

Blackheath Joint Working Party (BJWP) Meeting Minutes

Meeting 7pm, Thursday 21st September 2021

Venue: Zoom online meeting

Attendees

Cllr Kevin Bonavia (Chair)	London Borough of Lewisham
Sacha Bright (mins)	BJWP Administration
Joe Beale	Nature Conservation Group
Vince Buchanan	London Borough of Lewisham
Tony Butler	Friends of Greenwich Park
Sue Corlett	Hare & Billet Action Group
Meg Dinkeldein	Tidy Blackheath Group
Cllr Leo Fletcher	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Cllr Mariam Lolavar	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Mike Norton	Westcombe Society
Helen Reeves	Blackheath Society
Janine Whittaker	Events, Royal Borough of Greenwich

1. Apologies

- 1.1. Apologies from . Cllr Geoff Brighty- Royal Borough of Greenwich, Philip Craig- Greenwich Society
Gemma Marston - Glendale Services.

2. Minutes of 13 May 2021 and matters arising

- 2.1. **Larger litter bins on Blackheath:** the last meeting had been unable to deal with this as the possible designs had not been available. Helen apologised as she had not yet circulated the necessary information. Pictures and details of possible bins were then forwarded to Sacha who shared her screen with the meeting. The meeting was unanimous in selecting the Olympic double-sided bins to be coloured dark green with either the Lewisham or BJWP logo. These should be placed where it had been found necessary to place large temporary bins during the summer. Meg will contact Glendale to find out exactly how much each bin will cost including installation.
- 2.2. **Forries education:** the meeting asked if any children's parties had actually taken place since the last meeting. Vince was not aware of any such events.
- 2.3. **Soil erosion in Eliot Pits:** Vince is not aware of any concerns by Lewisham officers or by Glendale.
- 2.4. **Litter following events on Circus Field:** Leo said that additional staff were employed for the most recent event following problems the time before.
- 2.5. **The Hare and Billet Pond group:** there was no information available about the funding application for "web hosting".
- 2.6. **Missing gazebos:** The Blackheath Society have asked Lewisham and Glendale to pursue an insurance claim for the missing gazebos purchased with charitable money for Blackheath Village Day and stored at Talbot Place. Vince said he thought it unlikely that a claim could be made. Sacha will forward Liz Wright's notes to Lewisham Councillors on this issue to Vince.

3. Planting Trees on the Heath

- 3.1 Joe Beale presented a statement on behalf of the Nature Conservation Group

- 3.2 The group is concerned about some local proposals to plant more trees on the Heath. If these are the wrong trees, they can affect the habitat of birds and insects. There is general agreement that new trees do enhance the built environment in residential areas but not on the Heath. Vince agreed on the basis of ecology and also stressed that un-approved planting on the Heath would be illegal and Lewisham would not normally agree.
- 3.3 Helen had intended to raise this issue under AOB. Earlier in the year, four new trees had appeared on Mounts Pond Road. There had been concern that this could be related to a recent bid to have avenues of trees across the Heath. It had emerged that a 2020-2021 grant had been received by the charity 'Street Trees for Living' and that these trees had been planted with money remaining at the end of the year. It was agreed that in future, any proposal should be referred to BJWP. Tony asked if the new trees would remain and Vince confirmed that they would.
- 3.4 Joe stressed the importance of preserving the naturally wooded areas on the edges of the Heath and Vince confirmed that Lewisham supports that view.

4 Blackheath Joint Events Policy Review.

- 4.1 As Kevin had briefly to attend another meeting, Mariam took the chair. Mariam stated that, as it is several years since the policy was last reviewed, Greenwich would like to propose more flexibility, particularly regarding late applications for new events. It was agreed that the October planning date should stand as far as possible and that when late applications occur, the BJWP will always be consulted.
- 4.2 Both councils agree the no parking rule for events. Tony reported a problem with increased parking in Greenwich Park and asked that this should not be encouraged by promoters.
- 4.3 The proposed amended version of the policy provides for a maximum of two high attendance two-day events on each side of the Heath rather than the previous maximum of two events a year in total. Janine was asked if it is intended to double the possible maximum. This was confirmed with the observation that no such event has ever, so far, taken place on the Greenwich side of the Heath.
- 4.4 Regarding the continuing maximum of 90 days events on the Heath for each council, Mike reminded the meeting that the amenity societies had always recommended a maximum of 90 days in total but that this had been changed without notice at the last minute during the previous negotiations.
- 4.5 Meg asked for clarification that the 90 days include setting up etc. Janine confirmed that this is the case. The Showmen's Guild (funfairs) have been given a maximum of 60 days in total which is why they have not yet decided on a Christmas event. Meg reminded the meeting that serious damage had been caused to the Heath by previous Christmas events.

Mike wondered if it would be better to hold two events at once to reduce the times the Heath is occupied for commercial use. Janine stated that Greenwich tries to avoid a clash with Lewisham events. Mariam reminded the meeting that many residents value the events on the Heath and that this is a matter of balance.

Kevin returned and suggested that all concerns which have been expressed should be reported back to the councils to be considered in future decisions.

Lewisham: As councils are likely to experience even further cuts in the foreseeable future, the famous annual fireworks will not be possible this year unless a sponsor is found. Lewisham is seeking other ways to fund the event in 2022.

Other events will be a half-term funfair on 21st October, the Marathon on 3rd October and the Kite Day and children's funfair on 9-10th October.

It was agreed that the next meeting in October/November would be the annual events meeting. Sacha will alert Janine and Gemma.

5 Blackheath Tea Hut

5.1 Kevin had been surprised to see the new Tea Hut on the Heath and he was not aware of any planning application. Vince confirmed that he was in the same position.

5.2 Regarding the bid to move to the building North of the A2, Mariam told the meeting that the delay has been caused by recent re-organisation of the Crown Estate. Helen confirmed that, on top of a bad year personally, the owners of the Tea Hut were frustrated by the lack of progress and needed to re-start their business on the basis of their original licence. Kevin was concerned that the BJWP had not been consulted and he will check with the Lewisham planning and the licencing departments to see if any application has been made.

6. OnBlackheath Fund

6.1 After many reminders, £10,500 has now been received from OnBlackheath Ltd. from the 2019 Festival. The new owners of the business, Festival Republic, still owe us £4.500. Vince will chase his contact.

6.2 New applications for funding: a general invitation needs to be published inviting bids for new projects

6.3 Vince reported that the duck islands on the Prince of Wales Pond need to be repaired.

6.4 Kevin reported that there are new requests for wooden posts on the edges of the Heath, some to be privately funded. Meg suggested that any new posts should be shorter than those recent installed.

6.5 The Blackheath Society are proposing the completion of the bunds around the Heath, to be dealt with as a specific project. Kevin suggested that this could be the subject of a separate meeting for interested parties to discuss how this could be achieved, costs, maintenance etc. Vince agreed to arrange the necessary meeting.

6.6 Kevin proposed that any further bids should be invited for the public meeting in the Spring of 2022.

6.7 Helen agreed to check the amount of money available for allocation

7. AOB

- 7.1 Mariam asked about the recent algae on the Prince of Wales Pond which has been the subject of considerable concern on local social media. Is it the type of algae which is dangerous to dogs? Vince will seek identification of the algae and issue a statement.
- 7.2 Concern was expressed again about the wrong food being distributed to the wildfowl. Sue reported that one local resident is regularly distributing large quantities of bread at all ponds on the Heath. She has been asked repeatedly to stop.
- 7.3 Queries were raised about the Extinction Rebellion encampment on the Heath. Vince confirmed that there had been no application and no permission had been granted. The campers had, however, treated the area with respect, had cleaned up all refuse and they have offered £500 as thanks. Lewisham did not think it appropriate to accept and have suggested the money is offered to local charities. Helen was concerned that this would be passing a difficult decision to others to resolve. There was concern that taking no action on this occasion would establish a precedent for the future.

8 Next meeting

- 8.1 As half term falls at the end of October, the meeting to agree events for 2022 as well as a general agenda will be held in the first week of November. Thursday 4th November was suggested.
- 8.2 The next public meeting will be in February 2022, in person, COVID permitting.
- 8.3 The usual committee meeting will also be held in January 2022.

The meeting ended at 9.15 pm.