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**Dacorum Environmental Forum  
Full Meeting – 16<sup>th</sup> October 2008**

**MINUTES**

**Attendance**

Phil Pennington	DEF Chairman
Norman Cutting	Berkhamsted Citizens' Association
Paul Harris	Friends of the Earth
Sylvia Davidson	DEF Water Group
Cllr Neil Harden	Dacorum Borough Council
Roger Hands	DEF Water Group/Box Moor Trust
Rudolf Kirst	Hemel Hempstead GM Action Group
Cllr Bert Chapman	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr John Lythgoe	Berkhamsted Town Council
Jean Blackman	Friends of the Earth
Cllr Garrick Stevens	Berkhamsted Town Council
Lizzy Savage	Dacorum Borough Council
Douglas Walker	Resident
Andy Hardstaff	Countryside Management Service
Gruff Edwards	New Conservation Society, DEF Vice-Chairman
Richard Blackburn	Dacorum Borough Council
Tim Vaughan	Tring and Berkhamsted Cycling Campaign
Marion Baker	Transition Town Berkhamsted
Danny Bonnet	Transition Town Berkhamsted
Adrienne Gear	Community Action Dacorum
Jason Williams	Friends of Shrubhill Common
Hazel Johnson	Green Party
Alan Johnson	Great Gaddesden Parish Council
Peter Thring	CPRE Hertfordshire, Chiltern Society

**49. Apologies**

Cllr Carole Green	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr David Nobbs	Chipperfield Parish Council
Cllr Brian Jones	Northchurch Parish Council
Cllr Alan Anderson	Dacorum Borough Council
Dennis Harvey	Hemel Nature
Mary Dyson	Lions Club Berkhamsted
Veronica & John Allan	Tring in Transition
Emma Norrington	Groundwork
Graeme Cannon	National Trust
Bruce Nixon	Transition Town Berkhamsted

**50. Welcome**

Phil Pennington welcomed everybody to the meeting.

**51. Minutes from the Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2008 and Matters Arising**

The minutes from the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2008 were approved. Both Gruff Edwards and Paul Harris reported that they had sent press releases to the Gazette but none of the press releases had been published.

Richard Blackburn (RB) reported that there would be a more focussed consultation on the Local Development Framework between 3<sup>rd</sup> November and 15<sup>th</sup> December 2008. This will still form part of the initial consultation looking at which potential sites should be taken forward. They still have a number of studies to complete and they have completed most of the place workshops. The Hemel Hempstead place workshop will take place in December.

Jean Blackman asked if the legal challenge was still going ahead.

RB reported that it is but he has received no further information. All Local Authorities have been instructed to continue with the Regional Plan.

Gruff Edwards (GE) mentioned that at the last meeting he had asked RB if DEF's response to the consultation had been included in the Council's response and RB had confirmed that it had. GE stated his disappointment that DEF's concerns did not appear to be reflected in the Plan.

Roger Hands (RH) stated that the Water Group had responded separately to consultation. He also made a plea for more Dacorum representation at Chiltern Society meetings as he feels Dacorum should be considered more during discussions about the AONB

Sylvia Davidson reported that there had been no further news regarding the herbicides but she was unaware of it causing problems in Dacorum.

There were no further matters arising.

**52. DEF Water Group Update – Roger Hands**

RH reported that the website was being developed to become a reflection of their activities and believed it was a better way of getting information out. He offered thanks to Marion Baker for her assistance. The website address is [www.defwatergroup.org.uk](http://www.defwatergroup.org.uk)

RH reported that he was also disappointed with the Gazette coverage and stated his intention to contact them again.

He reported that they have received approval from Herts Highways to put an article about motorway run-off on the website.

He stated that the utilities companies and the Environment Agency (EA) are seeing that the Water Groups endeavours are properly represented and not excitable. The

River Gade Sustainability Study working party has completed their task and the project has been handed back to the EA.

The Water Group has sent emails to the EA regarding the Draft Water Resource Management Plans. The EA reported that they have been passed on DEFRA but the response indicated that they are taking the Water Group's efforts seriously. He stressed his concerns about the Growth area placing stress on the aquifer and the importance of looking at the River Basin as the aquifer goes beyond political boundaries.

RH mentioned that a number of organisations are applying to join the Water group including British Waterways and Thames Water (Berkhamsted Sewage Works). He expressed his concerns over lack of funds.

Marion Baker (MB) stated that she attended Herts Funding Fair recently and recommended that RH investigate a Grass Roots Fund for small projects (less than £5000).

Hazel Johnson asked where the reed beds would be installed. RH stated that they would be at Berkhamsted Sewage Works on the north side of the canal.

PP suggested that there might be funding available to assist with the Water Group.

#### **47. Transition Towns – Marion Baker**

MB presented to the group an introduction to Transition Towns and Peak Oil. A copy of her presentation will be attached to the minutes.

#### **48. Sustainable Communities Act – Danny Bonnett**

Danny Bonnett (DB) stated that at Transition Town Berkhamsted's third public meeting they welcomed a speaker from Unlock Democracy/Local Works to talk about the Sustainable Communities Act which is intended to give more power to local communities.

The aim of the Act is to assist Local Authorities in promoting the sustainability of local communities and works on the idea of double devolution – powers devolved from National Government to Local Authorities and then to local people's panels. The panels are intended to be representative of the local population and include groups that are often under-represented.

The Act has four limbs of sustainability that it works to: environmental, social, economic and participatory. Within the act there is a schedule of matters to which local authorities must have regard, this is not an exclusive list. The Act require the community to come forward with proposals that they believe would make their community a more sustainable place and they should meet some of the matters in the schedule.

DB provided a couple of examples including charging out of town supermarkets business rates for their car parking spaces and giving the revenue generated to in town businesses that do not have easy parking access.

The Act also requires Local Spending Reports to be produced to demonstrate where money is being spent in a local area. This will also give the community opportunity to question what money is spent on.

DB asked Lizzy Savage (ES) if Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) were intending to opt into the Act. ES reported that the Leader of the Council had stated that the Council is likely to opt in but that a final decision was awaited. The Council is also waiting for guidance on how to set up the citizens panel and the best way to manage the process practically.

Phil Pennington (PP) suggested taking a report to Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee if the Council did not move forward with this quickly. Members of DEF agreed. He also asked MB if there had been a Transition Town initiative considered for the Borough. MB reported that both Tring and Berkhamsted had become transition towns and she was aware that some people in Hemel Hempstead were also interested. She also stated that if anyone was interested in setting one up in Hemel Hempstead they could contact her.

RH voiced his concerns with DB's example for charging business rates to all out of town businesses as his small nursery would be hit badly by additional costs. DB reassured RH that any proposals would need to be carefully considered so that they were sustainable for the community as a whole.

Paul Harris (PH) stated that he thought the Act was brilliant but was concerned that the schedule made no mention of the availability of a clean water supply and believed it to be a weakness.

Rudolph Kirst stated that it is sufficient for DB to inform us but DEF should be demonstrating active support for the Act.

PP stated that DEF would endorse it and Members of DEF agreed.

GE requested more information about Transition Towns and how they relate to the Sustainable Communities Act.

DB stated that the Totnes in Devon became the first Transition Town two years ago. Berkhamsted have become a Transition Town but they are still in the awareness phase, but are soon to start the action phase. He stated that the Act is unrelated but it provides a legal framework to help do some of the actions that would make Berkhamsted more sustainable.

PP asked if there were any Transition Boroughs

DB said that Brighton and the London Borough of Brixton had become Transition Towns and in Bristol a number of areas had become Transition areas. He stated that he thought it was best to keep it smaller to make it as relevant to the local people as possible.

Cllr Garrick Stevens (GS) stated that there is a framework to set up a Transition Town and there is a lot of information available on the internet. He stated that the Sustainable Communities Act is one of a number of new legislative tools designed to empower our local communities.

PH stated that in Hemel Hempstead it could work through neighbourhoods or wards.

PP stated that DEF would endorse promoting the Transition Town initiative.

GS said that DEF should press Dacorum Borough Council to adopt the Sustainable Communities Act.

## **Outcomes**

DEF to support Transition Town initiatives

DEF to lobby DBC to opt into Sustainable Communities Act

### **49. Cycling – Tim Vaughan**

Tim Vaughan (TV) started by mentioning that cycling has been highlighted recently through the success of the British Olympic Team and this has come from substantial investment and is likely to lead to increased demand in suitable facilities.

TV reported that Tring & Berkhamsted Cycling Campaign (TBCC) had organised a very successful 'Bikefest' in September that provided lots of information to the public about cycling and routes and training to children.

TV reported that TBCC are now developing a questionnaire so they can conduct a survey across Dacorum to gain a better understanding cyclist needs. He asked if opportunities were available for support.

TBCC are also looking to develop local cycling maps but this will also involve investment but they have not yet looked into costings.

TBCC are also lobbying for better cycling facilities. With developments at Three Cherry Trees Lane in Hemel Hempstead and Bank Lane in Berkhamsted there would be opportunity to invest in suitable routes to train stations and suitable facilities to park bikes at the station. He asked if there was an update on the progress of the Dacorum Cycling Strategy.

TV stated the possibility of forming a Dacorum Cycling Forum to incorporate cycling enthusiasts in Hemel Hempstead but this is likely to be built upon TBCC's activities planned for next year.

ES confirmed that she had spoken to Lorna Clark and Lorna had reported that the Dacorum Cycling Strategy is currently with Herts CC and DBC are awaiting a response. RB reported that parts of the strategy have been brought forward into Hemel Hempstead's Urban Transport Plan, which is committed to go to Cabinet in November.

PP suggested that a Transport sub-group should be set up again.

ES suggested that DEF could support TBCC by providing a link from DEF's website to the TBCC website and stated that if TV sent her the questionnaire she would send it out to all of those on the DEF mailing list.

PP reported that there might be a small amount of funding available to help cover the cost of the cycling leaflets.

Jason Williams questioned whether DBC still published cycling maps.

TV stated that they were not up to date and DBC had not published any more.

Norman Cutting reported that he had brought Cycling up at another meeting in Berkhamsted and there were a number of issues with new cycling paths. If the tow path was used it may cause problems for pedestrians and anglers, but the High

Street has too many junctions. TV replied that if the towpath were to be used it would need to be widened.

### **Outcomes**

Link to be created on DEF website for TBCC [www.tbcc.org.uk](http://www.tbcc.org.uk)

TV to send questionnaires to ES for her to send to DEF members

Steering Group to looking into potential funding support

## **50. Dacorum Partnership – Andy Hardstaff**

Andy Hardstaff (AH) reported on progress on the action plan since the last meeting. The action-planning group have been meeting to work on the plan, supplemented by work by AH and ES to condense it and make it more reader friendly.

He stated that more organisations needed to be included and that ES and AH would speak to them individually. A new version of the action plan will be attached to the minutes for comment. If organisations have any more ideas for actions they would like to undertake please contact ES.

AH reported that he had also received a proforma for proposals for using the Local Area Agreement money. £2 million over two years (half capital, half revenue) will be given to the Dacorum Partnership to aid meeting the aims and objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy. AH invited members to provide ideas for what this money could be spent on. He suggested that from the meeting alone there were perhaps ideas to put the money towards cycling information. The proforma for proposals will be attached to the minutes and AH requested that any completed proposals be returned to ES by December 1<sup>st</sup> 2008.

### **Outcomes**

ES to send out latest version of action plan and proforma for proposals with minutes.

Members to put forward suggestions.

## **57. Any Other Business**

### **57.1 Computer Aid – Cllr Garrick Stevens**

GS stated his concerns about what happens to IT equipment that is taken to the Household Waste Recycling Centres. He introduced Computer Aid International, a charity that refurbishes old IT equipment, clear hard drives and then send them out to developing countries. He wondered if there was general interest to co-ordinate this locally.

Cllr Bert Chapman (BS) stated that the Borough and County Councils were already working on IT recycling and DBC held a successful bring event in January with Hewlett Packard at Cupid Green. He reported that due to its success DBC would be organising a similar event soon.

Sylvia Davidson stated that there was no shelter at the Recycling Centres from rain, which damages the equipment.

DB stated that the bring days should be more regular and more spread across the Borough so people don't have to travel as far.

BC stated that as technologies develop DBC can offer more services and this is only the start of this new service. If they continue to prove popular DBC will look to improve the service in the future.

PP agreed that it would be beneficial to have more regular collections.

GS reported that he was not aware of the event at Cupid Green and agreed that it would be good if they could be more regular.

GE commented that the bring event in January with Hewlett Packard at Cupid Green" was to be applauded and should be extended to other computer-related waste items (e.g. Floppy Discs). It should also be extended to other problem items such as tungsten filament light bulbs, that are due to be phased out under EU legislation.

#### **57.2 Sustainability Week – Lizzy Savage**

ES invited members of DEF to become involved in Sustainability Week, which will be held between 12<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> January 2009. She provided a briefing note with further information, which shall be attached to the minutes.

#### **57.3 Dacorum Green Team – Phil Pennington**

PP reported that he and ES had hosted the first Dacorum Youth Environmental Forum meeting in September. At the meeting the children had chosen to be called the Dacorum Green Team, they also took part in a planning workshop organised by RB and his team to ask the children what they would like Dacorum to look like in 2031.

#### **57.4 Mailing – Phil Pennington**

PP announced that agendas and minutes would no longer be sent by post due to the cost and the amount of paper. If Members do not have email addresses the minutes and agendas are available on the DEF website. If Members have a specific reason why they need to receive them by post he asked that you contact ES to confirm.

### **58. Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting of the Dacorum Environmental Forum will be on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2008 at 7.30pm in the Bulbourne Room, Civic Centre.

Note: The Agendas and Minutes from the Dacorum Environment Forum meetings can be found at [www.dacenvforum.org.uk](http://www.dacenvforum.org.uk)

The meeting closed at 9.30pm