

**MINUTES OF THE OPEN MEETING HELD AT R.SANDILANDS SCHOOL
ON 17TH OCTOBER 2005 REGARDING FOOTPATHS AT DONNINGTON
GROVE COUNTRY CLUB.**

The Motion under discussion is to extinguish part of Footpath 15 and divert part of FP 30, and create two new sections.

Present: G Foulkes (Parish Council Chairman) J Booth (PC Vice Chairman)
C Woodhead (PC Councillor) R Tolcher (Ex PC Chairman)
L Warner (P C Councillor) J Ives (Parish Clerk).

District Councillors: P Bryant and M Franks

Members of the Public : 72

WELCOME by the Chairman. He asked residents to give their names before speaking during the evening.

OPENING by Jenny Booth

The Parish Council had received a letter from WBC on 7th September involving comments on the Proposal from Sandtrends to close and move some footpaths on the Donnington Grove Estate. Since then a site meeting had been held with Sandtrend, the owners of the Golf Course attended by some Parish Councillors and the Clerk.

The position is that a decision will be made by the Legal Department of West Berks Council will be recommending a decision in a few weeks time, for the Executive Member to take on whether the Proposal should be granted or not. This matter does not come under Planning Regulations. The closing date for all comments is 21st October for the public and 24th October for the Parish Council. We are, Jenny said, as a Council, opposed to the motion. We are here this evening to get your views, the residents of Speen. It was obvious from the Site Meeting with Mr Pascoe of Sandtrend, that they have a problem. They wish to hold International Golf Tournaments and the Footpaths are in the way. His Insurance will not insure the Company with the footpaths in place. He stressed Health and Safety but the Parish Council have not yet seen the report. It was noted that there has never been an accident at this golf course since it was first designed and planned. Jenny continued by saying that she had asked Mr Pascoe to attend this evening's Meeting several times but had been refused.

J Booth then suggested that the Meeting be Open.

Q: Brian Catterer asked there had been any accidents when the course was known as Parasampia?

A: No reports at all.

Q: Brian Kerning asked if the Footpaths could be closed during the Tournaments?

A: We have already thought of this one – the Ramblers are in agreement and it would be a practical idea – Sandtrend had said 'no'.

Q: Sue Frant said that she had walked these footpaths for 15 years and she had never felt at risk. She agreed that it could be too close for Tournaments, but to lose the use of the walk by the river would be terrible.

A: PC agreed

Note by MOP: It was always very well maintained before, now it is unkept.

A: M Franks that all paths should be maintained by Sandtrend, and signs and posts by WBC. Some of the latter have been tampered with.

Q: is the Health and Safety policy very relevant? Tournament players are too good – when the everyday players are on the course that the danger lies to walkers!

A: Until we see the Health and Safety Report we cannot be clear on this.

Q: Kevin Hurley said golf has technically improved over the years – safer now than it was, to walk.

A Thank you

Q: Chain link fencing?

A: Sandtrend say it would cost of great deal to fence 620 metres along the fairway.

Q: Kay Hughes said was it true that the Golf Course had to look after all the footpaths?

M Franks responded: Sandtrend has applied to get rid of two footpaths, and Newbury Committee turned this down unanimously. They have Appealed. Maybe we should put on ice this matter, and wait until appeal heard.

Q: Sue Shipley said that she had suffered abuse from the groundworkers at Donnington, whilst she was walking her dog. Also she is concerned about the lack of wildlife, as the geese had been killed and after the RSPCA had been called.

A: CW said please keep to the point – but 5 others in the room had suffered bad temper from the groundworkers.

MOP: said that there was an accident waiting to happen. The course was very dangerous he thought.

P B: said that it was not legally possible to ‘keep the matter on ice’.

R. Tolcher said that in Speen Village Design Statement the remark was “ Footpaths where appropriate and public access.”

Note: There are powerful reasons for improving footpaths.

Q; Bill Gretton said that to walk along the road instead along the river was horrible!

Q: Miss Griffiths thought the solution was to play golf at certain times of the day only!

Q Bill Williams – Move FP30 to the north?

A: Noted, and there is room at the other side of the castle.

M Franks said that this matter may go to the Secretary of State, should Sandtrends appeal against any decision of the District Council. J Booth said that development of the area could be for houses. P Bryant said that there was nothing in the pipeline regarding this, but maybe in the future. At present the only aim is for International Golf Tournaments.

Q Loraine Lea said could there be housing

A: Conjecture only.

A gentleman in wheelchair spoke in favour of FP30 and surrounding countryside.

C W: perhaps the Parish Council could pay for the netting?

PB: not out of taxpayers money – not admissible.

Rita Elms stated that Footpaths have been here longer than the golf course.

A: Unanimously agreed.

D Rendel summarised: a) Health and Safety for all our sakes

b) impossible for the Company to get Insurance Liability.

c) it could lead to the Company being put out of business.

West Berks wish to keep the recreational facility open and employment for the area, perhaps it would be feasible to get the Insurance changed to another company? Other Courses must have similar problems.

Q: Paddy Viccars asked why Sandtrend purchased the golf course without going into the footpath question?

A Not known.

Note: Shaw-cum-Donnington Chairman of PC said that they had discussed this matter in detail and had turned it down.

The Meeting closed at 8.35 p.m.

The Chairman and Vice Chairman urged all those present to write a letter – one per household to WBC voicing their concern.