

# **BADLESMERE LEES AND HALL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Monday, 17 July 2023**

Present were Chris Moore (Chair), Sue Earl (Secretary), Rick Blackman (Treasurer), Dave Austin, Steve Burt, Ian Earl, Charlie Kirby.

N.B. Meetings, including this one, now begin at 8.00 pm.

## **1 Apologies**

1.1 Gareth Fulton, Fred Gregory, Ben Pullen, Tom Sisley.

## **2 Approval of minutes**

2.1 The minutes for the March and May meetings were approved. (The meeting originally scheduled for 17 April was cancelled.)

## **3 New Chair's notes**

- 3.1 CM formally expressed the thanks of the committee to IE for his efforts and contributions over the past 8 years as Chair. The formal handover of the Committees' archives, the boxes of documents pertaining to current matters, and the Chairman's flash drive (the back-up of all things digital) will take place soon. Until either CM or RB has the NatWest online banking app IE will continue with his.
- 3.2 CM reported on FG's speedy recovery from a recent emergency operation, and the committee duly sent their regards.

## **4 Vice Chair's notes (effectively 'matters arising')**

- 4.1 Mar 2.1. No actions undertaken yet (unchanged from Mar) with respect to:-  
> the Wilding Project (Jan 2.2);  
> 'Do list' and broom cupboards (Aug 4.1, Jan 2.3);  
> a system for circulating bookings (Jan 2.5);  
> the fire safety risk assessment (Jan 2.8);  
> an inspection of the hall for asbestos (Jan 2.11).
- 4.2 Mar 2.2. The Spring Clear Up of the lees took place on 8 April, with help from DA, IE and CK. The bonfire was burnt on 17 Apr, though some of the bigger branches were added to an existing collection in the southern woodland to rot down naturally.
- 4.3 Mar 2.3. The electrician has yet to return.
- 4.4 Mar 2.4. Posts. Unless The Lees Court Estate were not to offer more than materials it was thought that erecting a knee-rail fence was too big a job for the committee. Consideration was given to single posts with metal spikes that go into the ground as an alternative. SB to supply details of some he had seen. IE to liaise with the Estate.
- 4.5 Mar 2.4. Footpaths map. IE still to contact KCC PROW [Public Rights of Way].
- 4.6 Mar 2.4. A contribution to the village sign by the Estate has been received and will be put towards landscaping and the planting of flowers at its base (see Mar 2.11). DA to carry this out.
- 4.7 Mar 2.5. The red oak was planted by SE and IE on 7 Apr.

- 4.8 Mar 2.10. Phill Scutt has been invited to become one of the Custodian Trustees. IE supplied details of the role (in the form of information sheets from ACRE [Action with Communities in Rural England]) for consideration.
- 4.9 Mar 3.5. The hall heating electricity tariff has been increased to 25 ppu.
- 4.10 Mar 5.1. IE and CM met on 4 May following receipt of replies from KCC saying they will not consider registering the lees as a village green because it is already effectively a village green by being registered as Common Land (in 1968) and is Open Access (under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000), and is therefore sufficiently protected from any development that might be proposed. Furthermore Badlesmere Lees is a Conservation Area within the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 4.11 Mar 6.1. SB arranged for work (2 men for 2 days in early April) on the main store roof whereby all the translucent polycarbonate sheets were replaced by corrugated iron sheets, and on the ridge of the main hall (here larger ridge tiles were affixed).
- 4.12 Mar 6.2. On 30 March SB's plumber repaired the leaking toilet.
- 4.13 Mar 9.1. The remaining dip in the track leading to the Leavemere bungalows has been filled.
- 4.14 Mar 10.5. The North Track underwent considerable remedial work on two weekends in May (by SB, GF, BP) making use of the equipment SB had hired for use on his own drive. Details of the costs of extra material used have yet to be supplied. Discussion took place on who has responsibility of maintaining the tracks on the lees. IE read from a document from December 1979 that showed that a village committee (presumably then or later called the Badlesmere Lees Preservation Committee) was accepting responsibility for maintaining the lees and its tracks, and was expecting to pay for this from fund-raising activities (and without help from the parish council other than the making available to the committee of a tractor-drawn mower – which was hoped for rather than agreed). It also stated that the Trustees of the late 5<sup>th</sup> Earl Sondes' estate would be willing to support the village in exercising control but gave no indication whether there may, or may not, be any financial help. To IE's knowledge there are no formal terms of reference for this committee, nor a written agreement with the estate. The current ad hoc arrangement seems to have stood for 40+ years. The rights of way that residents who live along the tracks have come solely from the fact that they and the previous owners of their properties have had access and have for very many years regularly used the tracks to get to and from their properties. It is understood that the estate is willing to contribute about 5% of the cost of materials (but not the labour) for the upkeep of the tracks, and has been known to contribute in the past. Individual properties may, separately, have more formal agreements.
- 4.15 May 3.1. 10 tonnes of road planings were delivered to the South Track on 26 June.
- 4.16 May 3.2. The Village Sign was a success with many residents of Badlesmere Lees and further afield attending at the sign and at the Red Lion afterwards (20 May). IE has produced a leaflet describing the sign, and his report on the event was published in the parish magazine.
- 4.17 May 3.3. BP presented Mary Moore flowers and a card signed by villagers on the occasion of her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## **5 Hall Insurance Claim Update – Hall Works**

- 5.1 RB reiterated the current state of play with respect to the claim (see May item 2). Concern was expressed over the insurers stating we are underinsured as this will have a big impact on our finances or whether we are able to pay for the component of the repairs we would be expected to fund. A challenge to the valuation may be possible. It depends on whether or how much the rebuilding has to be to current building regulations or whether the existing form of the hall can simply be replicated. It was accepted that any groundworks would need to comply. CM, SE (both having contacts) to investigate.
- 5.2 There was also some doubt as to whether subsidence has actually taken place, and the dip in the floor along the western wall, which seems uniform the full length, is not just due to degradation of the horizontal timbers. If it is the latter then repairs by ourselves (or our chosen builder) would allow the claim to be withdrawn. We would need to show that subsidence was not the cause in order to continue to get insurance that covers possible subsidence in the future. The insurers have yet to install the movement monitoring equipment (to prove the subsidence) they said they would. RB to contact insurers for an update.

## **6 North Track Issue (dumping on the track)**

- 6.1 TS reported on 9 June that a pile of litter had been offloaded onto the North Track near The Old Rectory. BP removed it. Concern was also expressed at the way the excess type 1 from the North Track repairs was left at the side of the track. SB, GF and others were sure that rain and vegetation would soon render it insignificant.

## **7 Lighting the Beacon in 2024**

- 7.1 Badlesmere Lees has been invited to light its beacon on 6 June 2024 when the country will be celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D Day. All agreed we should take part. CM to confirm our interest.

## **8 10k Run Update**

- 8.1 SB stated that 47 runners have so far signed up. He expects more, especially when close to the date (10 Sep). That a run seems to happen every week now gives us more competition unfortunately. Various promotion schemes were discussed, including using social media more, Facebook targeted advertising (with associated costs), and 'Google clicks'. All were encouraged to promote the run. DA will edit a video for posting on YouTube. For future runs SB stated that the next one should be promoted immediately after the last one.
- 8.2 The new medals (500) are due shortly, the design of which is based on our new village sign.
- 8.3 SB expressed the opinion that the current route which includes a very tough uphill finish puts many off – past runners have thoroughly enjoyed the challenge but then say 'never again'. Also, by not being a flat course individual timings are not comparable with other runs. Promoting the run in the future as 'The Beast of Badlesmere' was suggested. However, it was deemed counterproductive for this is likely to put off 'ordinary' runners and not attract those who do the more extreme runs – for them it's not tough enough!

Consideration instead will be given to finding an alternative, more level route (but not until after this year's run as the route has already been published). An ending (and start) in Sheldwich was suggested (subject to SVEMCO agreement) but it would then be no longer the *Badlesmere* 10k, and the famous welcome and hospitality at our village hall would be lost. Having a track from Badlesmere Lees to Badlesmere Court that was level and puddle-free in wet weather could alleviate the problem to a degree. Unfortunately this was thought impossible to arrange.

- 8.4 The village hall's insurers no longer cover events that take place on a public highway. Our brokers suggested seeking separate cover from specialist companies. RB to seek.

#### **9 AOB**

- 9.1 A new arrangement was needed for the maintenance of the grass verge alongside the Leavemere bungalows (a resident has raised the issue of its current unkempt state). CK has volunteered to mow it immediately and in the future whenever the main part of the lees is cut.
- 9.2 SE's request that she be allowed to purchase a new toilet seat to replace a broken one was granted. SE also reported that the rising main stopcock was leaking (a recurring problem). IE to do a quick repair and SB to organise a replacement when his plumber next works for him.
- 9.3 SB reminded the committee that the post for the northern layby is available and awaiting installation.
- 9.4 Phil Scutt is in need of a post to be erected as part of the gate between his top field and the lees. The committee will fund this (as PS so kindly allows the 10k Run on his land and moves stock and fences for it to be able to take place). The equipment to be used will then be used to achieve item 9.3 above.

.

**The meeting ended at 10.00 pm.**

**The next committee meeting is scheduled for 8.00 pm, Monday, 16 October 2023, in the village hall.**