

**Minutes of a Meeting of The Greenham and Crookham Commons Commission**  
**Held at 7.00pm on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at the Greenham Common Tower**

<b>Commissioners</b>	Chris Austin (Commoner), Derek Cutt (Commoner), Billy Drummond (WBC), Sue Ellis (WBHF & Chair of the Commission), Tony Ferguson (Greenham Trust), Frank Huxtable (Commoner), Simon Pike (Thatcham TC), Nicole Rorie (Commoner)
<b>WBDC Appointed Officer</b>	Paul Hendry (WBC),
<b>Advisors</b>	Tom Hayward (BBOWT),

**Also present:** Trevor Goodall (New Life); Mark Hayes (Run Committee); Jeff Bird (ParkRun).

**Secretary:** Kim Lloyd, (Greenham PC Clerk)

**Apologies:** Claudia Sievers (Commoner), Michael Williams (Commoner) Tony Vickers, (Mid & West Berks Access Forum) Julian Swift-Hook (Greenham PC), Roger Hunnerman (NTC), John Thorogood (Commoner), Erik Pattendon (WBDC)

	<b><u>Action</u></b>
<p><b>2 PUBLIC SESSION</b></p> <p>No members of the public were present and Paul Hendry was not aware of any public questions.</p> <p><b>3 APOLOGIES</b></p> <p>Apologies had been received from the above.</p> <p><b>4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b></p> <p>Tony Ferguson declared a non-preferential interest as a representative of Greenham Trust.</p> <p><b>5 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING.</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of 2<sup>nd</sup> May were <b>APPROVED</b>.</p> <p>i) <u>Half Marathon Event Proposals (TH and Mark Hayes)</u></p> <p>Tom Hayward reminded the meeting, for the benefit of newcomers, that the Commission needs to approve larger events taking place on the Commons. Mark Hayes explained that New Life are planning a charity run which they hope to hold on the Commons on the last Sunday in February 2024 – final numbers not yet known. While this is</p>	

the first event here they have organised charity events before. Paul Hendry suggested that we encourage local attendance, and arrival by cycle or walking, as there are parking issues with large events. Mark Hayes advised that they will manage the event themselves, with marshals etc. and will seek for sustainability with issues such as litter. They may make some café provision as well.

Following discussion the event was **APPROVED** with all in favour. Mark Hayes and Trevor Goodall left the meeting.

ii) Park Run Consent (TH and Jeff Bird)

TH explained that consent for Park Run to continue has been given by Natural England, but Jeff Bird was here to answer any questions the Commission might raise. He pointed out that the benefits are massive, and that the organisers are now seeing 12-15 youngsters attending each week as well. Involvement with BBOWT may be needed during the ground nesting birds season to ensure the ecology of the Commons are not compromised. It was suggested that Park Run is exactly what the Commons need.

Jeff Bird was thanked for attending and left the meeting.

iii) Run Nation Proposal and other proposed events

Tom Hayward brought three further event proposals to the notice of the Commission. All of these have been put forward at somewhat short notice. They are:

Swings & Smiles – Charity night walk proposed for Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> August from 8.30pm to 1am – up to 150 people. BBOWT will not be attending so Security will have to lockup afterwards.

Run Nation - Commercial 10k running event proposed for Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September (date not yet finalised) – up to 300 people.

Rainbow Trust sponsored cycle ride – children's/young people's event proposed for Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> September 1.15pm onwards – possibly 140 people.

The Commission discussed the proposals, and in particular the short timescale in which they had been brought to BBOWT's attention. TH explained that they were receiving a lot of similar requests, often with short timescales, which made decision making difficult as the Commission only met four times a year. A streamlining to the process would be useful. SE suggested that the Commission needed to set some parameters for guidance, to make BBOWT's job easier, and ensure there was sufficient time to assess proposals for events.

After discussion it was **AGREED** that we would ask for proposals to be put forward at least four months (preferably six months) in advance, and that we would limit Sunday events to one per month. This was not proscriptive, and the Commission could make exceptions, but it provided some guidance to those organisations, particularly commercial ones, proposing to hold events on the Commons, and

<p>supported BBOWT’s administration of the process.</p>	<p><b>Action</b></p>
<p><b>ACTION</b> SE will liaise with TH to put this information on the website.</p>	<p>SE/TH</p>
<p>The Commission then turned to the current proposals. After discussion it was <b>AGREED</b> to <b>GRANT</b> permission for the Swings and Smiles event, and the Rainbow Trust Cycle Ride, both are on a weekday, and will cause less disruption on the Commons. However, having discussed the Run Nation event it was <b>AGREED</b> to <b>REFUSE</b> this event. Run Nation is a commercial organisation and should be able to plan ahead and give sufficient notice, in addition they had not responded to a request for information and seemed undecided about the actual date despite being only five weeks away.</p>	
<p><b>ACTION</b> TH will notify the two charities that permission has been given, and will also notify Run Nation that permission has been refused on this occasion, and advise them that the Commission requires much more notice in future.</p>	<p>TH</p>
<p>iv) <u>Grazing Rights</u></p>	
<p>KL and SE had found a copy of the grazing rights list. Derek Cutt has also found a list which has details of when the different entries were updated. KL and SE will put the lists together and produce a consolidated list for consideration for the next meeting. It is possible that we may need to write to the commoners to confirm details. It would be useful to have the list on a shared drive like Google.</p>	
<p>v) <u>Crookham Pools Common Land (S3(3) of Greenham and Crookham Commons Act 2002) – updated PH</u></p>	<p>KL/SE</p>
<p>PH explained that there have turned out to be legal problems associated with this, and its not as straightforward as it first appeared. It has now been made clear that in order to open the land to Commoners Rights, everyone with an interest in the land needs to give consent - this includes all Commission members, all Commoners, Thatcham TC, BBOWT and Natural England.</p>	
<p><b>ACTION</b> PH will look into this further. SE suggested that he arrange a meeting for her with himself and Legal Services – if a formal letter is required to seek consen, she can draft this and send it out.</p>	<p>PH/SE</p>
<p>v) <u>Gigaclear Trunking for Estovers</u></p>	
<p>This grinds on. TH reported that they are now suggesting connection by end July or beginning August.</p>	
<p><b>ACTION</b> He will notify the Commission when this is completed.</p>	<p>TH</p>
<p><b><u>MATTERS FOR DECISION AND PRESENTATION</u></b></p>	
<p><b>6 NATURAL ENGLAND APPOINTEE</b></p>	
<p>Natural England has been in touch with TH, and they had hoped to send someone to this meeting, but no one was free. There has been no formal candidate suggested. The inclusion of Natural England on</p>	

	<b>Action</b>
<p>the Commission was discussed, but we do need them as they approve ParkRun, and should have an interest in the Commons, given their importance.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> SE will send Natural England a list of dates for October 2023, and 2024 and invite them to attend.</p>	<b>SE</b>
<p><b>7 GCCC REGULATIONS</b></p> <p>SE had heard from Defra in respect of the final version of the Regulations, which were sent to them for approval – they are now questioning why the Regulations set out some provisions for Commoners to take vehicles on the commons, and seem to think that these are Byelaws. SE read out a letter she proposed to send Paul Ballinger at Defra, explaining why the Regulations contain a qualification to the existing Byelaws, and providing a copy of the Byelaws and the Code of Practice for their information.</p> <p><b>ACTION</b> SE will send the letter to Defra and will let the Commission know what happens next.</p>	<b>SE</b>
<p><b>8 BEATING THE BOUNDS</b></p> <p>A date for this event has not yet been arranged. However, since September is now too close, we may wish to move this to October. TH will talk to KN about a date and arrangements for the event. SP pointed out that if its held on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> October, then it might be possible to promote it in the Thatcham Festival brochure.</p> <p><b>ACTION</b> TH and KN to liaise about taking this forward.</p>	<b>TH/KN</b>
<p><b><u>ADDITIONAL PAPERS AND REPORTS</u></b></p>	
<p><b>9 LAND MANAGEMENT REPORT</b></p> <p>TH presented the report to the meeting</p>	
<p><b>10 GORSE REPORT</b></p> <p>TH apologised for the late delivery of this report. It outlines what work has been done to reduce and manage gorse on the Commons since the last report (2017). <b>NB</b> the 2017 report is on the Commission website with the January meeting reports. It also outlines the work which is planned going forward.</p> <p>TH explained that, while gorse cover does need to be kept in check, gorse is an important resource for birds and insects on the Commons, and some cover needs to be left to support their ecology. However it is fast growing and needs to be efficiently managed to prevent uncontrolled spread.</p> <p>Over the period 2017 to 2023 BBOWT has reduced the gorse by 10ha, giving a 12% gorse cover, within 2% of the target, although this is not 12% evenly spread across the Commons. The cost has averaged out at £16k per annum, and additional funding is needed – around £100,000 over the next five years to ensure the gorse cover in the</p>	

	<b>Action</b>
<p>grazeable area is reduced to 10%.</p> <p>Standardised methodologies are proposed for the future, and monitoring will be more accurate – concentrating on the grazeable area (not woodland or hard standing). BBOWT is reviewing the management plan and targets, and setting new objectives. Originally the plan was to cut an area and then return to the same area in year nine, but BBOWT has found that additional work is needed to clear gorse entirely. There are 7ha to tackle, with 4ha to remove entirely, using scraping, cutting, burning and uprooting measures.</p> <p>PH noted that WBC is very grateful for BBOWT’s stewardship – WBC was struggling to manage the commons and gorse was a significant issue.</p>	
<p>DC asked whether Natural England needed to provide consent, TH confirmed that they do. <b>ACTION</b> SE asked TH to send the Gorse Report to Natural England. This is another reason why we need Natural England to engage fully with the Commission by providing an appointee.</p>	<b>TH</b>
<p><b>11 AOB</b></p>	
<p>i) Chris Austin reported that there are five fewer cows on the Commons. Their owners decided that they were too old to keep and removed them. SE asked if we hold a list of how many cows there are on the common, TH said he could provide this information.</p> <p>ii) PH advised the Commission that next year will be an election year for the Commission. We need a new generation of people to take the Commission forward, and some way of promoting what we do and the value of the work to encourage Commoners to come forward – we need an elected Commoner for every appointed Commissioner. SE asked whether there is a set date – PH advised that this depends on whether we want an assessor from the election team at WBC. The Commission runs the election, although WBC will pick up the bill for postage. PH will speak to Clare Ockwell at WBC.</p>	<b>TH</b>
<p><b>AGREED</b> We need a draft letter explaining who we are, what we do and what it involves, and a meeting to discuss how to proceed. SE, KN, PH, KL to meet – <b>ACTION</b> SE and KL to arrange.</p>	<b>SE/KL PH KN</b>
<p>iii) BD raised the issue of attacks by dogs and dogs out of control on the Commons. This is not something that the Commission can address directly – attacks and out of control dogs need to be reported to the police or the Public Protection Team at WBC. TH mentioned that BBOWT is looking to engage with dog walkers.</p>	<b>SE/TH</b>
<p><b>ACTION</b> SE will discuss with TH and add a message to the website about out of control dogs and anti-social behaviour.</p>	
<p>iv) SP drew the Commission’s attention to the Rights of Way consultation. Does the Commission wish to comment? We also need a link from the Commission website to the Consultation.</p>	<b>SE</b>

	<b>Action</b>
<p><b>ACTION</b> SE will add a link and point the Commissioners to the Consultation.</p>	
<p>v) SP drew the Commission’s attention to a proposed footway on the roads near the Commons and believed there might be some S106 funds from the Racecourse development to help fund this. It was questioned on who owns this land. TH said he would look back at previous meetings mins as PH said this matter had been discussed before.</p>	<b>SE/TH</b>
<p>vi) List of Commissioners and email addresses – now that we have the Councillor nominations for the Commission, KL will supply an up to date list, and SE will update the website. Commissioners can provide telephone numbers and addresses to the Clerk if they wish. No address details will appear on the website, although there will be a link to the relevant organisation, or to the Councillor details.</p>	<b>SE/KL</b>
<p><b>12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b></p>	
<p>The Clerk cannot attend meetings on Thursdays or Fridays, or the second Tuesday and Wednesday of the month. SP cannot come on Tuesdays when Thatcham TC Planning Cttee meets (every third Tuesday).</p>	
<p>The next meeting will be Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at 7pm at the Greenham Control Tower. Meetings in 2024 will be held in January, April, July and October. SE will discuss dates in 2024 with KL and circulate suggestions.</p>	<b>SE/KL</b>
<p>The venue will also be discussed – PH has suggested that the Commission might meet at WBC. The main issue with meeting at the Control Tower is that a Zoom meeting cannot be offered.</p>	
<p>The meeting closed at 9.00pm</p>	