

FUZZY DROVE CONSERVATION GROUP

Notes of an open Public Meeting held on 29th June at Kempshott Village Hall.

Present: Jenni Henderson (JH) - in the Chair, Sally Matthews (SM) - Secretary, Coral Iles (CI) - Treasurer, Noel Matthews, Rita McCormick and Walter McCormick (WM). Also in attendance, Zoe Channon, Community Development Officer (Green Spaces) and June Balcombe, Leader of the Community Development Team. 28 members of the public also attended.

Jenni Henderson opened the meeting by introducing officers of FDCG and Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council. She then presented the results of our neighbourhood survey and explained something of our planned approach to future work. The content of the Chairman's presentation is appended to these notes and is available on our web site. Printed copies were distributed at the meeting.

Zoe Channon and June Balcombe gave an outline of the Council's role in the maintenance of Fuzzy Drove on behalf of Hampshire County Council who are the owners of the Drove. They also described how FDCG can be supported by

- liaising with relevant departments of the Council, in particular the Tree Officer and the Rights of Way office
- advice and guidance when planning planting, clearance and maintenance schemes
- training in relevant aspects of nature conservation and in leading working parties and surveys
- possible funding

Coral Iles, the Group's Treasurer reported that we currently have £133.16 in funds. We will be applying for grants and looking for other ways to raise funds and get more people involved with the Group. Opportunities include:

- Event organising
- Liaison with schools and other children's organisations
- Surveying trees, birds, butterflies, wild flowers, etc
- Publicity
- Grant applications
- Mulching, pruning, planting, etc

When invited to comment and ask questions, the following points were made:

1. Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and Tree Replacement

Concerns were expressed that TPOs may not be properly observed. We were asked to plot all mature trees on a map of the Drove (this already exists but may need updating), and note the positions of all that are subject to TPOs. Consideration should then be given to placing TPOs on additional specimens where appropriate.

Actions:

- (1) Make a request to the Tree Officer for the relevant map and TPO list for Fuzzy Drove
- (2) Confirm whether or not there is any mechanism for individuals to appeal against the removal, coppicing or pollarding of trees

Some felt that when dead or diseased trees are removed they should be replaced. This

appears not to have happened in most cases. The Tree Officer does have earmarked funds and the discretion to do selective tree replacement work. FDCG has been invited to do their own survey of the trees in the Drove and produce proposals for replacement planting for consideration by the Council.

Actions:

- (1) Check to ensure inclusion of tree survey and replacement requests/recommendations in our list of work to be scheduled.
- (2) Pass on comments and concerns to the Tree Officer

Some guests felt that it might have been helpful to invite the Tree Officer to attend this meeting.

2. Neighbourhood Survey

Guests were very pleased that we had done such a thorough job of surveying local residents. The Group had completely removed the worries of residents who were reassured by our promise to consult with them and keep them updated about our planned activities.

Action: Continue to communicate with supporters, users and residents

3. Amenity Land behind Auklet Close

Property owners near to a piece of amenity land asked whether it would be included in the work of FDCG or would it be maintained by the Council's workers.

Action: visit the site with Zoe to look at the scale of the task and assess who should take it on

4. Pedestrian access points along Fuzzy Drove

There are a number of pedestrian access points between Fuzzy Drove and public roads. These include, but are not limited to, the area between Bittern Close and Petrel Croft, the end of Seagull Close, and paths into Petrel Croft and Kempshott Gardens. The Group was asked how they would approach work in those areas given that no one individual householder would be affected by any changes. The Chairman explained that every effort would be made to consult with residents in the roads concerned, probably by leaflet dropping well in advance and inviting comments.

Action: Schedule consultation activities ahead of working parties.

5. Improvement of surfaces

Several comments had been received in survey responses, and at the meeting it was mentioned that wood chips would be one method of improving the surface of Fuzzy Drove during the winter months when muddy conditions can be a problem. It was suggested that there may be a natural spring in the vicinity which would cause the excessive moisture. Machinery used for cutting hedges along the adjacent cycle path is also responsible for churning up mud. Motor cyclists also use the Drove on trail bikes. It is doubtful whether this is appropriate use of a bridleway.

Some feared that as wood chips degrade they would add to the problem rather than improve it. However, this section of the Drove is classed as a bridleway and should be

maintained as such. Zoe commented that surface work should not be done by private individuals without prior permission of the Council or it may be construed as fly-tipping.

Actions:

- (1) Research appropriate surfacing materials for improvement of winter conditions. Check permission from B&DBC/HCC to carry out the work
- (2) Ask HCC to consider other options than Fuzzy Drove for contractors' machine access when maintaining the cycle path
- (3) Confirm whether or not motor cycles should be driven along a bridleway.

6. Fly tipping of Garden Rubbish

A recurring problem in Fuzzy Drove is the fly-tipping of garden rubbish, which should either be composted by householders in their own gardens, or disposed of via the Council's green waste disposal service. Residents should report any rubbish to the Contact Centre on 01256 844844 who will log the call and arrange for material to be collected. This will enable further preventive action to be taken if a pattern emerges.

Action: continue to report fly-tipping to the Contact Centre

7. Private Pedestrian Access Gates

A number of properties that share a boundary with Fuzzy Drove have installed pedestrian access gates in their fences. There is probably no legal right of access of this kind, but may be regarded as discretionary. Whatever the legal position, the Fuzzy Drove Conservation Group will not be actively restricting existing access points.

8. Clarification of Boundaries

Property owners asked where the boundaries of Fuzzy Drove actually lay. Some had the impression that developers had placed garden fences well inside property boundaries to avoid trees which were on the proper fence line. If so, this may mean that many of the trees on the verges of Fuzzy Drove should rightly be regarded as the property of the adjacent householders. Individuals may do well to consult their property deeds about the exact dimensions of their plot.

Action: See if it is possible to define the precise width of Fuzzy Drove.

9. Potential Impact of the Local Plan

The Local Plan issued by Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council which completed its consultation process in the summer of 2014 appeared to suggest that Fuzzy Drove (referred to in the Plan as Fuzzy Lane) might be developed into an access road for a large new housing estate to be built between Kempshott and Oakley. This prospect had caused great concern at the time and many residents are still very anxious about it. Several of those present at the meeting wondered if FDCG knew how likely it is that Fuzzy Drove will become an access road.

The Group does not have any firm information on this question. The proposal to change the status of Fuzzy Drove had scored very poorly on every test of its viability and the private view of FDCG is that development as an access road is unlikely. Meanwhile, we will work as hard as we can to increase its value as a local amenity and as a haven for wildlife which is supported by the whole community.

Zoe re-stated that its current status is that of a restricted byway between Kempshott Lane and No.1 Fuzzy Drove, beyond which it is classed as a bridleway. It would take a lengthy legal process to change this.

Residents remain deeply concerned about the future of the Drove and asked to be notified as to exactly what representations had been made by Basingstoke Councillors for or against the development proposal made in the Local Plan.

FDCG does not have copies of submissions from local Councillors which either support or object to the proposal that Fuzzy Drove should become an access road to serve the new housing estate. If anyone wishes to know details of Councillors' views, they should approach individual Councillors direct.

10. Communication with Residents

Members of the public present at the meeting were encouraged to leave contact details with the Group Secretary so that they can be kept informed of FDCG progress and activities in the future. Forms were available for the purpose.

The Chairman reassured residents that consultation will be an ongoing process, particularly in regard to work alongside shared boundaries.

Sally Matthews
Secretary

8th July 2015