



**Dacorum Environmental Forum
Full Meeting Thursday 10.05.2018**

MINUTES

Attendance

Name	Organisation
Gruff Edwards	Chair DEF
Steve Wilson	Vice Chair DEF
Peter Ablett	Box Moor Trust
Caroline Evans	Box Moor Trust
Chris Ridley	DEF and Friends of Halsey Field
Mike Ridley	DEF and Friends of Halsey Field
Cllr Janice Marshall	DBC
Cllr Phil Hills	Tring Town Council
Cllr Tina Howard	DBC and HCC
Cllr Garrick Stevens	Berkhamsted Town Council
Paul Harris	DEF and Great Gaddesden PC

Meeting started at 7:30pm

1. Apologies

Siva Niranjana, DEF and West Hemel Action Group

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting held 22/02/18

No corrections suggested.

3. Matters arising

DBC's Street Champions project

GE said that on March 14th he had reported fly tipping in Pouchen End Lane to the DBC website (<https://eforms.dacorum.gov.uk/EnvForms/ExtraQuestions.aspx>). This is also where you end up if you follow the directions in the recently-published "Let's S.C.R.A.P. Fly Tipping" leaflet. The Web form includes a map facility to help pinpoint the location of the dump being reported.

The dump (plastic bin liners, part-split, in lay by) did mainly disappear within a couple of days, although there was no acknowledgement or other indication that it was DBC who had done it.

GE had previously been given an ID login (“Customer Reference :”), to use the form on the DBC Website. This had had the advantage that one didn’t have to supply all one's details each time one made a new report. Although the facility to use the ID seemed to have disappeared, following correspondence between **GE** and Neighbourhood Action he was able to use it for a further report on 21st April (a pile of clothing with some plastic bags in the woodland edge of Northridge Park behind fencing facing Green End Lane). This dump had disappeared by Apr 28th.

Based on this admittedly anecdotal evidence, **GE** said that it had increased his confidence in using the DBC website for reporting flytipping for the present, and encouraged others to use it and to report their experiences to the Forum via him.

Halsey Field Update

CR reported as follows:

The Halsey Field update May 2018

We had a very interesting AGM last month, when Steve Lings told us all about the invertebrates he has so far found on the Halsey Field, including some rather rare species. (Minutes of the meeting can be found in the minutes section of the H/F pages.)

Decisions made at the meeting were:

- to postpone the idea of cattle grazing on the field, at least until Steve has completed another year of field monitoring. HCC have not yet given permission to graze the field and say that they need to decide what they are going to do with the site, before giving this permission
- to encourage the public to pick up after their dogs, by making posters to explain the harm dog faeces can cause to the flora and fauna on the field
- to ask the local councillors to arrange for a dog poo bin to be moved nearer to the field entrance.
- To dig a small pond to make the most of the natural seep on the north side of the field.
- Fiona Guest will liaise with D.B.C. and Herts CC about the implications of making the top part of the field into a playing field for Cavendish school, and to enquire what was meant by a ‘purchase order’ being raised.
- Chris Ridley will discuss with Carol Lodge of HMWT the possibilities of gaining more protection for the field, and how to go about this. Her current understanding was that protection of Wildlife Sites was limited, although individual species found on the sites are protected.

Bird walk on 3rd May

Richard Tomlin led an excellent walk, and he spotted a Whitethroat while we were waiting by the bench. We had good views of a Whitethroat singing at the top of a bus on our way round the Halsey field, and we heard a Lesser Whitethroat (which is a much rarer bird) singing from the middle of some bushes. We also had wonderful views of a Green Woodpecker on the field, and a Greater Spotted Woodpeckers in Warners End wood (Richard brought his telescope for a better view). Altogether we saw/ heard 25 different species of bird, which are listed below.

Green Woodpecker	Blue tit	Magpie
Greater Spotted Woodpecker	Great tit	Jackdaw
Nuthatch	Long tailed tit	Raven
Blackbird	Robin	Jay
Song Thrush	Dunnock	Crow
Chiff-chaff	Wren	Starling
Blackcap	Collared Dove	Goldfinch
Whitethroat	Wood Pigeon	

Future events on the field will include:

- A work party on 27th May when we will install another bench, and sand and paint the existing bench, and if time, continue to widen some of the footpaths, and tree pop more blackthorn stumps.
- Moth trapping event on May 18th
- The big butterfly count and children's bug hunt on August 4th

GE said that there was a consultation concerning an amendment to the national Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2018) which would remove protection for Local Wildlife Sites such as Halsey Field. The Wildlife Trust had set up an online petition objecting to this. The Planning Policy Consultation Team had told him that information on the consultation could be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-revised-national-planning-policy-framework> However the consultation closed on May 10th, the date of the DEF meeting.

It was agreed that DEF should send a letter objecting to the amendment to the Dacorum MPs, DBC's Portfolio Holder for Planning & Regeneration and members of the relevant committee. **MR** agreed to draft the letter.

LA3 Master Plan and sustainability

GE said that he had still received no communication to date resulting from an offer by the West Hemel Action Group (WHAG) to notify DEF of all new planning applications that they monitor, in particular on the LA3 Master Plan.

However, WHAG were holding a public meeting on May 13th at 6pm at Chaulden Infants School, School Row, Chaulden, Hemel, HP1 2JU as there are many issues of concern which include:

- Access to & around the development
- Access around all the existing roads on the west of Hemel, which are already
- unacceptably congested
- Proposed Herts CC development of "the Horses Field" (south east corner of LA3, parallel to Chaulden Lane) with access via Lindlings & through to LA3 *
- Location of the travellers' site, which is far from "integrated" & is designated to
- be accessed from Chaulden Lane – a single track road, with no vehicular access to LA3 itself.

The Agenda for the meeting includes:

- Update residents regarding the current situation & suggested action
- Discuss the plans – outline or planning applications if received
- Discuss the challenges related to – traffic, infrastructure, school, medical services & travellers' site
- Discuss the need for specialist input to maximise our influence

* In March a public consultation leaflet had appeared, regarding a proposed outline planning application by planning consultants TEP (The Environment Partnership) for up to 32 dwellings on 1.4 hectares of land with road access off Champion Road, Chaulden. The leaflet bore the HCC logo beside the TEP one, and said that "Land West of Chaulden" was part of the LA3 Local Allocation.

WHAG have been in correspondence with DBC planning officers regarding this. The latter said that this was the first they'd heard of it, that they were seeking to contact HCC (the landowners) and had raised the matter with MP Sir Mike Penning.

GE referred to the Minutes of the May 2017 DEF meeting, where the following exchange was noted: "Carolyn Wallis (WHAG) **asked** the developers if their development plans included the field beyond Champion Road in the SE corner of LA3 currently owned by Herts CC. Chris Irwin (Taylor Wimpey) from the developers stated that they did not own the land and did not have any intention of buying it and that they would not be the ones who might build on it. Cllr Fiona Guest said that she had made some enquiries about that field and had been told that Herts CC had no intention of selling it. "

DBC 2017 Local Plan Consultation

No further news.

4. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

No Nominations were received. **GE** and **SW** were willing to continue as Chair and Vice Chair respectively. **GE** was consequently proposed and seconded by **PHa** and **PHi**, and **SW** by **MR** and **TH**, respectively.

5. The Boxmoor Trust: Current Policies, Plans and Objectives, and Outreach.

SW took the chair for this item

Peter Ablett, Boxmoor Trustee and founder of DEF in the early 1990s, spoke first on the Trust's Policies, Plans and Objectives. He reminded the meeting that Phil Pennington, the Forum's chair from 2006 to 2013, had also been the Estates Manager for the Trust.

PA said that one of the most rewarding elements of serving the Trust for him was the opportunity it gave him to inspire and involve the younger generation. For a comprehensive source of the Trust's history he recommended the book "Royalty to Commoners" by Roger and Joan Hands (ISBN: 9780950453224, published in 2004.)

The Trust currently covered 480 acres, and originated from gifts of land by Elizabeth I to friends, and the subsequent transfer of smaller parcels to commoners. Further land was added in the 1990s, some in exchange for losses to the A41 bypass. More recently land at the former Bovington Brickworks had been acquired on favourable terms. A prime feature of the current management was the grazing by herds of Belted Galloway cattle and Norfolk Horn sheep. Systematic monitoring for plant and animal species, and enhancement/preservation of important habitats was also a key feature.

Management of the Trust's land had been subject to the challenges of bisection for transport links, the Grand Union Canal in 1809, the railway in 1848 and again for the Nicky Line in 1894 and the A41 in 1994.

The £60,000 'Bringing Back the Bulbourne' partnership project between the Environment Agency and the Trust had been very successful and acclaimed. The river had been narrowed, and its natural meander restored, creating new habitats for plants and wildlife, for instance Ranunculus (Water-Buttercups). Removing a weir had allowed fish to move along the river, while cutting back trees had allowed more light to reach it. There had been some adverse comments about fencing on social media. However the fencing's purpose was to deter grazing of the banks. The electric fencing was temporary, barbed wiring less so.

Recent open days and events including the Lambing Weekend had been very successful and had attracted a lot of interest. The Trust supported nature conservation work throughout Dacorum with grants to the tune of £25K p.a.

Unfortunately, many horse chestnut trees, whose lines and alleys characterise the best-known parts of the Moor, as in most of the country, were having to be removed and were under continuing threat from Phytophthora and the Leaf Mining Moth. This was despite efforts to treat individual trees. Other commonly occurring tree species were similarly threatened, and the prospect for trees locally, nationally and even globally over the next two decades was decidedly bleak.

Some dog owners also presented a challenge to management of the Trust land. In addition to direct attacks by dogs on livestock, cattle could graze hay infected with dog faeces. Because of the anticipated step increase in housing in Dacorum under the Core Strategy and New Local Plan, "footfall" on Trust land would increase, and in order to continue to manage its landholding effectively for the benefit of the public and for nature conservation the Trust needed to increase its income correspondingly. So it would need to "engage with" the Two Waters Masterplan in order to obtain the maximum planning gain.

Caroline Evans, Education and Community Manager for the Trust, spoke about the Trusts' outreach to the younger generation and community.

CE said that she had connections with working on the Trust land via two of her grandparents, and that she loved her job and being able to continue in this tradition. The education department was based at the Old Barn at Westbrook Hay, which incorporated classrooms and nearby facilities such as boardwalks, ponds and hides, all of which catered for disabilities. There were successful youth groups for various age ranges, and a conservation volunteer youth group, advertised on Facebook and Twitter.

They had been visited by 5000 children on school outings, generally linked to subjects on the schools' curriculum. This however was mainly Junior Schools. Organising visits from Senior Schools had proved more problematic, with some heads insisting that their pupils needed to stay in school uniform, a constraint that for some activities compromised safety rules. Some school visits feature litter picking, and this could be a "hard sell" initially to pupils who had different expectations, but participants could become enthused if they were encouraged to think more widely about waste management, with the message "Reduce, Re-use, Recycle" (in that order of preference - the familiar Waste Management Hierarchy).

There is also a series of Family Activity days throughout the school summer holidays. This is managed by **CE** and four part-time education officers.

CE kindly offered to co-operate with DEF with any ideas for nature conservation, outreach or related subjects in Dacorum that it might come up with.

Questions/Comments were then invited:

GS Confirmed from his volunteering experience with his children's school that the children really value excursions with a nature conservation theme.

DH and **JM** praised the work of the Trust.

TH said that she had spoken to David Kirk (Trust Chairman) regarding increasing the multicultural appeal of the Trust, particularly amongst adults. **CE** said that this already happened as far as schools were concerned, e.g. with visits from schools from Watford and London Colney. **PA** said that the now-discontinued "Music on the Moor" would attract a great diversity of people, but that it became unmanageable.

MR said that elsewhere wildflowers such as Lady's Smock that the Trust wish to preserve were mown down prematurely by the Council. **PA** said that he had had success in the past in persuading the then DBC Landscape Manager to adopt a more nature-sensitive approach to mowing verges etc., but that this

had been opposed by a majority of councillors in the interests of tidiness. **CR** said that Dacorum were less enlightened than other LAs in this regard. **GE** referred to the minutes of the DEF meeting on May 22nd 2014, addressed by Colin Chambers, DBC Landscape Manager, who said that there were two schools of thought on the issue amongst DBC officers.

GE asked whether there was any possibility of introducing a byelaw to require dogs to be on leads on Trust lands. In addition to attacks on and infection of livestock, uncontrolled dogs turned parts of the river banks into canine splash parks, effectively denying enjoyment to the rest of the public. **JM** pointed out the existence of Public Space Protection Orders. However **PA** thought such an order would be unrealistic unless it was enforceable.

CR asked about publicising the dangers of cattle being infected by dog faeces. **PA** said that Trust were working on it.

A copy of the PowerPoint file covering both presentations was promised, and will be placed on the DEF website next to these minutes.

5. Any Other Business

GE proposed that as a follow-up from Duncan Jones's presentation on Waste Management at the February meeting DEF should again lobby local stores and other food outlets on the question of packaging, as it did in 2008, and if possible again in the form of a joint letter from DEF and the Council, maybe following a presentation to the O&S committee. Last time there had just been a survey by the Local Government Association comparing the main stores' ratios of packaging to product by weight. This time we could point to the Government's recently published 25 Year Environment Plan, which was referred to in Duncan Jones's presentation. This is 150 pages long and very wide ranging, but this time round we could usefully concentrate on plastics, most of the references to which **GE** had extracted from the Plan to form a five page document.

He invited those present and recipients of the Minutes to show a measure of interest in such a campaign, as a first step by requesting copies of this extract and of selected documents from the 2008 campaign.