

**Blackheath Joint Working Party
25th September 2014, 7.30pm**

Age Exchange, Blackheath

Attendees:

Cllr Kevin Bonavia	Blackheath Ward Member (LBL)	(Chair)
Justine Roberts	LBL	(Minutes)
Philip Craig	Greenwich Society	
Anna Townend	Greenwich Environment Forum	
Mike Norton	Westcombe Society	
Steve Ragdale	RBG	
Shirley Broughton	Westcombe Society	
Barbara Morris	Westcombe Society	
David Walker	Blackheath Society	
Helen Reeves	Blackheath Society	
Martin Hyde	LBL	

1. Apologies And Introductions

Apologies were received from Cllr Matthew Pennycock, Cllr Amanda de Ryk, Cllr Paul Morrissey, Cllr Gareth Siddorn, Cllr Aidan Smith, Margaret Dinkeldein, Sue Corlett, Rob Widdicombe and Tony Butler.

Justine Roberts (LBL) was introduced as the minute taker for the evening.

2. Minutes of last meeting (15th July)

- i. Accuracy: Agreed
- ii. Matters Arising: None

3. Arrangements for Review of OnBlackheath Festival

MH provided an overview of the council's plan to review the OnBlackheath festival. He provided information to the group in relation to attendance numbers at the event and complaints received. The group requested that this detailed breakdown is provided to members of the BJWP.

MH said that he attended on both days of the event to monitor activity. KB said he also attended the event. Officers from Greenwich and Lewisham's Green Scene and Environmental Health services attended onsite meetings with event organisers at various points and Vanguardia were in attendance to monitor noise levels.

MH said that over the weekend, winds were in a north easterly direction which was positive for noise impact in most areas of Blackheath. DW asked whether this meant that there was a greater impact for residents in the Dartmouth Hill area. BM said she had reports that bass was audible inside properties on Dartmouth Hill. MH said that although the noise remained well within the permitted 70 decibels throughout the festival, there was a lot of bass from the red tent, which would

have been audible for residents of The Orchard and Mounts Pond Road. MH said the location of this tent could be reviewed for future events.

MH said that there had been concerns that car parking would be a problem at the event but that in fact this was not a problem and he was able to park easily on Watt Tyler road during the festival. MH said that arrangements had been put in place with stewards to ensure that roads which were closed remained accessible to residents but said that one complaint had been received from a resident who was prevented from accessing a local road on Sunday evening.

MH discussed the rerouting of the 380 bus and the replacement shuttle bus which was put in place by the event organisers. MH reported that there had only been 27 passenger journeys on the bus. He said that the signage was not prominent enough which may explain why it was underutilised.

SB asked about the impact of the event on the heath and acid grassland. MH said that photos had been taken before and after the event and will be taken again a week later for comparison. MH said that although some areas were dry and dusty immediately following the event, the grass was generally repairing well with no significant damage. MH also said that the areas of acid grassland were largely untouched by the festival with only one media tent in these areas.

KB asked the group for their feedback on the event. PC said that although he could hear noise from the event outdoors but not indoors. DW said that Blackheath Society's website has a survey to capture feedback on the event. At the time of the meeting there were 622 completed survey returns. HR said that 40% of the returns were from people who attended the event, and that people who attended had a good time. The group agreed that the event had been very accessible to families. HR said that the group would prepare a preliminary report on the survey returns for 8th October when the survey will close.

ACTION: BJWP secretary to circulate the noise map and breakdown of attendance and complaints with the minutes.

ACTION: Final results of BJWP/Blackheath Society survey to be provided to Kevin Sheehan and meeting with him to be scheduled for discussion.

4. Review of Blackheath Events Policy (Scope, Timetable & Implications)

MH said that the events policy review process would commence following the ESAG meeting scheduled for 1st October and that the Blackheath Society's survey results would feed into this. MH also informed the group that two pre-application questionnaires had been received from the Jimmy Mizen Foundation (for 1st and 2nd August 2015) and On Blackheath (for 12th and 13th September 2015). MH told the group that the pre-applications were largely the same as last year. However, the group discussed the potential increase in the size of the event as the pre-application questionnaire is for an event of up to 25,000 people on both days.

KB asked that MH provide electric copies of the applications and that these are circulated with the minutes. KB asked BJWP members to review the applications in advance of the meeting on 20th November so that the meeting time can be used to focus on the collective views of the group. The group asked MH to arrange for both organisations to come and present proposals at the November meeting.

The group discussed the broader review of the Blackheath events policy, the results of which are scheduled to be presented to Mayor and Cabinet in January 2015. KB said that he would like the BJWP to be involved in the process of reviewing this policy.

SB asked whether the policy sets a limit on the number of events on the heath. MH said that it did not and that the earlier advice of Lewisham Council's legal department was that a limit should not be set. KB said that councillors and Kevin Sheehan would not be adverse to a proposal to put a limit on events but consideration would need to be made as to what the appropriate limit would be. DW said that he felt the group should be proposing a limit. HR asked whether the group might want to propose a slightly different approach for charitable vs commercial events.

PC said that he was unclear as to what the financial incentive was for the authority in relation to events of this type given the high costs incurred for staffing to manage the application and event process. KB explained that the licences were £4,000 for the first licence and £2,000 for subsequent licences. MH said that Glendale received £30,000 for the event, £15,000 of which will be used to reduce local authority contract costs and £15,000 of which will be reinvested back into the heath. KB said that although staff costs were high for this first event, he thinks that they will be reduced in future years once the process is established. HR said that she thinks the licensing and other charges made to organisations hosting events on Clapham Common are much higher and that there is a strong belief that Lewisham does not charge enough.

SB said that she thinks the policy should include a requirement that the land is surveyed before and after every event to assess the impact on the grass and wildlife. AT suggested that Lewisham Council looks at the events policy covering the royal parks given their greater experience of hosting large scale events.

The group discussed whether Greenwich had agreed the policy. MH and SR said that they did not think Greenwich had actually ratified the policy.

KB asked that the policy be circulated to members in advance of the next meeting and for BJWP members to bring comments to the meeting on 20th November so that the meeting could be used to agree a consensus.

MH asked the group to avoid small changes to wording in their recommendations, he also said that if radical changes to the policy were proposed then this would need to go to full public consultation which would take much longer.

ACTION: BJWP secretary to circulate the pre-application questionnaires to the group. BJWP members to review the content of these questionnaires in advance of the meeting on 20th November.

ACTION: BJWP secretary to circulate events policy

ACTION: MH to invite the Jimmy Mizen Foundation and OnBlackheath to attend the BJWP on 20th November.

5. Autumn 'Big Tidy Up' (Proposed Date of 18th October)

MH asked the group whether they would be interested in holding a Blackheath tidy up event on 18th October 2014. SR confirmed that Lee Beasley is happy to support the event from Greenwich Council. The group agreed that they would like to support the event.

MH said that the group would meet At Talbot Place Car Park on Saturday 18th October from 10am to 12 noon. He asked the group to promote the event and bring sturdy shoes and gloves. Lewisham council will provide bags and litter pickers.

ACTION: MH to circulate details of the tidy up to BJWP. Members to promote the event via their societies.

6. Improvements to the Heath (from available funding)

MH asked the group for views on how funding for projects to improve the heath could be used. MH said he had received request for bollards at St Germans Place, work on the Prince of Wales pond and report on the condition of the heath. MH said that cost for the St Germans Place project is likely to be high and use most of the funding available. SB said that the contractor used for phase one of the work to the Prince of Wales pond had indicated that he could come back to do further work.

KB said that the group should delay making a decision on how to allocate the funding until the public meeting in February. MH suggested that the group come up with a set of options for this meeting and these can be put into a short PowerPoint presentation to put to the vote at the public meeting in February. KB asked that the January meeting of the BJWP is used to finalise these options.

ACTION: BJWP members to gather options for projects and funding required. BJWP secretary to ensure that planning for the presentation and the public meeting is included on the January agenda.

7. Any Other Business

MH informed the group that the proposal to continue the Green chain walks signs across the heath to Greenwich had been resurrected and that the signs had already been made. MH said that Mark Budd the Green chain officer may wish to speak to the group at a future meeting.

MH told the group that Lewisham Council would be holding a parks summit on 25th October from 10am-12 noon in the Civic Suite in Catford. He explained that the meeting would be used to discuss forthcoming cuts to the parks budget. MH said that the chairs of the friends groups and one additional representative per group were invited to attend.

KB outlined the challenging savings targets facing the council as a result of budget reductions imposed by central government. He explained that the council will need to reduce spend by £1 in every £3 spent. Savings proposals have been put forward to members relating to green space in the borough. KB asked that the link to the savings proposals is included with the minutes. KB also encouraged members to take part in the council's big budget challenge which is accessible from the council's website.

BM told the Working Party about the nature conservation group which has been operating informally via email. She presented a paper including agenda items which the group recommends for forthcoming BJWP meetings, plus a list of fundable projects relating to nature conservation on Blackheath. KB agreed that a nature conservation update should be included as the first item on each BJWP agenda, and asked the Nature Conservation Group to prepare and circulate a paper updating members on nature conservation matters in advance of each meeting. It is expected that there will only be a brief discussion unless specific issues are raised as a result of this paper. On an annual basis a longer discussion on nature conservation will be scheduled at a BJWP meeting, where nature conservation will be the main item on the agenda. KB also asked that the five projects identified by the nature conservation sub-group be included amongst the projects to be considered for funding at the public meeting in February.

MN raised the issue of fencing for events on the heath. He said that he thought that there was often too much fencing which was too high and put up earlier than required. The fencing can disrupt

pathways used by runners. SR confirmed that Lee Beasley is happy to request that fencing be moved back 2-3 meters to free up pathways but said that it is difficult to reduce timeframes because fencing can take some time to put up. MN gave the example of fencing around the car park which he said was unnecessary. He also gave the example of the tall ships regatta which did not have fencing and said that the approach was inconsistent. The group agreed that fencing should only be used when it was absolutely necessary to ensure security and/or safety.

PC said that he had been made aware of an incident relating to parking by the tea hut during which cars were parked on both sides meaning that no cars could pass. MH said there were yellow lines already in place and that is was an enforcement issue.

KB reminded the group that the fireworks on Blackheath would be taking place on 1st November. He said that he hoped that this would not be the last fireworks event but that funding the event was becoming more difficult as budgets are reduced. He told the group that L&Q were providing some sponsorship for the event and that the council is already collecting donations online and is looking for volunteers to collect donations on the night. He asked that the groups circulate the link to the donations site and ask for volunteers to get in contact with Kellie Blake.

ACTION: The BJWP are asked to nominate attendees for the Park Summit on 25th October

ACTION: BJWP secretary to circulate a link to savings proposals

ACTION: BJWP secretary to add an item on nature conservation to the start of all future BJWP meetings

ACTION: BJWP secretary to circulate a link to the Blackheath Fireworks donations page and provide contact details for Kellie Blake. BJWP members to publicise the link and request for volunteers via their societies.

8. Date of the next meeting

20th November 2014, Age Exchange Blackheath, 7.30pm