

**Dacorum Environmental Forum
 Full Meeting – 22nd May 2014**

MINUTES

Attendance

Gruff Edwards	DEF Chairman
Steve Wilson	Vice Chair DEF
Paul Harris	Friends of the Earth/Green Party
Phil Pennington	DEF(Minute Taker)
Emma Norrington	DEF
John Mawer	BBB Action Group
Maq Alibhai	Arriva
Ken Hargreaves	Arriva
Angela Lynch	Green Party
Siva Nirajan	WHAG
Colin Chambers	DBC
Anthony Armitage	Berkhamsted Town Council
Rachel Biggs	BBB Action Group
Brad Gunn	BBB Action Group

1. Apologies

Cllr Garrick Stevens	Berkhamsted Town Council
Cllr David Nobbs	Chipperfield Parish Council
Cllr Julie Laws	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr Fiona Guest	Dacorum Borough Council
Adrienne Gear	Community Action Dacorum
Dennis Harvey	Hemel Nature
Mike and Chris Ridley	DEF
Roger Hands	DEF Water Group/Box Moor Trust
Jason Williams	Friends of Shrubhill Common
Bruce Nixon	Transition Town Berkhamsted
Alan Storey	DBC

2. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting.

3. Minutes from the Meeting held on 20th February 2014 and Matters Arising

The minutes from the meeting held on 20th February 2014 were approved.

Matters Arising:

Little Hay Golf Course Proposal.

John Mawer reported that since the previous meeting he had written to the leader of Dacorum Council and to its Chief Executive seeking reassurance that they will adhere to policy 78 in the Core Strategy, agreed by the Council on 25th September 2013. This states that (for golf clubs)

'Proposals involving significant alterations to levels, either by the extraction or importation of large quantities of material, will not be permitted'

There has been no response as yet.

There was no further information on Berkhamsted Golf Club, but subsequently (May 24th) Peter Thring kindly provided this update:

"At the Forum meeting this week, under "Matters Arising", no one knew whether any fresh application for planning permission had been made by Berkhamsted Golf Club, following the withdrawal of its application to import waste to construct a new practice ground. I have subsequently looked into this and it appears that no fresh application has been registered at today's date."

Roman Snail Field.

A reminder was given that the proposed site tour was scheduled for Sunday 8th June at 2.30pm.

The tour subsequently took place in warm, dry conditions and was a great success (pictures are sent out with these minutes). Pyramidal orchids were spotted in abundance, as well as several other wildflower and butterfly species, and there was no difficulty in finding Roman Snails. The presence of (particularly) ash saplings confirmed that management would be necessary in order to prevent the land becoming woodland. The contrast with the adjoining "upper field" part of the same HCC landholding, which is kept mown for potential or actual sports use, clearly illustrates the wildlife value of the lower field. Many thanks are due to Chris Ridley for initiating DEF's interest in it and for leading the walk, and to Emma Norrington for progressing the agenda with relevant bodies.

Regarding the proposed survey of the field by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust Emma Norrington reported subsequently (June 30th) that she had just heard from Judith Cox of the Trust, who is leading the survey team, that they plan to visit the site by the end of July, and would let her know the date when it has been confirmed.

LA3 Housing Proposals:

Gruff reported that a letter dated 21st March from Laura Wood stated that because of the planning department's work schedule and lack of staff there would be no time to meet any groups before the Master Plan is discussed by Members in July. She gave reassurance that all the concerns set out by DEF to date had been acknowledged by the developers and the Members.

Note: the timetable for forthcoming stages of the Core Strategy, including the Master Plans for LA3 and other Local Allocations has been obtained and kindly passed on by Siva Niranjan, and is:

Site Allocations document considered by Dacorum Cabinet –	24 June 2014
Full Council considers Site Allocations document –	9 July 2014
Local Allocations draft masterplan(s) considered by Cabinet –	22 July 2014
Consultation for 6 weeks on draft Site Allocations document (known as the pre-Submission or Publication stage) –	Sept / Oct 2014
Council considers comments made on the draft masterplan(s) and Site Allocations document and whether any changes are required to the documents –	early 2015
Council submits the Site Allocations document (with any necessary changes) to the Planning Inspectorate for –	July 2015
Examination of Site Allocations document (Note: The masterplan(s) are not subject to formal Examination) –	October 2015
Adoption of the Site Allocations document and masterplan(s) –	February 2016

Finance:

Emma Norrington reported that she had obtained a sum of £470 via the locality budget of Cllr Wyatt-Lowe for two years. This would be spent on the web site, training workshops and meeting venues. The money is deposited in the Transition Towns (Berkhamsted) account. Emma was thanked for her efforts.

Web Site:

Gruff Edwards reported that Marion Baker had now relocated to Devon and was still in the process of transferring the DEF website to Wordpress, which would make it easier for others to update. He also said that Dennis Harvey had kindly offered help with future maintenance of the website.

There were no further matters arising.

4. Election of Chair and Vice Chair:

Gruff Edwards was nominated as Chair by Emma Norrington and seconded by Siva Niranjan and there being no other candidates Gruff Edwards was duly elected and chaired the remainder of the meeting

Steve Wilson was nominated as Vice Chair by Emma Norrington and seconded by Siva Niranjan. There being no further nominations Steve was duly elected

5. Arriva Buses: A presentation was delivered by Maq Alibhai and Ken Hargreaves representing the Arriva Bus Company regarding their pilot electric bus system in Luton. Arriva currently operates several routes around the town and the buses are able to run for up to 8 hours without re-charging, though there are charging points within the route in the form of metal plates in the road. The project is set to run for 5 years.

Background details can be found at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-25621426>, which includes a video showing how buses are charged.

6. DBC Wild Flower update:

Colin Chambers, DBC Trees and Woodlands Team Leader, presented an update on Item 4. "Planting for People and Wildlife" from the DEF meeting in July 2012. He reported that the plantings of oak and cherry at the north west end of Gadebridge Park had now been further supplemented by natural regeneration from nearby Home Wood. Although Jubilee Wood is planned as an extension to Home Wood, the grass and wildflowers produced by a change in the mowing regime have meanwhile further enhanced the site.

Colin also reported that many staff members, although not all, are changing to the idea of leaving small areas of verges and roundabouts unmown for longer periods, and that when this was achieved, the result was very attractive.

Colin showed photographs of the two roundabouts on the Link Road and larger areas in Leverstock Green where wild flower mixes were employed, as well as areas where the mowing regime has been changed and plants such as Ox Eye Daisies are already present.

In response to the question whether the public were aware of the situation, Colin explained that there would be articles in the local publications. These would highlight the need to take a balanced approach to grass management with a need both for short amenity grass as well as wildflower-friendly plantings and changes to mowing regimes.

In response to the question about further areas, Colin agreed that the current activity was confined to Hemel Hempstead but that future initiatives could be extended to other parts of the Borough such as Berkhamsted or Tring.

7. Any Other Business:

There was no other Business and the meeting closed at 9.15 p.m.