

AGENDA ITEM 9d

NOTES of the Meeting of the **WHITCHURCH DOWN CONSULTATIVE GROUP** held on Tuesday 15th April 2025 at 5:30pm at the Council Chamber, Drake Road, Tavistock

PRESENT

Councillors Mrs A Johnson (Chair), N Martin, B Smith.

REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER BODIES

Representative of Plasterdown Parish Council – Councillor R Phillips,
Councillor J Sturmer

Whitchurch Commoners – not represented

Tavistock Golf Club – Mr G Raikes, Mr S Getson

National Park Ranger – Mr L Engel

IN ATTENDANCE

Carl Hearn- Town Clerk, Wayne Southall - General Manager, Becky Rowe - Works Manager, Laura Harley – Community & Compliance Officer.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllr S Hipsey and Mr D Manning (Tavistock Cricket Club).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

3. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

- a. The Consultative Group received and endorsed the Notes of the Meeting of the Whitchurch Down Consultative Group held on 1st October 2024 subject to the following changes – item 6 – Purdy Lane should read Furzy Lane and item 7a – Taverton Bottom should read Taviton Bottom.
- b. There were no matters arising.

4. REPORTS/DISCUSSION TOPICS

The Town Council gave an update on: -

- a. **Wild Camping** – there had been two reports of people wild camping over recent months – one near Plasterdown and one off Furzy Lane. Both tents had been abandoned and subsequently removed by TTC. It was noted that the Down was checked 2-3 times per week by the Town Council.

A travelling community moved into the Meadows on Thursday 10th April. Proceedings had been started to evict them which involved carrying out a welfare check with a view to serving a section 77 notice. The travellers subsequently moved to Plasterdown on 13th April and so legal proceedings had to start again. Whilst there, it was reported that allegations had been made they had tried to steal some ponies. The travellers left on the afternoon of 15th April (either to Okehampton or Cornwall) leaving a great deal of dispersed litter which was being currently cleared by TTC staff. The notice, that was due to be served by a private enforcement company, had not been issued.. It was noted that eviction could either be by a common law route or a S77 notice which was favoured as it prevented return to a site for three months.

It was noted that West Devon Borough Council, the police and Dartmoor National Park had worked with the Town Council on this matter and that provisions for dealing with such situations should be included in the Whitchurch Down Management Plan. It was noted a streamlined strategy involving stakeholders would be considered for the future and to ensure the safety of all users of Whitchurch Down. It was important that everyone was vigilant and reported any future occurrences to the landowner (TTC on call team over weekends/evenings), police, WDBC Environmental Health team and Devon County Council Traveller Team.

The Chairman thanked everyone, including the Depot staff for their efforts with regard to the eviction process and the clear up.

- b. **Gorse Management** - TTC and Commoners had run a successful campaign to control the gorse. TTC staff had cut around the Pimple and had outsourced the cutting work off Furzy Lane. The Commoners had controlled the gorse on the other side of Furzy Lane by burning.
- c. **2025 Walkabout** – the Works Manager agreed to circulate some dates for a half day walkabout in August.
- d. **2025 Annual Open Day** – it was agreed that this would be postponed until 2026 to allow the new DNP representative, Luke Endel, to become familiar with his new role.
- e. **Whitchurch Down Management Plan** – as previously agreed the Management Plan would now include reference to the travelling community and related matters. The Works Manager asked that a meeting be convened in the next six to eight weeks to discuss the draft

Management Plan. This would be circulated prior to the meeting ready for discussion.

- f. **Walkham Valley Project** – The Works Manager reported she had recently attended a meeting with DNP whereby they explained the Walkham Valley project. The project was in the early stages to design a long-term land management scheme to be able to then apply to DEFRA for funding. The project would be collaborative between landowners over two years (although the team was already a year behind and so was playing catch up). (Cllr R Phillips declared an interest).
- g. **Pre-meeting written reports** – Tavistock Cricket Club reported that they had completed the replacement net scheme. The season would start on the Easter weekend and run to early September. They had requested a new sign for the gate at the top of Chollacott Lane.

5. REPORTS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

- a. Whitchurch Commoners - not present – no report received.
- b. National Park Ranger – the new ranger, Luke Endel attended the meeting. He had started 3 months previously and would be working in the South West area of Dartmoor. He was just getting to know the area, people and what the job entailed.
- c. Tavistock Cricket Club – written report received.
- d. Tavistock Golf Club – the golf club representatives stated that the season was about to start and asked for an on-site catch up with the Works Manager.
- e. Plasterdown Grouped Parish Council – reported that they had recently beaten the bounds and advised that they would be adding some new boundary markers.

6. URGENT BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD

With regard to the sign for Whitchurch Cricket Club, the Works Manager was due to replace the existing sign on the gate and so would accommodate the new sign for the Club.

A Member raised the issue of erosion in high footfall areas of Whitchurch Down and whether access points could be managed to reduce the risk. The General Manager stated that some ground work had been carried out two years ago around the dog bin but could not

think of other examples that had taken place in the last 10 years. He would take a measured approach to any surface works especially on the moorland. It was acknowledged that the area was moorland.

Reference was also made, more generally, to:

- whether, or not, signs could be erected with regard to travellers;
- if a bund was to be erected at the top car park and the Works Manager stated that the work was programmed for this year.

7. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Next Meeting is on Tuesday 14th October 2025 (tbc).

Note that a date was to be agreed for a consultative meeting to discuss the Whitchurch Down Management Plan only.

The Meeting closed at 6.30pm.

Signed:

Dated:
CHAIRMAN