

# Blackheath Joint Working Party (BJWP) Public Meeting Minutes

**13<sup>th</sup> February 2018**

**Venue: Bakehouse theatre, Blackheath**

## **1. Introduction**

Cllr Kevin Bonavia (KB) opened the meeting by welcoming attendees to the annual public BJWP meeting. This meeting is used as an opportunity to let people know what activity has been taking place at BJWP meetings, and to give the public an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the OnBlackheath Community fund proposals.

KB explained that BJWP was set up when the Greater London Council was disbanded in 1986. The joint-working party is responsible for looking at maintenance and events plans for Blackheath. Both the Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG) and London Borough of Lewisham (LBL) are represented by councillors and there is also several amenity societies represented. The group meet 5 – 6 times a year. The BJWP also organises a “tidy the heath” event twice a year.

In recent years the group has been able to allocate additional funding received from OnBlackheath Festival. This £15,000 is held by Glendales (the Blackheath green maintenance company) and allocated to various projects by the BJWP.

KB introduced the other Councillors that were present – Cllr Amanda de Ryk (LBL), Cllr Meboob Khan, and Cllr Aidan Smith.

## **2. Update on OnBlackheath Community fund projects 2017**

KB introduced the item as a look back at the projects that had been supported by the OnBlackheath Community Fund in 2017.

### ***a) Bunds for the Heath Boundary – Nick Pond (NP)***

NP started by explaining what a bund was; an embankment with a flower bed embedded in it which is designed to prevent cars from parking on the heath. Several bunds had already been built around the heath. In 2017 as part of the OnBlackheath Community fund £2000 had been allocated to build more bunds around Prince Charles Road. Glendales were still working on the best place to locate them so at this point, none have been built. The money allocated to building bunds has therefore been rolled over to 2018.

The following points were discussed in relation to the bunds:

- A member of the public asked why in the bunds that had previously been built the wild flowers seemed to wane after the first couple of years. NP responded that was the nature of the bund as it is freshly seeded in the first year the wild flowers seem to do their best. In the second and third years the flowers die back a little bit. Glendales only maintain the bunds, and do not reseed them every year. The member of the public asked if they could scatter wild seeds, so that the bunds will continue to look at their best. KB said that if they wanted to they could, but it would be best to make sure that

NP and Glendales are aware of what the member of the public wants to seeds so that there isn't any confusion, and inadvertent damage caused to the heath or its habitat. KB noted that all of the projects on the OnBlackheath Community Fund are added extras, and "nice to have" features. The basic maintenance of the Lewisham side of Blackheath already costs £350,000, so the continual reseeding of the bunds is not necessarily a priority.

***b) Maintenance of pond – Nick Pond/ Eugene Kirk (EK)***

NP said that as part of the OnBlackheath Community fund each year £500 was contributed to for volunteers to use on the maintenance of the Hare and Billet pond. Over the years this money had been put towards:

- Public liability insurance for volunteers,
- Planting of pond and marginal plants and shrubs.
- Installing a "frogger" (a cross between a logger and a frog habitat)
- Pollarding of several trees

EK a volunteer at the Hare and Billet pond thanked KB and NP for their help and support for the volunteers. EK noted that there was day-to-day maintenance and litter picking that took a lot of their volunteering time. EK suggested the following ideas for how the work that volunteers on the Blackheath might be supported:

- Promotion of volunteers projects (via BJWP, amenity societies etc.)
- Creation of a fund which will be able to provide some basic supplies for volunteers (clothing, equipment etc.)
- Use of volunteer work around Blackheath as part of Community Service for offenders

A member of the public agreed that it would be a great idea to promote the work that volunteers do around the heath, particularly at schools. KB said the BJWP would look into the best mechanism for promoting the work of the volunteers.

***c) Wild Fowl Signage – Shirley Broughton (SB)***

KB introduced the item by explaining that the Blackheath Nature Conservation Group regularly provide updates to the BJWP about the issues relating to the natural habitat of Blackheath.

SB explained that £1600 had been provided to create and instate signs which explained what you can, and can't feed wild fowl. This had been done in particular because people continue to feed the wild fowl bread which is very bad for them. The signs explain what to feed the birds and why people should do this. SB noted that the signs had been deliver to budget and on time.

A member of the public asked whether the Model Powered Boating Club still used the Prince of Wales pond, as this has caused stress and damage to wild fowl in the past. The following discussion points were noted:

- KB said that there are already Bye laws that protect the Heath and motorised vehicles were forbidden.
- One member of public said that the pond had been designed as a model boating (motorised and sail) pond, and it's only in the last 10 -15 years that it hasn't been used as such.

- SB noted that model sail boats could still be used on the Prince of Wales pond, and the pond is set up allow to allow space for the boating without interfering too much with the wild fowl.
- One member of the public noted that the use of the ponds have varied over the years.
- Another member of public present at the meeting noted that the proliferation of wild fowl is nice but they do produce a lot of faeces around the area, which can impact the pleasantness of the heath. SB asked if there was something that Glendales could do to wash it away.

#### ***d) Nature walks and Storyboards – Dame Helen Reeves (HR)***

HR explained that she had been inspired by a series of leaflets outlining river walks in Lewisham, and therefore applied to the OnBlackheath Community fund for 2 nature walk leaflets to guide people around Blackheath. They have been designed and published by Creekside Discovery Centre.

The storyboards have been in progress for the past 4 years with bits of funding. The idea started with one storyboard to provide some history about Blackheath, however it didn't seem right to put all of the history of Blackheath onto one storyboard so it was decided that there should be a few more – in the end a number total of 7 was agreed.

- 4 x have been supported by Lewisham
- 1 x by RBG Chair
- 1 x Supported by Agincourt 600 fund

They are all due to be revealed on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April at a ceremony which will feature entertainment from Trinity Laban. KB thanked HR for her effort on bringing both projects to fruition, and looked forward to the event.

A member of the public asked how events such as the one described are advertised. KB and other members of the BJWP answered that the following channels are often used:

- Amenity societies
- Westcombe News
- Lewisham Website
- Posters
- Lewisham Life publication
- Lewisham Life e-newsletter
- Local Assemblies (next meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> February at the Parkside Community Centre)
- Update on community projects 2017

### **3. OnBlackheath Community Fund Projects 2018**

KB introduced the item explaining that the following proposals had been put forward and provisionally agreed to be funded by the OnBlackheath community fund in 2018.

#### ***a) Balmoral bins***

NP explained that £2400 is being put forwards to install six 90-litre Balmoral bins. The bins are lidded so this prevents animals from getting in and spreading the rubbish across the heath, which can happen with the current bins.

### ***b) Replacement of trees***

HR explained that at the beginning of last year there was a tree survey of Blackheath (something that takes place every 4 years). As part of the tree survey several dead and diseased trees were removed. Despite the fact that consultation is not needed for the removal of dead or diseased trees several local residents were very upset about the removal. HR said that £1000 has been allocated for the replacement of the 4 trees that were removed after the last survey. The following points were discussed:

- A member of public asked what type of trees are being replaced. NP said that he wasn't sure but would be able to find out, and would inform BJWP.

### ***c) Reinstatement of timber bollards on the west side of All Saints' Drive and along Duke Humphrey road***

KB explained that initially this proposal had included Portable toilets to prevent people urinating around the heath, particularly in the area around Duke Humphreys Road, and All Saints' Drive. The cost of maintaining portable toilets would have been too expensive and therefore this component was removed from the proposal leaving just the re-instatement of timber bollards.

NP explained that the cost of a bollard and installation was £100 per bollard so this would allow approximately 40 bollards. If a bollard was placed every 1.5m this would allow a total distance of 60m. Glendales will be carrying out a site visit to determine where the most effective points to install the bollards are.

### ***d) Planters and Horse troughs Prince Charles Road***

HR explained that the proposal was for £1000 to provide planters and horse troughs with flowers and greenery around Blackheath Village. A group of 6 keen gardeners had got together to work on the project, and they had already made great progress in clearing the triangle of land between Montpellier Row, Montpellier Vale and Royal Parade. The following points were discussed.

- A member of the public noted that there hadn't been any hanging baskets in Blackheath Village since the Olympics and this was a shame. It seemed lots of other villages (e.g. Greenwich) had hanging baskets. KB said that there are several factors which mean that extras like hanging baskets are no longer necessary viable. One of the reasons was that the change and churn of businesses in the village means that they are less likely to club together to do something like that. On top of that Lewisham Council's budget has been dramatically reduced over the last 5 years, and there were other priorities such as social services. HR added that there are some businesses which are already maintaining nice flower baskets outside their businesses, so it might be possible to encourage others to do the same.
- One member of public made the general point that all the proposals were for projects on the Lewisham side, and this seemed a little bit arbitrary especially as Greenwich residents were still affected by the disruption from OnBlackheath. KB said that this was partly due to how the contract was negotiated when the fund was first started, but agreed that it is slightly arbitrary. On the other hand all the projects will benefit users of heath, as the whole heath is open to everyone regardless of where they are from.

## 4. Events Planner 2018

### ***a) Greenwich side events***

Janine Whitaker (JW) (events programme manager from RBG) explained that there were going to be less events on the Greenwich side of Blackheath this year. This is due to a change in events policy which means that there will be no visitor parking on the heath during events. This will result in a significant reduction in income that is generated from the events, meaning that it is likely that there will be a gap on the income target for events this year..

JW stated that she is going on maternity leave so will not be the person who will be generating new events. As it stands the only events that are taking place on the Greenwich side of Blackheath are

- Funfair
- London Marathon

#### **b) Lewisham side events**

JW noted that the events planner that was part of this meeting's papers did not include the Greenwich events should be added.

**Action: Gemma Buttel to add Royal Borough of Greenwich events to planner and then recirculate it with next meetings papers.**

KB noted that there was one new event on Blackheath this year – *Lets' dance for kids*. It will be taking place July 28<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> at Church field.

KB also said that the annual Fireworks is still going ahead although it is funded mainly by Lewisham Council and sponsorship this year, with a small contribution from RBG

OnBlackheath is likely to be scaled back this year, with a smaller number of tickets going on sale. This could potentially mean that the OnBlackheath Community Fund money could stop, but this has not been confirmed yet. It has also been agreed that Whitefield's Mount will not be used.

The following points were made during a discussion around the Events programme:

- One member of public welcomed the prospect of a less heavy events programme compared to last year. KB said that the Event Policy sets out the limit, of the events that take place and the BJWP work programme has an annual meeting in October which looks at all of the potential events for the coming year in the round.

#### 5. A.O.B

The following issues were discussed as other business.

- A member of public raised the issues of damage to the Heath around the Shooters Hill area due to damage by HGVs driving onto, and parking on Blackheath. It was agreed that JW would liaise with Highways at the RBG to see if there could be something done to protect this area.
- James Hazlerigg-Kinlay introduced himself as the founder of the Forries Education which runs Forest School events on Blackheath. He wanted to let the BJWP know that he has been running both school age and pre-school forest schools , and they have been fairly successful, though less busy in the winter.
- KB said that there is the potential to expand the Cycle path (in the form of a Quietway) provision through Blackheath as part of the Mayor of London's promotion of cycling in London. The current proposals are being discussed between the Mayor of London and

the freeholders of the land at Blackheath. Once those discussions have finished then respective councils and the BJWP will be in a position to consult on the proposals.

- Cllr Amanda de Ryk said that a second consultation is in place around the future of Blackheath Changing rooms. Following an initial consultation (Jan-Apr 2016) a draft brief on the future of Blackheath Changing Rooms has been developed. This second consultation aims to develop this further to help establish an architectural brief for the site. Amanda highlighted that there will be more consultation to come, and encouraged anyone who is interested to log onto <https://lewisham-consult.objective.co.uk/portal> and take part. The deadline has been extended to 16<sup>th</sup> March 2018.
- Another member of public asked if the minutes would be going online. KB said that there has been some difficulty getting the minutes online in the past hence why they are not completely up-to-date, but he has spoken to an officer at LBL and this is being addressed.