

Blackheath Joint Working Party Meeting Minutes

19th July 2016

Venue: Age Exchange, Blackheath

Attendees

Cllr Kevin Bonavia (chair)	London Borough of Lewisham
Cllr Mehboob Khan	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Cllr Paul Morrissey	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Shirley Broughton	Nature Conservation Group
Tony Butler	Friends of Greenwich Park
Jane Dyer	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Mike Norton	Westcombe Society
Jane Dyer	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Gemma Buttell	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Nick Pond	London Borough of Lewisham
Philip Craig	Greenwich Society
Helen Reeves	Blackheath Society
David Walker	Blackheath Society
Joe Beale	Blackheath Society
Bob Hills	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Oli Seadon	In the Night Garden Live (presenting at point 4)
Cassandra Beckford (mins)	London Borough of Lewisham

1. Apologies and introduction

Apologies were received from Sue Corlett, Margaret Dinkeldein, Philip Craig, Janine Whitaker, John Thompson and Vincent Buchanan.

Cassandra Beckford (CB) introduced herself as the minute-taker for the meeting.

2. Minutes of 24th March

(i). Accuracy

AOB - The bid to Veolia UK should be upgraded.

AOB - The pits being discussed were the Elliott pits, not the Tranquil Vale pits.

(ii). Matters Arising

Joe Beale (JB) requested that he be added to the BJWP email distribution list. Cllr Paul Morrissey (PM) noted that the distribution list was on the agenda for review at point 7.

3. Blackheath (SMINC) Nature Conservation Group

Shirley Broughton (SB) commented that she had shared the papers rather late and hoped that all had received them; CB confirmed that the papers had been circulated.

SB raised the issue of funding for the survey work and was advised to speak to Cllr Kevin Bonavia (KB) regarding the shortfall between the quoted and allocated funds. Nick Pond (NP) informed the group that £6,500 costs for the survey had been

approved. NP said that in order for the site to be assessed ecologically, a Site 2 grass fund survey should be undertaken, since this provides robust, detailed information. NP advised that the cost of this survey (£3012 + VAT) is covered within the existing budget and that a copy of the methodology report was available. NP said that there was an additional £1500 available for the soil analysis to be undertaken.

Helen Reeves (HR) said that the first draft of the wild flower leaflet produced by Juliet Cairns (JC) was available. HR said that although she had a circulation list, this was not complete.

SB said that parking was causing plant damage to the Orchard Drive section of the heath and queried whether the edge of the heath could be left unmown to rectify this issue, since people would be less likely to drive onto unmown plants and land.

David Walker (DW) stated that commissioning bunds from scratch are expensive, adding that Roger Marshall was very pro-bunds and was keen to plan for high-grass corridors on the heath. DW felt that there should be as much bunding as possible on the heath, since this could be acquired more cheaply in bulk.

Cllr Kevin Bonavia (KB) and Cllr Mehboob Khan (MK) entered the meeting room and apologised for their late arrival due to traffic congestion.

NP said that there was no ecological reason as to why a strip of grass could not be left unmown, but wondered whether this would really stop the car parking in actuality. NP felt this could possibly lead to further management enforcement problems.

Gemma Buttell (GB) said that some bunds had been taken away to allow for laying track for coaches, and advised that this was a task that Glendale would not want to manage going forward. HR asked whether the coaches could wait at the paragon to load and unload; GB added that the coaches bring runners and athletes onto the heath for the London Marathon, so relocation now would be very difficult. DW enquired as to whether coaches could come off the heath on Blackheath Road.

GB asked if the drop-down style bollards could be made available for marathon day, since Glendale no longer wish to continue removing and adding the bunds. HR suggested that South Row could be used in this regard, since it does not have any bunds. However, NP stated that the step-up/step-down area was too high here.

KB suggested that making changes in the South Row area might be the solution, since this was the quickest and easiest way but the costs would need to be explored.

KB agreed to receive all further comments from members and circulate amongst the group.

Action: SB to ask JC if she is willing to meet with BJWP members and take them on a walk on the heath.

Action: PM agreed to speak to Parks, regarding leaving the edge of Orchard Drive unmown.

Action: GB to discuss with Lewisham highway officers and London Marathon organisers, the possibility of making changes to South Row.

4. 'In the Night Garden Live'

KB informed the group that 'In the Night Garden Live' (ITNGL) were very happy with this year's event; Oli Seadon (OS - General Manager) would be coming to talk with the group shortly with the aim of gaining approval for an upcoming application. KB suggested that the group should only consider making an in principle decision today, so as not to prejudice any other events.

Tony Butler (TB) felt that the group should say 'yes or no', not give an in principle decision, since ITNGL need to be able to manage their business appropriately.

KB said that if the group did not feel, on balance, that it would be harmful to make the decision today, then they could proceed. But other risks could come along and scupper the decision, hence an in principle decision in the round would be the safest option.

HR said that there had been no complaints about ITNGL, other than comments about the state of the grass. Overall, she had heard from others that this had been a great event for small children, and that it might actually be better to have one event that lasts for five weeks, rather than lots of other events.

MK said he had heard nothing but praise from local residents for ITNGL, and therefore the presumption should be in favour of giving approval for next year's event. MK added that he rotates his attendance with Aiden Smith (AS) for this meeting, and that AS also held the same view.

PM asked whether the group were happy to place a limit on two further events taking place this year: ITNGL and the 'Foodies Festival (FF)'. KB said that all event decisions would be revisited in October, and could therefore only be made in principle now.

TB said that last year it had been agreed that ITNGL would not hold their first event of the year at Blackheath; KB advised that this point would be discussed further with OS.

OS entered the meeting room, along with Bob Hills (BH).

KB welcomed OS and BH, and said that the group were happy to look at a pre-approval application on an in principle basis, with a final decision (subject to license) being made in October.

OS said that by waiting until October to receive the full decision, it would then be too late to get another event booking; KB said that all events were fully confirmed in October.

OS said that this had been the first year INTGL had been held on Blackheath (since they were previously at the O2 arena), that it had been a new experience to be outside and that to his knowledge they had not received any complaints via the events email address or telephone line.

OS explained that the production company had explored switching their touring route so that they would not arrive at Blackheath first, but unfortunately this had not been possible. It was proposed however, that ITNGL would compress the stage build time, reducing this by four days, in order to minimise some of the impact on the ground, even though they are conducting longer tours at the other venues.

OS said that the poor summer hadn't helped the ground conditions on the heath, but confirmed that the production was working with Greenwich council regarding reinstatement costs.

BH shared a statement from Parks, which highlighted that though there had been some torrential rain over the weekend when ITNGL were coming off the site, they still felt that the grass would recover naturally. At present the Parks team are unable to get on site due to the rain but the remedial works are set to start in the week beginning 25th July and would last for two to three days. Parks advised that they would also provisionally grant ITNGL permission to return to the heath in May 2017, but did suggest that attending slightly later in the year would be better.

KB asked the group for comments; HR said that since the group didn't know which other event applications were coming in, this made it difficult to compare. TB felt the timing of ITNGL felt very fixed, with no flexibility. KB said that both councils are currently receiving event applications that they would need to look at alongside other events such as fairs, fireworks and the London Marathon.

GB said that ITNGL was scheduled to take place fairly close to next year's London Marathon; HR said the FF had followed this year's ITNGL quite quickly; and the feedback she had received was that some people felt it had not been well publicised .

KB enquired whether there would be a window of recovery for the heath, since ITNGL and FF were both held quite close together; BH advised that he did not have this information in the current report, just information regarding the exceptional amount of rain.

BH asked OS if there were any other measures the production could put in place in order to minimise the weather issues. OS said ITNGL could possibly lay more track way but that this would also lead to a larger area of grass being covered for a longer period. OS confirmed that he would need to consult further, since the move schedule from one venue to the next is tight. BH said that the timing of the remediation could be looked at and quicker response times could be factored in as contingency terms.

OS enquired what the risks might be surrounding getting a yes decision in principle now and a final decision in October.

KB said that hypothetically, if the group felt that another event should be there instead of ITNGL, then this would be the key risk, adding that a competing event hoping to be on at the same time would be a key reason for receiving a non-approval decision.

BH said that from a Greenwich perspective, there is no other event tabled into that slot next year. KB said that the group could receive an event offer in September, for example. KB thanked OS for attending the meeting; he confirmed that the group would share their comments and feedback with BH, and that ITNGL would be notified in due course.

OS thanked all at the meeting and left the room.

KB reiterated that the only negative aspect surrounding ITNGL had been the impact on the heath. However, HR reminded the group that they had previously agreed not to hold such long events on the heath. Jane Hendry (JH) confirmed that ITNGL was 90 days long, which was a huge chunk of time. DW agreed that smaller events were not the issue, whereas larger events held cheek by jowl did have an impact.

KB noted that the group had previously shared with the production company their preference for this event to be held later in the year, and that this point should again be raised when confirming any events for future years, with no delay to the remedial works. TB felt there was a need to share this information with OS now, in regard to the productions 2018 planning and KB agreed.

SB raised that in the past tracking and reinforcement had been laid, and wanted to know if this was working.

KB stated that ITNGL should revisit the recanting plan to see if there is more mitigation work which could be done in the event of poor weather.

Action: BH agreed to produce a feedback paper about the 'Foodies Festival'.

Action: BH confirmed he would request a statement from ITNGL regarding mitigation around events being held in poor weather.

5. Blackheath Events Policy update

KB asked Mike Norton (MN) to talk the group through the current policy. MN made the following comments:-

- a) There had been many revisions
- b) Additions had been added, with a key one being limiting the use of the heath and how to prevent Blackheath from solely becoming an event heath for the whole summer.
- c) Noise and treating the whole of Blackheath as a single site for noise purposes.
- d) Confirmation that the maximum number for attendees at Lewisham events is 5000. This was previously raised to 10000, but has now been reset to the lower figure.

KB confirmed that only one commercial and one music festival per year gain agreement to be held on the heath.

KB urged those that had not been involved in the drafting of the document to share their comments, adding that he would meet with council representatives once the document had been agreed, to make the case for the way forward.

KB confirmed the agreement would be for Greenwich to remain as the license holder, but also maintain a license per event. JH felt this was quite an expensive way of doing things, since the license that events receive should have all the compliance issues within them. JH felt this would save on having to complete separate licences for each event.

KB stated that with regard to this point, the drafting and wording of the Lewisham document would therefore need to change. KB said that it made sense for acts to attend a BJWP meeting the first time they applied for a premises event license but not for on-going/repeat applications. JH agreed here, highlighting the cost implications and council capacity issues in maintaining this process.

TB queried whether these changes now suggest that the BJWP has decision-making powers; KB agreed that this was an issue both councils needed to think about.

KB confirmed that the draft document would be left as is at this stage. However it would be up to both councils in question to confirm they were happy with the wording of the premises license paragraph and also confirm the status of this group (for example, as advisory or decision-making).

MK said that the premises license wording should not be too rigid, since both councils and applicants could benefit from the flexibility here. MK also said he felt the practicalities of visiting the heath by public transport only were limited, therefore the group may want to rethink with regard to suggestions around restricting private transport access.

With regard to paragraph 4.2 about limiting the use of the heath, MK felt that the BWJP group had a duty to a wider set of stakeholders, and so internal council colleagues should be notified of members' views and intentions beforehand.

HR said that people come to Blackheath to walk, play and share family time, reminding all that though events bring people to the heath, the heath is also an attraction of itself. HR added that people like green open spaces not just tents, therefore there is a need to maintain some balance.

KB confirmed the draft document would be sent to both councils for key points to be reviewed and noted.

MK suggested that the early October approval date for this document should be kept to, since all ward councillors would be keen to see the final document.

NP reminded the group that this was still a Lewisham document at this stage, therefore it might be difficult to impose upon Greenwich council.

KB stated that historically Greenwich didn't have a Blackheath events policy and so were minded to be guided by Lewisham policy. Now both councils should review, share and feedback at the next meeting, to add to the final draft. KB confirmed that he would send the document to cabinet members and officers from both councils.

Action: KB to send the draft document to cabinet members and officers from both councils. KB to forward a copy of the sent email to the BJWP.

6. 2016 Community Projects update

(i). VAT - SB stated that the VAT was not clear in this regard; KB confirmed that this would depend upon who had commissioned the work. NP confirmed current costs were £5000 (£3300 for cost of survey, plus VAT).

(ii). Storyboards – Costs had been received from Glendale regarding the installation, and these showed a saving of over £100 per board.

(iii) Resident Plaque – GB stated that a resident had enquired about putting a small plaque out on Heath Bench; all members agreed this could go ahead.

HR advised that the Agin Court fund had some money left over and requested the option of erecting two to three benches in the Greenwich area.

Action: BJWP members agreed to review meeting minutes from earlier months, in order to confirm the actual storyboard costs.

Action: HR to check with Greenwich council to see if benches can be placed in Agin Court; KB confirmed that he would be happy for a bench to be added to the Lewisham side of the heath.

Action: HR to discuss further with GB regarding the Glendale installation.

7. Any Other Business

(i) Constitution – It was agreed that views on this would be sought in the next BJWP meeting, with approval of the document taking place at a public meeting next year.

(ii) Members List – KB asked members to take away the list circulated in the meeting, and send feedback via email as to who they feel should be on the official list.

KB reminded the group that the BJWP minutes are posted to the website once they have been approved.

Next Meeting: 20th September 2016

Events Meeting: 18th October 2016
