

TILGATE COMMUNITY FORUM MINUTES

Thursday 18 July 2019 7.30

1. Richard Handy (Chair) welcomed Janet Rose Crawley Borough Council Conservation officer, Cliff Charman, Crawley Borough Council South Patch manager, Francis Guidera, Tilgate CBC councillor and 28 general members to the meeting.

Apologies from: Councillor Duncan Crow, Nick Hagon, Committee members Lindsay Thompson, Liam Richmond, Don Garner and Jim Leggett.

Councillor Guidera told the meeting that sadly Charles Petts, our recently elected councillor, who had been suffering from cancer for the past two years, had taken a severe turn for the worse and passed away on Monday in St Catherines Hospice. Members were shocked and saddened to hear this news. RH asked FG to pass our condolences to the family.

2. The minutes from the meeting held on 22nd May 2019 were taken as read & signed as correct.

3. Nature Conservation in Crawley: Janet Rose, Crawley Borough Council Conservation officer. Janet Rose apologised for not being able to show us the photos as our projector would not work with her laptop. JR works part-time in Tilgate Park and part-time on conservation. Her patch is quite wide and covers twenty areas of parks, woodlands - 300 hectares including Tilgate Park.

Crawley has 6 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) which Crawley Borough Council has had approved by Natural England. They have to be good habitat with recreational value. They are Tilgate Golf course LNR also Waterlea, Willoughby Fields, Grattons Park, Target Hill, Broadfield Park.

There are also twelve local wildlife sites designated at County level for conservation. They include the whole of Tilgate Park also Woldhurstlea woods in Gossops Green. Crawters Brook on the industrial estate had a special mention.

Habitats in Crawley: broadleaved woodland (oak, ash) with understorey of hazel, holly, smaller shrubby plants so bluebells can grow. Native conifers are Scots pine, juniper and yew. Plantations of conifers were set up to replace wood after World War One, but they are not native trees generally, and not so good for bluebells. Ancient woodland (if mapped from the year 1600 it is considered ancient) can be seen. Signs of this are bluebells, ferns and roe deer too. Also dormice - colonies of dormice have been found in Tilgate Park and a five year study took place with boxes for nesting but these were taken down after the five years due to other creatures using them. (There are also dormice in Targets hill.)

Meadows are another habitat type eg Willoughby fields, which is mown every two years by the Patch team to encourage more insects, butterflies, moths. The Council aims to keep meadows in most areas - good for small mammals, bees. Meadow brown butterflies like long grass areas. Yellow rattle, which discourages grasses, allows wild flowers to establish. Bee orchids have been found on the bank coming down from the car park at Tilgate Park, but they are fickle, and don't bloom every year. Wetland areas, lakes, ponds, streams running through the town, all flow into the river Mole and kingfishers, herons, even little egrets can be found. The rarest habitat is heathland – found in Tilgate Park and the Golf course. Heather, gorse, bracken, birch, adders, slow worms (legless lizards) huge anthills made by the wood ants can be found.

How does the Council manage all these habitats? There are very few resources. There is a plan for annual or every other year mowing - "cut and take" clippings to reduce fertility. Gatwick Greenspace helps using volunteers. Wetlands are tricky, needing waders, and heathland work is mainly trying to control bracken.

Question: How safe are conservation areas from risk of development? Answer: As safe as they can be, so maintaining them is important.

FG pointed out the new Pease Pottage site where hundreds of homes are to be built will encroach on the far side of Tilgate Forest that it borders.

In answer to a question, JR said there are still some great crested newts about.

JR said the Triangle (part of the LNR on the golf course) is looking quite nice at the moment, worked on by local volunteers and Gatwick Greenspace. They are trying to keep it connected to the heathland.

It was pointed out that the stream between the golf course and railway line has bags across it at intervals. It was suggested that these are to collect pollution.

RH thanked Janet for her very interesting talk and hopes she will come back again to tell us more.

4. Looking after our Green Spaces: Cliff Charman, Crawley Borough Council South Patch team. With only 13 members of staff they have a difficult task to keep the areas well maintained. They are now on the 4th cut and it takes three & a half weeks to cover the area and sometimes they work on Saturdays to keep on top of the job. He said if we had any questions that we would like to ask the men, they would be welcome as they are all very proud of the work that they do. Next month there will be three teams tackling the hedges.

A member did point out that some trees are hiding the road signs.

Jennie Withall asked if there could be a wild flower area in Durham Close, CC said they were looking for areas to plant wild flowers and this brought RH in with the seeds that the Forum has been given as to where would be the best place. JR had a look at the packets and said they were quite a mix of various flowers. Can plant seeds in turned over ground said CC. The Patch workers have done similar elsewhere in Crawley. JR says if planting into existing meadow, grow first and plant as plugs. However, she suggested working with the Patch team.

CC said that as WSCC are not spraying the weeds now, it is causing a lot of problems.

RH thanked CC for the insight into his work.

5. Updates from Councillor

FG: Anti-social behaviour is still going on in the car park in Tilgate Park. He is doing his best to stop it but the registration numbers of the vehicles are needed and ANPR technology would cost £19K. He thinks the answer is metal flaps that allow exit but not entrance. A new threat up there is now people partying late at night. Parties of twenty/thirty people instead of hiring the Barn are just setting up in the Park for free. They have music machines, barbeques, and the noise is quite disturbing for the nearby houses. The police do not consider it a priority when they have more serious crimes to attend to.

He has met with Rosie Ross to see what can be done with the problems at Tilgate shopping parade. He suggested a CCTV and Rosie thinks it's a good idea. The Police have funded two more community wardens. The old WC block at the end of the parade needs to be dealt with, he wants it to be completely revamped and to be used as a business premises. To prevent cars parking on the grass verges, he suggested planting trees, or fencing the verges. If a car is making a nuisance, by racing around or blaring music, if you are able to get the registration number and

pass it to him he will pass it to the police.

Fishermen in the Park have seen mink in the lake. Wildlife Society are aware of it as mink are a danger to our wildlife, and are suspected of killing a cygnet. Nick Hagon is dealing with this.

The old Thomas Bennett site is also a huge eyesore and it has been in this state since 2005. FG has been back and forth to WSCC to use it. A member said it was something the Forum could be tackling.

Oates Walk: a member said she is still waiting for dropped kerbs for wheelchair users and those with walkers. DC is the person to deal with this as it is WSCC problem and FG will e-mail him. CC will ask the inspectors.

Ron Spragett pointed out that although Heathrow is to get the third runway, Gatwick is planning for a third one with a huge plan for enlarging the airport.

Problems in the Park - members should tag Crawley Borough Council. Screen shots if possible.

Evidently the Segways riders in the Park have a set path with a leader in the front and a backstop at the rear. FG however would like a total moratorium in the Park with no further additions to what is already there.

RH thanked FG for his information.

6. (Update on Tilgate Park: Nick Hagon was delayed and could not give this.)

7. Future dates: A fun day was announced for Holy Trinity's 60th birthday on Saturday 20th July.

Volunteers, Tilgate Park Peace Garden: 2nd + 4th Saturday per month 10.30 am

Volunteers, Tilgate Park Heather Garden: 2nd + 4th Wednesday per month 10 am

Next Forum meeting AGM **Thursday 19 September** 7.30 pm. RH said that the Forum is in dire need of new committee members. Lindsay and Liam have a new home in Forge Wood so will be leaving Tilgate. RH pointed out younger members would bring new life into the Forum. A new minutes secretary is also needed.

Gatwick Aviation Museum will provide our speaker for the September meeting.

In November we have Dianne Dodsworth on waste and recycling and Stuart Smith headteacher of Thomas Bennett Community College.

8. Any other business

Two consultations have been announced: one on Building for the High Weald, see <http://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/design-guide-consultation.html> and one on Crawley's Local Plan Review, see Council website <http://www.crawley.gov.uk/crawley2035> or visit staffed exhibitions at:

Crawley Town Hall on Monday 29th July from 10:30 – 16:00

K2 Crawley on Monday 5th August from 15:00-20:00

Crawley Library on Tuesday 6th August from 17:00 – 18:30

County Mall on Saturday 17th August from 10:30 – 16:00

Crawley Town Hall on Monday 19th August from 10:30 – 16:00

Crawley Library on Monday 9th September from 17:00 – 18:30

9. Raffle - as well as the box of chocolates, Cliff Charman donated a round of golf for four people at Goffs Park golf course.

RH closed the meeting at 21.15

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