

010/07

Novington Sandpit Residents' Committee

Minutes of Meeting Held on Wednesday 21 November 2007 7.30pm, Plumpton Village Hall – Committee Room

Present: Mike Barnard, John Bowden, Jane Gane, Jane George; Richard Muirhead, Paul & Carole Nicholson; Katie Wride.

Paul Nicholson firstly apologised for having to change the date of the meeting at short notice; he was grateful to those who had turned up.

1. Minutes

Those present approved the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 25th September.

2. Matters Arising

Item 7 concerning the impact of the prospective South Downs National Park. Tom Hawthorne had commented prior to this meeting that as the park status is still some time off, the most influential body is currently the South Downs Joint Committee but its remit is somewhat stifled by its impending demise. However, it is thought that the National Park would have more resources than current bodies and be able to commit more of those resources to minimise the impact of development within the park, which would include mineral extraction. Our conclusion is that the National Park should work in residents' interests and we should continue to monitor and lobby where needed for our points to be heard.

All other points arising will be considered as part of the meeting.

2. Pre-conditions

Paul Nicholson had circulated an updated planning summary prior to the meeting which he hoped would be a useful reminder of the situation.

The position regarding the two outstanding pre-conditions remained unchanged and Paul commented that he was receiving little help from ESCC in pressing for these to be concluded. As a reminder the two outstanding conditions are numbers 24 Aftercare and 25 the Ecological Survey, both of which depend on the Revised Conservation Management Plan ("CMP"). Paul would continue to press the relevant parties to complete this exercise and as soon as the revised CMP is received a copy will be made available to residents.

John Bowden questioned the conditions regarding the timing of operations as it appears that working on site may be outside of these times.

The meeting discussed generally how the conditions were to be monitored. Paul reminded the meeting that earlier discussions with ESCC had not been entirely reassuring on this point as much appeared to be reliant on self policing by the operator. Paul had raised with ESCC the council's own site monitoring policy which is a public document. Lack of funds means that this isn't really being followed which is unhelpful. Paul would take this up again with ESCC and, if necessary, with Norman Baker.

Action: Paul Nicholson

4. Activities on Site

Activity on site has increased. On landscaping, the western bund, along the footpath, had been completed and topsoiled. The gate is still to be erected which means that although unauthorised, access to the site is still possible. The stockpiles, which can be seen clearly from off-site continue to grow. A new grading machine had been brought to site.

Paul Nicholson had met Dudman on site in October and had noted how the two site operatives (Ron Carson and another) appeared to be genuinely interested in the wildlife and landscape of the site; this augers well for the future. The site is relatively tidy. Dudman is slowly building the contacts he needs to sell sand from the site but initially vehicle numbers are quite low – Dudman thought on average about 10 lorry movements per day although the meeting felt this may be on the low side.

Paul had asked for the footpath to be improved and for the field to the south to be topped. Only the latter had been done to date.

Paul undertook to ask for the hedge along Plumpton Lane to be trimmed but would first assess the best time for such work to be carried out.

Action: Paul Nicholson

5. Traffic

Traffic from site continues to be low although there have been some early morning movements with lorries going both north and south to/from the site.

The Parish Council (Katie and Carole) are actively discussing with the relevant bodies what alterations are possible at the Half Moon junction. As had been discussed in previous meetings, this junction falls very low on the priority list for Highways but the Parish Council were congratulated for continuing to press for something to be done.

The tree growth around the eastern (Lewes side) 20 mph sign had been cleared and Richard Muirhead had cleaned it – for which he was thanked. The meeting felt that the sign is in the wrong place and should be set further back. The Parish Council would be asked to include this in its discussions with Highways. The sign on the western side of the junction is still missing.

Action: Katie Wride

Paul was asked to remind residents of the need to monitor and record lorry movements in the next Parish Magazine.

Action: Paul Nicholson

5. Ecology

Tony Hutson and others had continued to monitor the site as far as possible although it was accepted that this is becoming more difficult.

Water levels appear to be very low and the meeting questioned if the drainage ditch clearance might be responsible. Carole Nicholson noted that SOCS had continued to take regular readings at Plumpton Mill stream and at the Ferrings and nothing untoward had been recorded. Carole also reminded the meeting that when an apparent discharge of water from the site had taken place earlier, SOCS had attended and taken measurements and had notified the Environment Agency ("EA") of a possible issue. EA attended site and informed the operator that no discharge licence was in place for the site. This was reassuring.

Mike Barnard noted that the area set aside for the little ringed plovers appeared to be too far from the water to be of any real assistance to them during the breeding season. Paul commented that this and several other such issues really required attendance at site by ESCC so that it could satisfy itself that the operator was dealing with these points sensibly and sensitively. Paul referred to the failure of the monitoring policy noted in 3 above. He would seek to improve this.

Action: Paul Nicholson

6. Date of Next Liaison Group Meeting

Paul Nicholson commented that he had received no assistance from Meg Stroude or Jeremy Patterson of ESCC in pressing for this. He would continue to pursue this, perhaps with Norman Baker, and remind those involved of the commitment given by Dudman at the public meeting in 2006.

Action: Paul Nicholson

7. Any Other Business

Paul had found the cost of aerial photography to be too high for residents to consider. It was suggested that he ask Peter Baker to suggest a way to achieve this form of monitoring.

Action: Paul Nicholson

John Bowden suggested that the new residents of Westcroft should be contacted so that they know of the existence of the residents' group. Paul agreed to draft something as soon as possible.

Action: Paul Nicholson

8. Date of next Residents' Committee Meeting

This will be held on **Thursday 7th February 2008 at 7.30pm** in the Committee Room in the Village Hall.