



Friends of Wimbledon Park

Horse Close Wood & Neighbours 03

1) Introduction

- a. Horse Close Wood (HCW) is owned by London Borough of Merton (LBM) and situated in the West Hill Ward of the London Borough of Wandsworth (LBW). It is managed by the Tree Officer (LBM).
- b. Improvements and maintenance (subject to approval of the Tree Officer) are led by the Friends of Wimbledon Park (FOWP) and tasks carried out by the Wimbledon Park Volunteers (WPV)¹ and helped by The Community Payback Team (CPT)². Idverde have no contractual obligations in HCW.
- c. Dave Dawson³ drafts the HCW Management Plan and when reviewed FOWP ensure consultation with the Community via social media and the FOWP Forum.
- d. Third parties are the neighbours living in the adjoining houses. Doug Napier (previous Greenspaces Manager) indicated that the fences were owned by the House owners.
- e. An objective is for HCW to be a good neighbour.

2) Health & Safety

- a. LBM carry out area safety assessments and maintain or fell trees that could pose a danger.
- b. WPV work within their competencies and a risk assessment is forwarded to LBM for agreement before work is undertaken. By verbal agreement those participating are then covered by LBM insurance.
- c. Tools for use by WPV and CPT have been provided by idverde and stored in the NW store under the café. Use of own tools is permitted.

3) Procedure

- a. Where a situation⁴ develops a simple procedure for dealing with it is necessary. One owner LBM has a relationship with many owners so it would be useful that this should be a formal procedure to avoid confusion and help speedy resolution of the situation. Any lessons learnt can be recorded and remembered for future situations.
- b. It is anticipated that most situations can be resolved at volunteer level.
- c. The complainant should either contact the Chair of their Residents Association or the lead⁵ Cllr which for pragmatic purposes will generally be from Wimbledon Park Ward with the details of the complaint.
- d. Either the Chair or Cllr will then send details to LBM Tree Officer copying in LBM Greenspaces Manager, idverde and FOWP.
- e. FOWP will then investigate and report back with proposals for its resolution.

4) Fences

- a. Repair of fences from time to time will be necessary so the notification of intention of repair or replacement by the owner using the above procedure should suffice.
 - i. Once work is completed the area in HCW should be cleared of discarded materials and rubbish.
- b. Clearing areas by the fence on the HCW side would effectively create a perimeter path which is probably not a good idea.
 - i. Partial clearance may be an option in certain cases.
- c. Growth of vegetation over or under fences should be cut in line with the fence by the relevant garden owner and cuttings thrown over into HCW.



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- d. Where there is a disagreement on fencing issues that can't be resolved at volunteer level this will need to be resolved between the fence owner and LBM.
- 5) Dens
 - a. From time-to-time dens are created using woodland materials. These can lead to anti-social behaviour and littering and should be removed.
- 6) Fourth entrance
 - a. This entrance at the end of Southdean Gardens and end of Gartmoore Gardens is permanently closed but is accessed by individuals climbing over the gate.
 - i. This causes problems when individuals avoid entry payments such as firework events with congregations of people forming around this entrance.
 - ii. Neighbours report hundreds climbing over on fireworks night which clearly leads to a significant loss of income.
 - iii. This behaviour is a nuisance to neighbours.
- 7) Flames and wildfires.
 - a. Wildfires are on the increase in London due to global warming and this should be kept in mind.
 - b. Reporting of sightings of use of flames should be reported immediately to the park officer on duty. Followed by the procedure above.
 - c. Fire notices should be prominently displayed.
- 8) Illegal camping
 - a. This should be reported immediately to the park officer on duty. Followed by the procedure above.



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Appendix 1 – Situations



Fence with supports & undergrowth



New fence undergrowth cleared



Discarded fencing left in HCW.



Fence in disrepair



A den



The Glade & WPV at work



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Appendix 2 - extracts from HCW Management Plan (Dave Dawson)

The wood is at least 300 years old. Use of the woodland by visitors to the Park has not been studied. However, visitors have been noted on monthly visits over the last 35 years and several responses to the consultation reported regular use. The majority use has been by dog walkers, almost all the dogs off the leash and my impression is that this use has more than doubled over that time. Other walkers come second, but very few joggers and cyclists go through the wood. Third would be young people seeking outdoor play, with or without parental supervision. In season there is some use by Blackberry pickers. Bird-watchers and other naturalists are less common.

Anti-social uses are remarkably uncommon. Given that the main perimeter path of the Park runs beside the wood, it's clear that those who walk in the wood are not doing so for access to places beyond, but rather because it's a desirable, natural landscape. As an accessible natural open space, the wood helps to fulfil the Mayor of London's policies on access to nature.

Bramble occurs naturally in the wood. It thrives where shade is not too heavy, which is especially in glades and where safety work has thinned the woodland canopy. It provides valuable habitat, especially for birds and insects, in the form of cover, fruit and nectar. It impedes access, which helps reduce disturbance of nesting birds by dogs. The shade cast by Bramble may impede the establishment or maintenance of woodland wildflowers. When cleared, Bramble grows back vigorously, so it is expensive to keep large areas clear of it. The policy is to cut back to maintain agreed access, open space and wildflowers only.

Ivy, too, occurs naturally in the wood. Unlike Bramble, it can stand heavy shade, but it only flowers and fruits where it can climb a tree and gain access to more light. It provides excellent wildlife habitat, both flowering and fruiting when little else is available, and provides valuable cover, especially in winter. The popular prejudice that Ivy harms trees it climbs is largely incorrect, but it obscures the bark of trees of landscape value. Some Ivy may need to be removed to enable safety inspections. The policy is to retain climbing Ivy, except where it is a threat to trees or for safety inspections and, in a few places, for amenity. Some of the larger trees along the main path are free of Ivy and should be maintained this way for landscape reasons.

References.

¹ To join Wimbledon Park Volunteers (WPV), to assist in tree planting & watering, flower bed maintenance and similar tasks apply <https://www.friendsofwimbledonpark.org/contact>

² The Community Payback Team consists of individuals who are serving their Community Service award from the Criminal Courts.

³ Dave is a professional ecologist. He worked on many woodland questions when advising Local and Regional London Government, including the "London Woodland Action Plan" and "Tree and Woodland Framework", a joint project of the Forestry Commission and the Mayor of London, completed in 2005 (<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/ltwf>).

⁴ Situation is defined here as the location and surroundings of a place without comment.

⁵ Because Wimbledon Park ward is in Merton and covers the greatest area of the four wards the lead Cllr for the Heritage Park has been from this ward. This is a pragmatic approach and won't prevent others getting involved should this be considered necessary. The FOWP Forum will be kept abreast of progress.