

Tooting Commons Management Advisory Committee

Minutes of the Meeting on Wednesday 7 April 2021, 7.00 pm via video conference

Members Present:

Adam Smith –AS
Anthony Gilmour (vice Chair) - AG
Clare Fraser - CF
Duncan MacDonald -DM
Elisabeth Powell - EP
Hannah Stanislaus - HS
Kirsten Botting (Secretary)- KB
Mark Bery – MBy
Matthew Hamlyn – (Acting Chair) MH
Mike Morley-Fletcher – MM-F
Mike Squires – MSq
Robert Broadhurst - RB
Ruth de Grey - RdeG
Sarah McDermott - SM
Tom Mytton - TM

In Attendance:

Neil Blackley – Head of Parks, Enable
Leisure and Culture – NB
Richard Hughes – Streathbourne Road
resident

Apologies Received:

Ian Mitchell - IM
Jenny Thewlis - JT
Oli Griffiths (Chair) – OG
Steve Biggs – SB

Apologies received after the meeting:

Nabi Toktas – NT

1. Acceptance of Apologies.

The apologies were accepted.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting.

The minutes for the TCMAC meeting of 24 February 2021 were accepted.

3. Matters Arising

No matters arising other than those already on the agenda

4. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Police report and parks report

5.1 No police report this month

5.2 Parks report

Key points raised were:

Summer sports commencing Saturday 17 April

End of season renovations to winter sports pitches commencing April.

Scarification (mechanical removal of organic matter from grass areas to enable more water and oxygen to reach the grass roots and facilitate better growth) of all winter sports pitches commencing in the coming days.

Grass renovations will begin in the next couple of weeks, including fencing, harrowing, and seeding of some areas that have been badly impacted over the last year. Other areas will be renovated in the autumn. •

Plans are being pulled together to improve the eco pond and the area known as the Sanctuary by the lake.

Following a full review of lake signage planned for April, there will be improved signage around the lake, in particular to discourage people from leaving food around, which is encouraging rats to become bolder.

Tree surveys on Tooting Common continue.

Resurfacing of the Lido Car park is scheduled for Wednesday 7 April

After discussion the following points were raised

Rats and litter

A local resident raised the issue of increased number of rats on the common and concerns regarding public health should the café have an infestation.

After discussion it was agreed that signage discouraging the feeding of the ducks with bread and oats was needed. The sale of seed and grain bags on the common via the café, as on Wandsworth Common, is to be encouraged via the Friends of Tooting Common. Briannah Mollison-Read at Enable will be able to help. Briannah Mollison-Read@enablelc.org. It was suggested that Wandsworth common be used as a role model.

Action: Enable to contact Peter Ramell, FOTC

Signage

NB confirmed that signage is in hand for around the lake, and child-friendly signage in the playground. Signage will have new wording and be educational. In particular, there will be signage in the playground outlining people's responsibilities.

Furthermore, habitat creation is being encouraged to address the issue of rats ie tawny owls to be encouraged.

Action: NB to share draft signage copy

Public Health issue – rats around the café. No one had seen rats around the café and it was confirmed that there are rat traps around the café.

It was suggested that perhaps the rat population had increased due to the flooding on the common. SM noted that Wandsworth Common does not have such a great issue with rats, which could be because there is specific feed for birds, and common users are discouraged from feeding bread and cake to the ducks.

Additional comments from NB:

End of winter season renovations are taking place but not on those pitches being used, which will have their renovations of scarifying, ground breaking at another time. NB confirmed that due to the impact of increased usage there was a lot of erosion and ground impaction, which is being addressed by Enable. Some of the renovations underway include the paths from Dr Johnson Avenue to the Café, and Bedford Hill to the Triangle. NB confirmed that areas will be fenced off for a short period of time until the seed germinates; and one side of the path will be done at a time.

Around the Sanctuary dangerous decking will be replaced with gravel. Enable is looking at ways to combat anti-social behaviour in the scrub and shrubbery areas with a planned programme of cutting back. And seating around the lake will be improved.

Pot holes in the carparks will also be addressed. Resurfacing of the Lido car parks will recommence today.

Cycling - With regards to cycling on the commons NB confirmed there has been a full assessment of entry points onto the common and the scrutiny of the signage which needs replacing. Costs for new signage due this week. This is already underway, and will include a programme of surface markings.

DM raised concerns re the relationship between cyclists and pedestrians and the need for clear signage that is backed up with enforcement.

Lighting – The council has instructed a survey of lighting on the commons and all parks across the Borough by an independent contractor.

Grass reseeded – MS suggested that wildflower planting be encouraged on some areas of the commons. NB agreed that this is something that is being considered as it would work well.

Communication with the public – KB raised the point that there is a lot of negative comment on social media about Tooting Commons because people are not aware of what is being done. It was suggested that Enable's communication team include comments on social media, in particular, Nextdoor.

Public lavatories on the Commons – HS commented that the lavatories at the athletics track are closed although signage states that these lavatories are operational, and that the only open lavatory is at the Café. NB confirmed that Enable has been in discussion with the council re all available / potential toilet facilities and that includes the provision of Portaloos. Any increase in toilet provision will likely rest on the availability of capital funding which Enable is pursuing. NB confirmed the use of bushes was unacceptable and a result of the increased numbers of people and the changing way in which people are using the commons. EP commented that the use of the bushes as lavatories had probably contributed to the increase in rat numbers.

MS raised the problem of flooding on Dr Johnson Avenue. NB confirmed this was raised with Thames Water in February and that Thames Water will be investigating the flooding.

RB highlighted the problem of ditches flooding by Tooting Triangle. NB responded that Enable has contacted the Council's internal flood consultant and plans are afoot to deal with localised flooding issues in urban areas and a proposal will be put to the Council by the summer (as this involves several departments to collate information). MS asked if there was a map of the pipe layout that could be available.

NB to share information on pipes and layout when/if available from Thames Water

6.0 Annual Public Meeting

AG confirmed that a date needs to be agreed with Enable. Enable will issue notices of the meeting and signage on the common stating when and where, and inviting people to become involved. MAC also to aid with publicising event and to encourage new members.

Date to be in July.

Secretary to ask members if they wish to stand again, or step aside.

APM might have to be done via zoom and votes taken over zoom.

Minutes and annual report to be produced.

APM to be on the agenda for May meeting.

Action: KB, AG and OG

7.0 Streatham and Clapham High School's planning application to replace its sports pavilion

AG confirmed that he had gone through the proposals with a fine toothcomb and confirmed that, properly understood, the hours of possible use of the pavilion suggested at section 7.38 of the planning statement did not represent an increase in hours, and had little bearing on

the hours of use of the pitches. They should not worry the MAC. MM-F, among others, was not convinced, and still had concerns about light and noise pollution on the commons.

After discussion it was agreed that AG would write to the headmaster of SCHC on the point, to try to clarify matters. Then, informed by any response, AG was to write to the planning authority (Lambeth) with the MAC's comments on the application, so that the MAC has acted in its position of protecting the commons and has clarified any misunderstandings. It was accepted that those living in houses nearby might have greater worries about such matters as noise and traffic, and might want to write with their own comments. SM suggested the MAC's letter to Lambeth be cc to Wandsworth's planning department.

Action: AG to write to headmaster of SCHS, and then to Lambeth BC

8.0 Dark Skies

MM-F confirmed that the team had two outings star gazing and plan to make it a regular event. Report on findings will be circulated. The aim is to demonstrate the darkness/lightness of the sky and encourage common users to participate.

The team is looking to undertake a light inventory. Wandsworth Council has provided one. We need one from Lambeth. The team aim to have a complete map of light available for June meeting.

Dark Skies character statement has been drafted and circulated. Final comments were invited.

Action: Light inventory from Lambeth SM. MM-F to circulate character statement for final comments to be received by 12 May 2021 – a week before the next meeting.

9.0 Survey

OG working on format. CF to feed through collated responses. KB stated that TCMAC will use members' responses to format the questionnaire. TM offered to help format the survey as he is experienced in undertaking surveys for community forums. All Members to feedback answers to CF by next meeting. Email to be resent with out line questions.

Action: OG/KB/TM/CF - All

10. Cycling issues

To be discussed at the next meeting.

Meeting ended at about 9pm. Next meeting 19th May on Zoom