**REIGATE HEATH STEERING GROUP**

 Minutes of s Meeting held on Wednesday September 19th 2018

 At Town Hall, Back Committee Room commencing at 6.27 pm

**Those present**: Cllr Michael Blacker- Chairman, Cllr Rosemary Absalom- deputy Chairman, David Bellamy- RHRA, Nigel Ellis- RBBC Officer, Simon Elson-RACV, Neil Gayner-RHGC, Elinor Leech- RH Horseriders, David Watts- RBBC Countryside Officer and Cllr Christopher Whinney- ward Cllr and Secretary.

**1. Welcome**. The Chairman welcomed all those present and in particular the return of David Bellamy as the rep for RHRA and David Watts as the new Countryside officer.

**2. Apologies for absence**. Steve Carter- resident, Isobel Girvan- Surrey Wild Life Trust, Jenny Newell- Archaeology,

 and Charles Wragg - Reigate Society.

**3. Minutes of the last meeting** were agreed as a true and correct record.

**4. Work Programme**. ACTION

4.1. The work programme prepared by NE with contribution by SE and approved by Habitat sub-group,

 was agreed and such agreement to be advised to Natural England for their formal acceptance of work

to commence as from 1st October, but reference must be made to 4.5.below. CW requested that RBBC NE

obtain a formal letter/e-mail of acceptance by Natural England.(Subsequently NE advised formal

 acceptance letter agreeing works programme received from Natural England on 16th October)

4.2. The work programme resulted from hard work and much effort with items which are achievable

 and included a map. It was recognised that the inclusion of a separate summary was an improvement

as well as an improvement in communication with RHRA.

4.3. NE made reference to the Protocol pertaining to all activities be passed through the Steering Group

 for comment and agreement.

4.4. NE advised of the intention of Greenspaces Dept to provide information to SG members on a NE

fortnightly basis with hard copy to be placed on the Noticeboard at Flanchford Road Car Park.

4.5. EL advised of a muddy corner in far N West of the Heath was not in the work programme.

 It was agreed to review and include for action. NE

Further it was noted of a muddy area in front of the pavilion which flooded every year, there is a drain

 under Flanchford Road with the input blocked and contact has been made with RBBC Engineers. NE

This would also be included in the work programme for action.

4.6. It was noted later in the meeting that it was more important for information to be passed to residents

on the work programme than on the Management Plan.

**5. Walkabout on Heath on Thursday 13th September**

5.1. SE stated that this had been useful but referred to his e-mail dated 18thn Sept where he expressed concern

 that those attending had separated into groups and some verbal agreements given might be misleading

or unable to be achieved. For example the subject of tree felling occurred in one group, NE explained

at least 5 trees on south slope from clubhouse were causing concern for Health & Safety. It was noted

that NE and DW had visited and taken photographs, specifically south of the glade and of south slope from

the clubhouse.

5.2. SE had noted that for the first time residents had complained about noise, in the context of the

clearance of the Glade, previously it has just been a visual impact issue.

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**6.Surveys**  ACTION

NE advised i) Bird Survey completed last week

 ii) Bat survey . Thousands of calls were recorded.

 iii) Hymenoptera survey. done.

and when i) and ii) received , they would be included in the Management Plan. NE

 iv) Acid Grassland Survey of sports field .Bruce Middleton would be invited to come to review

grassland in Spring 2019, only if required but there is a need for photographs to be taken before 30th Sept. NE/DW

**7. HLS Funding**. ( Subsequently NE advised funding would be £3,153.23 per annum subject to final

scrutiny by Natural England later in the year ).

**8. Horserides and Bridleways.**

81. There was a petition submitted to SCC recently” to cut back and clear vegetation on or adjacent

to bridleways around Reigate Heath” with 60 signatories. EL commented that the petitioner Helen Slade

had not ridden on the heath for 15 years , was shocked on the condition of some permissive rides and

 bridleways on her recent return, but was unaware of the existence of RH Steering Group, the Horseridrsnetwork and it’s representative.

EL confirmed that the riders and the petitioner were now happy with the work undertaken by RBBC on widening the paths and the petition would not be pursued any further by the riders nor the petitioner.

8.2. On the petition to SCC, RA had written to Cty Cllr Dr Grant-Duff ( subsequently RA sent copy to

all members by e-mail on 30th September)

8.3. NE confirmed that two aspects the petition raised had already been covered in the work programme

 including trimming the paths ***annually*** and widening the track in places where it had become a NE

deep gulley.

8.4. It was confirmed that there had been a work party on the heath that afternoon with volunteers

 from GC and Horseriders on part of the permissive ride on which GC use for their machinery.

There had been recently a bad accident on this part involving a horserider and a piece of “ proud”

 metal on a tee which GC had repaired now. GC and horseriders were trying to prevent any more

accidents by improving sight lines on this part for both sight for the tees and to avoid GC machinery

causing upset to horses . It was acknowledged that this work was not in the work programme nor

 agreed by SG, according to protocol. The matter of insurance for such a work party was discussed. .

The issue of sight lines could be discussed when GC personnel meet with the Leader of Council

Cllr Brunt, as GC were becoming increasingly concerned about Health &m Safety, Risk Assessments NG

 and Litigation arising from accidents.

8.5. NE advised that when machinery was to be used on the heath by RBBC employees, this information

 would be available for horseriders through the Council’s web site and details would be sent to EL NE/EL

for her to share on the riders’ facebook page.

.7. It was noted for the need of a map to show bridleways and permissive rides on the heath.

This map to be cohesive and with clear colour marking – see13.3. below.

**9. Golf Club and Shooting Rabbits at night.**

NG advised that he had been in contact with Pat Bridges , Secretary of RHRA, and confirmed GC had had

a contract for about 3 yrs with a properly licensed person, who was thought to use .22 rifle with infra-red

scope and operated when no other person around. -

**10.Notice Board at Flanchford Road Car Park.**

10.1. It was confirmed that present notice board was to be replaced with one almost double the size.

The material currently inside would be placed on the pavilion and a new informative “ chart” be installed NE/DW

 in the new bigger noticeboard showing the bye-laws currently on the back – making reference to bicycling

 on the heath, which restricted to bridleways and permissive rides and mentioning birds to be seen

on the heath.

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 ACTION

10.2. It was noted that MB getting a quote for frame for a new bigger noticeboard ( subsequently MB MB

advised received quote for 7 oak posts for £166 plus VAT and to shape tops of posts for £ 40)

**11. Signage Survey.**

11.1. It was noted that previous survey not “ compatible” so DW had recorded all signs on the heath

with a camera and confirmed that these are responsibility of RBBC. There were a number of

new/replacement signs reflecting activity of golfers – one was on a tree and it was agreed NG NG

 to put on a post.

11.2. At the last meeting there was concern on the legality of many signs on the heath CW had been

in contact with Officer Jolley – first reply received 24th July and there was now further investigation CW

necessary to seek the advice of the legal dept.

**12. Finance and Resources.**

12.1. NE advised that the annual budget for Greenspaces Dept. was £ 1.2m and had been unchanged

 in the last 3 yrs . There was no specific set aside for Reigate Heath( why not?) and the resources available

were commensurate with the skills . However on further questioning , DW confirmed that there were the

 right skills available and sufficient resources to undertake the maintenance of the heath.

12.2. NE advised that he and DW were located in the same room together with Michael Hill ,

Operations Manager of Greenspaces Dept, in order to increase the effectiveness of the Dept and especially

for work on the heath.

12.3. SE enquired on the responsibilities of Officer Jolley which he had understood included fund raising.

NE affirmed that both Officers Wilcox and Jolley were working together jointly.

At the meeting with RHRA ,their roles had been explained..

**13. Archaeology on the Heath.**

13.1.NE affirmed the intention to protect and preserve the archaeology on the heath and ensure permissive

 rides were not encroaching tumuli, as well as working with Natural England to improve the wild life.

This subject would be in the Management Plan and RBBC would develop their web site on this subject NE

 and include it on the new noticeboard.

13.2. Since cycling on pathways adjacent to the heath and converging on the heath were recorded officially,

SE was concerned about cyclists on bridleways, cycles would be mountain bikes not road bikes, and

 he questioned whether cyclists would know that the heath is SSSI. Therefore he suggested that RBBC RBBC

contact local cycle clubs.

13.3. It was agreed for the need of one map showing bridleways and permissive rides, this map to be NE/DW

 cohesive and with clear colour marking.( Subsequently NE Advied such a map has been updated and

will be placed on Flanchford Road Noticeboard when this renewed and also placed on Council’s web site).

**14. SSSI Notification update.**

Reference was made to the e-mail dated 29th August from Graham Steven of Natural England sent

to all members on 18th September. Area 1 is owned by Dungate Estates and Area 3 owned by multiple private owners. Residents had stated that Area 3 had been much wetter this summer despite the dry weather.

SE expressed concern that the proposed de-notification may be premature as the dewatering pumping in

the Buckland sand pits had only been turned off for one year and there will be a rise in the groundwater,

as witnessed this summer. Area 3 still holds species referred to the SSSI citation.

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**15. Management Plan.**  ACTION

15.1. The latest version had been available to members of Habitat sub-group since early July and

would be sent to all other members the next day including DB, Chairman of RHRA. SE affirmed that he had SE

 still to send some details to Isobel Girvan in particular on Geology.

It was agreed that all members would read the latest version and send any comments etc to DW ALL

by November 14th.

15.2. It was noted that besides details to be sent by SE, the Survey Questionnaire was not yet shown

and Terms of Reference of SG would be included .The Portfolio Holder might wish to be consulted. NE/RA

 It was agreed to continue to include Steve Carter as a member and he be designated “ Veterinary Adviser”.

The results of the actual surveys would also be included - see 6 above. `

15.3. Consultation. It was noted that this Plan is the work of a professional organisation showing their

guidance and advice, and it was agreed for the public to be invited to comment and this Plan would RBBC

appear on the RBBC web site. If any valid points were made, there would be amendments.

**16. Planning . Nursery Development.**

It was understood that the nursery had ceased to trade and the previous applicant for re-development

 had sent in request for appeal too late.

Any further application for re-development would go to RHRA and SG ,giving the opportunity to comment.

**17.Britain in Bloom Competition.**

17.1. NE advised that RBBC had submitted at least two examples for consideration- Reigate Heath

and Redhill Memorial Park. Two judges had viewed these. The heath was considered alongside

many others viewing access,flora,fauna and consideration of golf fairways and acid grassland

 with balance of recreation and access for disabled may be a problem. Reigate Heath received

 a silver medal and Redhill Memorial Park a gold medal.

17.2. NE confirmed that RBBC would put in as submission again. The sponsors were Gatwick Airport. RBBC

**18. Use of Fittleworth Sand.**

18.1. NE confirmed that its use had to be approved in each case by Natural England and had been

approved as well for use on permissive rides.

18.2. If there was a requirement to provide a turning circle on the heath, this did not need planning

permission.

18.3. The use of granite as a binding material was approved by Natural England, but SE was concerned

that the increasing use of binding material was urbanising the heath.

**19. Dog Bins.**

NE advised cost of these is £500 each and commented but ( subsequently NE confirmed Dog Warden visits

 the Heath more often and is encouraged to speak to dog walkers to treat the disposal of filled plastic RBBC

bags responsibly by putting in dog bins. He confirmed as well two bins by Flanchford Road Car Park are to be replaced)

**20.Painting the Pavilion.**

NE was aware of the request to paint pavilion green and affirmed intention to re-paint. He showed

 two samples – red or dull green toned down with preservative. It was agreed to use the green sample.

(Subseq uently NE confirmed that this has been completed).

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**20 Next Meetings. Venues and Dates.** ACTION

 January. Wednesday 9th in Town Hall at 6.30 pm. CW

 May. Wednesday 15th in RHGC at 6.30 pm, following a walkabout on the heath. CW

Meeting terminated 8.26 pm