 – Luton Airport – It was pointed out that there were noise problems in Dacorum.

Minute 5 – Feedback from the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Phil Pennington gave feedback on his report that went to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June who resolved:

That:

- DBC and DEF investigate the potential of council / community initiatives and look at developing a protocol to promote understanding of operational constraints and manage expectations.
- DBC continues to support the forum with meeting venue, administrative support and a linked officer.

Councillor Anderson ran through the process of taking a report to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The author of the report, and anybody else who wished to, would attend the meeting. The author could be asked questions and the report would be discussed. The committee could recommend to the DBC Portfolio Holder to take a particular course of action. Agendas and minutes of all Overview and Scrutiny committees were available on the DBC website or via the following link <http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=1618>.

## 11. Introduction of the New Environment and Sustainability Officer for DBC

Lizzy Savage introduced herself. Lizzy started at DBC in September as the Environment Sustainability Officer and hoped to familiarise herself with the area as quickly as possible. The Council had signed up to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change and had committed to take action to combat climate change. Lizzy would be concentrating on this and on other environmental and sustainability issues and looked forward to working with the Forum.

## 12. Reducing Packaging in Dacorum

Mel Matthews of the Tring Chamber of Commerce, as well as a trader in Tring, gave a brief presentation. The Chamber of Commerce worked for the good of the town, was independent and was purely funded by the subscriptions of members. Tring has a population of 11,000, with 58 retailers (the majority independent) plus other service based industries.

There were a number of environment friendly companies, including Nash Partnership and Grass Roots. 17 billion plastic bags were used every day in the UK which caused a lot of pollution problems. Mel had bought 3,000 material Fair Trade bags of two different sizes for £5,000, produced in India, which were sold to Tring traders on a sale or return basis, who would then sell them for £2.50. These were funded mainly by the Tring Chamber of Commerce with sponsorship from Grass Roots. Any money made from the bags would go into other projects such as making the Christmas festival a carbon positive event.

Mel reported on countries that were actively reducing use of plastic bags, in particular in Rwanda.

Discussion:

Were the bags sold in Hemel Hempstead and how were Tring retailers relating to the bags?

Mel replied that the Chamber of Commerce was currently in talks with Marks & Spencer. National retailers all had their own projects underway.

Gruff Edwards asked Mel to send him an electronic copy of details regarding the bags.

**Action: Mel Matthews to follow this up.**

Did the bags leak?

Mel suggested using an old plastic bag to line it if there was a risk of goods leaking. The bags were washable.

Some areas were using corn starch bags which were biodegradable and could be put in the green bins. How could the Forum formulate a proposal to the Council to ban plastic bags in the Dacorum area?

Councillor Chapman replied that It must be voluntary and the traders must be involved.

How would Tring make Christmas carbon neutral?

Mel replied that they would calculate how much power would be used and then off set it through a carbon neutral company.

Berkhamsted Community Partnership had been asked to investigate how to reduce the amount of plastic bags used. A letter had gone to 65 local traders with responses from 25. National chains had national policies. People must be encouraged to stop asking for plastic bags.

Mel replied that UK retailers had agreed to reduce the issue of plastic bags by 25% by 2008.

Councillor Chapman stated that the Council could not force national retailers to do anything. He had put a question to the Government Minister about it and it was for the Government to bring something forward to encourage manufacturers and

retailers to review their policies. He felt that If supermarkets charged for the bags this would help.

In Brighton, they have asked their MP to put pressure on the Government to ask supermarkets to charge for plastic bags. The Conservative Group had agreed that it would write to the Government.

**Action: Councillor Peter to follow this up.**

It was suggested that individuals should be encouraged to write to supermarkets about reducing use of plastic bags.

Peter Snow reported that grass mowing teams gathered a large amount of litter every day and all measures to improve this problem would be welcome.

It was felt that retailers like Marks & Spencer grossly over-packaged their products with material that could not be recycled.

Councillor Anderson, Chairman of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee (EOSC), stated that the committee had considered over-packaging during the past two years. The packaging industry employed a lot of people and was influential. If the Forum wished to formally lobby the Council through the EOSC that would be welcomed. The committee could only advise the Portfolio Holder and Councillor Anderson reminded the Forum that the Council was at present in a serious financial situation.

It was felt that cardboard commercial waste was also a problem for retailers.

Councillor Anderson replied that commercial recycling had been discussed on numerous occasions. It was not in the Council's interests to pursue commercial recycling due to how landfill tax applied to domestic and not to commercial waste. The Council was trying to explore various ways to set up recycling for businesses who would have to contribute to pay for it. If local authorities kept business rate receipts, it would be a different matter. Recycling for schools was being considered at the moment (schools would have to make a contribution).

The Chairman felt that a Champion was required as the Council could not be expected to do much about it.

Mel Matthews said that she would be happy to be involved.

The Chairman thanked Mel Matthews for her contribution.

### **Outcome**

A steering group to be formed to present a report to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee as soon as possible.

### **13. Water Group**

Roger Hands gave a report. The Environment Agency had given a talk on water resources and Roger explained some of the issues being addressed.

The website would feature local rivers. There would be 30 headings managed by different groups. The quality and volume of water was being monitored. One of the pages would focus on how to work with the general public on water conservation and litter. It was essential that individuals were made aware of what needed to be done.

Discussion:

The River Gade that ran through Cassiobury Park was clear with no litter. The River Gade running through Gadebrige Park had a lot of litter and shopping trolleys in it. Why was there such a difference with the same river and where was DBC failing? Peter Snow replied that the River Gade running through Cassiobury Park was not accessible to shops and park and ride car parks, the environment was not comparable. The Council removed a great deal of rubbish from the River Gade – it was a constant round of tidying up.

There was a group called the Friends of Cassiobury Park.  
Peter Snow stated that a management plan for Gadebridge Park was being produced – a 'Friends of' was an important aspect.

RB reported that Stage 1 of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment was complete. Two additional studies had been commissioned to consider the residual flood risk of any failure of:

- canal bank at Berkhamsted
- the main culvert that runs through Hemel Hempstead

**Action: RB to send a copy of the SFRA to the Forum (Roger Hands, Water Group).**

Roger Hands stated that the Bury diversion was a concern and they were looking to revamp the diversion.

**Action: Roger Hands to invite Paul Wilkinson to the January meeting.**

#### **14. Landscaping in Dacorum**

Paul Harris commented on the poor state of the flower borders in Gadebridge Park and the Water Gardens and that some beds opposite the Kodak building had been turned over. He asked if there had been budget cuts.

Peter Snow stated that there was limited capacity and the lawn mowing season now lasted a lot longer.

Gadebridge Park – a review had been done 10 years ago but the picture had now changed and a new management plan was being produced. Consultation had taken place and the ambition was to get the green flag award. The service had 30 tasks and some standards were not as high as the Council would like.

Heath Park – This was being re-designed and some beds had been turfed over.

It was felt that landscape was important for the self esteem of the town.  
Peter Snow replied that the Council was facing great financial challenges which were affecting the standards being achieved.

Roger Hands, as Chair of the Dacorum Heritage Trust, was involved with the Water Gardens and Gadebridge Park and a feasibility study was looking at the issues. Roger agreed that the Water Gardens were a mess but the original Jellicoe design had not anticipated a shortage of water. Consideration was being given to make it a chalk stream feature.

It was suggested that using bi-annual plants could save money.

Councillor Anderson stated that the Strategic Planning and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee would be discussing the new urban park as part of Hemel 2020 on 1 November. This meeting was open to the public.

## **15. Local Strategic Partnership**

Andy Harstaff outlined the work being done on the existing Community Plan (Sustainable Community Strategy) to create a cleaner and healthier environment. A new action plan was being developed and Andy asked anybody who was interested in the process to speak to him directly, as he would like to form a separate sub-group. There would be a meeting on Thursday 1 November at 2.00 pm to finalise the document.

Lizzy Savage, Peter Snow and Jenny Habib volunteered.

The Chairman thanked Andy for attending the meeting.

## **16. Any Other Business**

### **16.1 Carbon Emissions** – this was one of the remits of the Nottingham Declaration.

Lizzy Savage explained that the Nottingham Declaration was a local authority commitment, started in Nottingham, to reduce the effect of climate change as far as they could. They were now trying to get other local authorities in the country to do the same and over 120 have signed up so far. The Councils give a list of commitments to try and combat climate change and DBC was developing a climate change action plan. The targets were voluntary.

Councillor Chapman confirmed that the Council was already moving ahead with it.

Lizzy Savage reported that a Corporate Sustainability Group was being formed involving somebody from each department.

### **16.2 Abandoned Supermarket Trolleys** – There were various solutions:

- The Council to issue fixed penalty notices for litter – hoped to get publicity for it.
- S215 Town and Country Planning Act – notices to be served on the supermarkets as part of their property was littering streets. The supermarkets could be taken to Court.

Councillor Chapman stated that most of the abandoned trolleys did not have £1 charge on them. He felt that supermarkets charging for trolleys was the answer.

## **17. Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting of the Dacorum Environmental Forum will be on Thursday 17 January 2007 at 7.30 pm , Council Chamber, Civic Centre.

## **18. Future dates**

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2008 at 7.30 pm, 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](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk).