

**MINUTES****MOUSEHOLD HEATH CONSERVATORS****2.00pm – 5.25pm****20 June 2014**

**Present:** Councillors Bradford (in the chair following election), Ackroyd, Barker, Brociek-Coulton, Jones, Little, Margaret Bush and Chris Southgate

**Apologies:** Councillors Gayton, Maxwell and Price and Matthew Davies

**1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

**RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Bradford as chair for the ensuing civic year.

**2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR**

**RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Little as vice chair for the ensuing civic year.

**3. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2014 subject to amending 'Beach Drive' to read "Beech Drive" in item 3 and item 6 to read ...'Lenny Stamp' and ...'Paul Holley'.

**4. PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2013/14**

The Finance control officer presented the report. He suggested conservators disregard the 'forecast variance' column in Appendix A and apologised that its inclusion had been unhelpful.

In reply to a question from Councillor Little, he said that setting a level of reserves was a matter for the conservators. As a large part of the budget was controllable programmed works, a level of 5% was deemed appropriate. He said that, in an emergency, the council's budgets were available to support the conservators if members of the council considered it appropriate.

In reply to a question from Chris Southgate, the Head of local neighbourhoods said that the conservators had signed up to a higher level stewardship scheme for restoring heathland with funding allocated by the rural payments agency.

**RESOLVED** to note the provisional outturn for 2013/14.

## **5. BUDGET MONITORING STATEMENT APRIL-MAY 2014**

The Finance control officer presented the report.

The Head of local neighbourhoods said that the budget monitoring ensured visibility of the work programme that drove the precept requirement. He suggested a more detailed update on programme works and projects at the half year stage.

In reply to a question from Chris Southgate, the head of local neighbourhoods said that the budget for the refurbishment and repair to the pavilion had been agreed by the conservators some time ago. It was anticipated that the final costs should be within the scope of the approved budget.

**RESOLVED** to –

- (1) note the current budget monitoring position;
- (2) record the Mousehold Heath Conservators' appreciation of the contribution by Mark Smith, the finance control officer, to the work of the conservators and to wish him well as he would be leaving the council in the near future.

## **6. RISK PLANNING**

The Head of local neighbourhoods presented the report.

In reply to comments and questions, he said that the preparation of an asset register was in the work programme for the current year. It would be reviewed annually thereafter. The chair suggested that listing notable trees should be included and Margaret Bush said that the Mousehold Heath Defenders had records of specimen trees on the heath.

**RESOLVED** to approve the risk plan subject to –

- (1) the action column regarding 'tree disease' be amended by adding ...'and take any appropriate action following guidance from the trees officer';
- (2) amending the action column regarding 'work plans and projects not completed' to read ...'...programme of works not completed...'.

## **7. DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT**

The Head of local neighbourhoods introduced the draft annual report which had been produced following early discussions with the management sub group. It was still a work in progress with formatting required and photo captions to be added. A list of current conservators also needed to be included.

Chris Southgate suggested a number of ways he believed the draft could be improved including adding more information on the challenges faced i.e. bikers using the heath; the need to manage heritage elements such as the chapel site and the low percentage of actual heathland. The need to work within the budget was also a challenge but the successful way that the conservators did this was also a 'good story'. He believed that all of the paragraphs relating to 'push the pedalways' should be removed as this was not a Mousehold Heath Conservators' project.

Councillor Brociek-Coulton said that the Mousehold Fayre should be included in the events section and there should be more information on volunteering, particularly Norwich in Bloom. Also Jill Webb was listed as an 'individual volunteer' but was actually a member of the Mousehold Heath Defenders.

Margaret Bush suggested the introduction should include reference to why the heath was given to the city and to amend the first paragraph to say it was given by the Dean and Chapter and not 'the church'.

Councillor Little said there should be a reference to the varieties of birds seen on the heath. Chris Southgate agreed and suggested that information on all wildlife be included. This again was a good news element that should be emphasised.

**RESOLVED** to ask the head of local neighbourhoods to –

- (1) update the draft report as minuted above;
- (2) circulate the revised draft to a sub group including the chair and Councillors Ackroyd and Brociek-Coulton for "sign off" in July;
- (3) inform all Mousehold Heath Conservators when the report had been finalised.

## **8. PUSH THE PEDALWAYS**

The Design, conservation and landscape manager, presented the report.

Councillor Little said he welcomed the plans for the project and was pleased with the routes chosen. He considered that the environmental sensitivities regarding creating the route with 3 metre wide asphalt on Beech Drive was relatively minor compared to the advantage of improving access to the heath for disabled people and those with wheelchairs as well as cyclists.

Margaret Bush said that the Mousehold Heath Defenders were happy with opening up Dragoon Street but did not support the proposal relating to Beech Drive as there were other available options which they believed were better. They also considered it would be dangerous where this route joined Gurney Road. They were not happy at the proposal to adopt the route as this was in fact a 'disposal' of part of the heath and Norfolk County Council would then have complete control over what happened with the route, including allowing utilities underneath.

Chris Southgate agreed with the Mousehold Heath Defenders' views that the Beech Drive option was not an appropriate solution. He questioned why the 2.5 metre wide

route had been deemed to be enough before but now a 3 metre wide route was proposed. They believed that the lighting of Valley Drive was not necessary. He did not accept the rationale that the route would discourage anti-social behaviour. He agreed that the Cavalry Drive element was more rational.

The Design, conservation and landscape manager said that the highways experts view was that the planned Gurney Road crossing would be a safe option. The proposal to adopt the route was to ensure that it was maintained by Norfolk County Council's budgets and this had worked well in other places such as the Marriott's Way cycle route. The 3 metre width would allow for a delineation of the space for cyclists and pedestrians. His aim was for the proposed lighting to include sensors which would light as people approached and if achieved would be a national first.

Councillor Ackroyd said that her main concern was the proposal for lighting.

Councillor Barker said that he could see 'pro's and cons' of the scheme. He was concerned not to spoil the heath; he did not consider that it was significantly more dangerous for cyclists to use the longer route and was unsure how lorries could be stopped from using an enhanced Beech Drive.

The chair welcomed the proposed improvement to Gurney Road and preferred this as the only route.

Councillor Brociek-Coulton also agreed that Beech Drive should not be included and that Gurney Road should be the only route.

Councillor Little said that the gradient was much worse for cyclists on Gurney Road. Enhancing Beech Drive would be acceptable encroachment on the heath. The conservators should aim to encourage more people to access the heath by cycle rather than the car. Also, he again implored the conservators to consider people with disabilities and pushchairs.

Some conservators suggested that improvements could be made to Beech Drive without the need for asphalt.

The Design, conservation and landscape manager said that if the conservators rejected the Beech Drive option the project board would probably implement the Gurney Road option alone. However, that was a matter for the board. Fewer cyclists would be encouraged to use the route and the project would be less successful as a result. In reply to a question from the chair, he could not say that the proposed crossing of Gurney Road would definitely go ahead if the Beech Drive route was not chosen.

In response to questions, the Head of local neighbourhoods said that his team would work with the push the pedalways project to ensure any works undertaken on the heath were carried out to the conservators satisfaction.

**RESOLVED** to –

- (1) endorse the decision of the push the pedalways executive board to create a good quality route for cycling and walking between Heartsease

and the city centre by implementing the following project elements that affect the legally designated areas of Mousehold Heath –

- (a) (voting unanimously) laying a 3 metre wide, sealed surface two-way cycle track with lighting on the alignment of Dragoon Street in the vicinity of the Ranger's House and clearing the adjacent sunken lane to make it useable by pedestrians, including a shallow cutting to create level access to Gurney Road and reinstating heathland habitat to the slopes of the new cutting, as shown in Appendix 1 of the report;
  - (b) (voting unanimously) widening of the footpath on the west side of Gurney Road between the junctions with Britannia Road and Mousehold Avenue into the carriageway by 1.2 metre average and the verge by 1.0 metre average (no more than 1.6 metre) to create a 3.0 metre wide unsegregated cycle and pedestrian path as shown in Appendix 1;
  - (c) (with 4 voting in favour, none against and 4 abstentions) to introduce lighting on Valley Drive as shown in Appendix 1, subject to sensors being used;
  - (d) (with 5 voting in favour, 3 against and no abstentions) the adoption as highway of the areas of cycle/walking path and associated lighting on Dragoon Street, Gurney Road, and Valley Drive that are created or upgraded through push the pedalways, in order to maximise the resources available for future maintenance;
- (2) (with 7 voting in favour, 1 against and no abstentions) not to endorse the proposal to lay a 3 metre wide sealed surface path along Beech Drive without lighting to provide an unsegregated cycling and pedestrian track between Gurney Road and Valley Drive.

## **9. MOUSEHOLD HEATH UPDATE**

**RESOLVED**, having considered the report of the Head of local neighbourhood services, to note the recent activities that have been undertaken on Mousehold Heath.

## **10. MANAGEMENT SUB GROUP – NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**RESOLVED** to –

- (1) receive the notes of the management sub group meeting held on 7 April 2014;
- (2) ask the Head of local neighbourhood services to circulate the schedule of dates of future sub group meetings;
- (3) hold an itinerant meeting later in the year.

**11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED** to note the following schedule of future meetings all to commence at 2.00pm –

Itinerant meeting – to be agreed

Friday, 19 September 2014

Friday, 19 December 2014

Friday, 20 March 2015

CHAIR