

Tooting Commons Management Advisory Committee
Minutes of the Meeting on 19th May 2021, 7.00 pm via video conference

Members Present:

Adam Smith - AS
Anthony Gilmour (vice Chair) - AG
Duncan MacDonald -DM
Elisabeth Powell - EP
Kirsten Botting (Secretary) - KB
Mark Shotton - MS
Matthew Hamlyn - MH
Mike Morley-Fletcher - MM-F
Mike Squires - MSq
Oli Griffiths (Chair) - OG
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 (part)

Apologies Received:

Clare Fraser - CF
Ian Mitchell - IM
Jenny Thewlis – JT
Mark Jordan - MJ
Matthew Billson - MB
Steve Biggs - SB
Mark Bery – MB (to join later)

Apologies received after the meeting:

Nabi Toktas – NT

1. Acceptance of Apologies.

The apologies were accepted.

Members wished Steve Biggs a speedy recovery and OG to ascertain who is covering for him

Action: OG

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting.

The minutes for the TCMAC meeting of 7 April 2021 were accepted.

3. Matters Arising

No matters arising other than those already on the agenda

4. Declarations of interest

Sarah McDermott and Hannah Stanislaus are Wandsworth Councillors.

5. Police report and parks report

5.1 No police report this month

5.2 Parks report

Key points highlighted:

NB confirmed that Enable has been working on improving the sports pitches, as well as the paths and adjacent areas, with some of the most damaged areas being fenced off. Slow-release fertilizer has been broadcast in those areas. NB stressed that this work is weather dependent and it is hoped that it will be completed by the summer. A key issue is compaction which is being addressed by probe aeration.

Tree planting has taken place on Dr Johnson Avenue and Elmbourne Road.

A full borough **survey of all trees** on the Commons will take place, in the light of a new disease, Massaria, which affects London Plane trees, in particular. Most of the London Plane trees on the Common (60+) are around the Bedford Hill area. An inspection needs to be undertaken from the crown of the tree and it is anticipated it will take three/four weeks to complete.

Update on previous issues:

Water courses and flood alleviation, in the Triangle/Woodfield area in particular. NB responded that 18 months ago Thames Water communicated that they had effected repairs. Following a recent mowing of grass, the problem areas have been highlighted again. Thames Water has responsibility and has been asked to look into it but are as yet unresponsive.

The issue of flooding on the Commons is part of broader work being undertaken with the Environment Agency, Thames Water and the Richmond & Wandsworth flood team, including mapping of existing known services, examining areas that flood frequently, clarifying existing responsibilities by organisation, examining pre-planned flood prevention schedules. This survey should be completed by the summer. This will be circulated to the TCMAC.

Action: NB to circulate document

Anti-rat signage has been printed and will be in place shortly.

OG commented that signage needs to inform people the reason for restrictions in order to improve understanding and compliance e.g. why you cannot cycle on the grass/allow dogs to swim in the water. NB agreed the need to educate and communicate those messages and welcomed feedback from TCMAC. MH raised awareness of the good signage on Wandsworth Common

Action: TCMAC members to feed through comments to NB

Rats and litter - NB confirmed that their aim is to improve public awareness of their responsibility to reduce litter as well as to improve collection. The feeling is that the prevalence of rats may be declining and that the encouragement of natural predators such as tawny owls may assist with this. The temporary lavatories should also help alleviate the problem.

Action: NB to confirm strategy

Communication to the public. How to alert the public of radical tree pruning? NB stressed that when it is an emergency action needs to be taken immediately and social media is probably the most timely and effective method of communication. OG proposed the use of a noticeboard by the café to provide an additional point of reference. Enable will provide information to the TCMAC and to the Friends in order to get the messages out in a timely fashion. Enable have increased their social media comms resources.

NB to liaise with Friends of Tooting Common and others to help issue information.

NB to assess how his team can inform the public and feed back to TCMAC.

Parking- OG raised the question about the red lines on Dr Johnson Avenue – NB confirmed that Enable has assessed the car park and has re planned the car parking area with additional spaces. Markings will also be re painted. Parks police to give input. NG to follow up re red lines on Dr Johnson Avenue.

Action: NG re red lines on Dr Johnson Avenue.

Time stamped ticketing in the car park

Action: NB to follow up.

RdeG raised the issue that St Leonards ward will become a controlled parking zone which might impact on the parking on and around the common.

Return of **Park Run** – NB confirmed that ParkRun is likely to return on Saturday, 21 June for the adults and a team are working on this, but this needs to be coordinated London-wide. NB was not aware of the youth park run.

Wildflower meadows – Biodiversity team has identified areas where they will allow grass to grow longer and wildflower meadows to develop. The best way to understand what grows in an area is to leave it to naturally germinate.

6.0 Dark Skies

MM-F confirmed that comments have been received and incorporated for the **Position statement**. This was unanimously agreed and approved by TCMAC members. Statement to be issued to Wandsworth Council.

Action: OG/Dark Skies team to send to Wandsworth Borough Council

Dark Skies London – a **speaker** has agreed to talk at APM and walk around the commons with members. It was agreed this was an excellent idea. All members are encouraged to join and arrange amongst themselves. Date and time to be confirmed.

Action: All

It was suggested that an audit of what types of lighting, in addition to their location on the commons, is required. SM to try and obtain a lighting map from Lambeth in addition to that already provided by Wandsworth. A walk-round audit of the lighting to be arranged.

Action: MM-F, OG and SM

Third star gazing session took place. Due to time of year, the team was unable to spot Orion. It was agreed that the next session takes place on Wednesday 22 September. Members are encouraged to join in and download the free app – Star Tracker Lite

Action: All

OG suggested that due to the volume of information on Dark Skies and other initiatives members use TCMAC Drop Box facility. The link is:
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/2gsut949z0z4v29/AABRB0fRYCQmWifq33X8JHcWa?dl=0>

7.0 SCHS

It was noted by Dark Skies team that the lighting around the school's perimeter is quite harsh and bright. It was mooted that perhaps the MAC could engage in dialogue with the school and encourage SCHS to improve its environmental credentials. AG confirmed that he thought this would be a useful discussion point to have with the school. MM-F suggest that the new director of finance would be the person to approach.

It was suggested that we should engage the school on the issues on the Common. OG suggested SCHS put up some bat boxes, in order to engage. RdeG commented that SCHS had erected bird boxes in the past and positioned them incorrectly. It was agreed that this would be an ideal way of engaging with the school. KB suggested SCHC school council/eco champions are invited to attend TCMAC meetings. SD suggested that SCHS is invited onto the MAC along with other young organisations in the area.

Action: OG, KB and AG to work up plan of engagement for new school year

AG summed up his email correspondence and telephone conversation with SCHS regarding the planning application for the pavilion. Clarified the scope and purpose of application, followed up with TCMAC comments and concerns, and mentioned the lighting on the school's buildings.

8.0 Bat audit

MS confirmed that a bat survey was undertaken a few years ago, although no bats were detected. AS confirmed that bats have been sighted by the pond. AS suggested that a bat survey of the whole commons be undertaken as in the past it has been piecemeal.

9.0 Licensing for Major Events

Enable has applied for a premises licence to support events on the common. Currently the events take place on the land between the lake and Tooting Bec Road. The new application is for a larger area (up to the Lido). FOTC and the Open Space Society have been consulted as well. TCMAC will issue an objection under the public nuisance criteria. The MAC is agreement that the current type and number of events is acceptable if the commons are given time to recover from the recent heavy use.

OG has drafted a response which needs to be issued by 23 May. There are only four grounds on which objects are valid. Members viewed the response, suggested amendments and approved the objection copy.

SM suggested that a letter is drafted to object on the grounds of public nuisance to the licensing committee and following MS's comment re the acid grassland, a letter to Paul Chadwick and/or Cllr Sutters stating that this will breach elements of council policy.

Action: OG to issue objection letter

10.0 Annual Public Meeting

The date for the APM is Monday, 28th June and will take place via Zoom.

Enable is producing two large and 20 small posters detailing the event, and it will have the TCMAC general email address for interested parties to register for the Zoom details. Members have been asked prior to this meeting to help disseminate information via social media. Images of the posters are attached to these Minutes and members are asked to post them to their contacts and groups.

Action: All to send out details of APM to networks

AG raised the issue of potential gate-crashers to the meeting. MH assured the committee that people can be 'booted' off zoom meetings and will discuss with OG.

AG confirmed that should there be more members wishing to join than places available then they should be encouraged to join the mailing list until a place becomes available.

AG confirmed that the election of the officers will take place at the first meeting in September.

Action: OG to issue information to members

MH to liaise with OG re Zoom practicalities

11.0 Survey of the Commons

KB outlined the thinking behind the survey initiative. TCMAC members had witnessed how people were using the commons more, and differently during the pandemic than before Covid 19. It was decided to undertake a survey to get people's feedback so that we can future proof the Commons. The results will create some newsworthy items that will not only be of general interest but will also raise the profile of TCMAC.

Adam Smith, Matthew Hamlyn, Mike Squires and Thomas Mytton all offered to be part of the core survey team.

It was agreed that the survey will be launched at the APM.

Action: Survey team

12.0 Cycling

AG and DM raised the issue should cycling rules be assessed as people are using the common differently now and the changes in behaviour. Should the rules be changed re cycling?

After a debate on cycle paths. SM to find out about 'quiet ways' for cyclists and what plans were in place for the commons and what the situation is now.

To be discussed in detail at the September meeting.

Action: SM any further information on 'quiet ways'

Meeting ended at about 9pm. Next meeting is the Annual Public Meeting on Monday, 28th June 2021 7pm via Zoom