

CAMS



NEWS

Contact David Standen on:
Tel: (01474) 337402 or Fax: (01474) 337546

ENCOUR AGING RESPONSE TO SECOND FORUM

Over forty people attended the second CAMS Forum at Cobham Hall on Tuesday 7th April.

Local landowners, interest groups, local councils and the police were all present to comment on the Scheme's progress and to discuss ideas for taking the project forward.

Ted Allett, Steering Group Chairman and Countrywide Director for Union Railways set the scene for the event which took the form of an illustrated progress report followed by a general discussion session chaired by Lord Darnley.

Considerable progress has been made on the Scheme since its launch last September with work particularly targeted at producing and costing a long term management plan for the entire area. The plan will inform future decisions, provide a balance between the various interests represented across the Scheme area and set out how projects will be funded, not only during development but once CAMS has finished.

As David Standen, Scheme Manager explains,

"The Scheme area is a complicated mix of land owners and land use types each providing individual opportunities for ecological, heritage and access improvements and each eligible for a range of different grants. The Schemes resources could

easily be swallowed up on a single project and it is essential to investigate and prioritise the range of options available before committing to any particular project development.'

The exception to this rule has been dealing with unauthorised access which, as well as being a Steering Group priority since the Scheme's launch, prompted brisk discussion among the forum members.



The Aviary at Cobham Hall being considered as part of the conservation plan

PROGRESS SUMMARY

Since the Scheme's launch last September, three working groups have been established to assess and make recommendations for their particular interest area for inclusion in the long term management plan.

Ecology - The CAMS area provides a superb opportunity for wildlife with its wide range of important habitats. Initial work has concentrated on developing a comprehensive understanding of what is and as importantly what is not found in the Scheme area. With comprehensive surveys already completed for the golf course, survey work is being targeted at other areas and particularly the Sites of Special Scientific Interest. As reported in the last newsletter, a contribution from Whitecliff Properties has allowed survey work to be extended into the Ranscombe Farm area. Draft results and management recommendations will be ready for early summer.

Access - Considerable time has been put into developing a comprehensive programme of works aimed at addressing the continued unauthorised use and abuse of the CAMS area, a pre requisite of access and general site improvements. Proposals have also been developed for access improvements, setting out the aspirations of the various access groups. Proposals take into consideration existing provision, current use of the area and local demand. They are based on the creation of a circular network of routes available for walkers, cyclists and horseriders that link current recreation facilities and provide access from the surrounding urban areas

Historic - As reported in the last newsletter, English Heritage are supporting the Scheme by preparing a conservation plan for the registered park area. The plan will document the site's history, assess the significance of historic features and outline policies and priorities for historic park development. Concurrently, work is in hand to survey the condition of park buildings, cost a range of repair options and set out potential future management options. The conservation plan will provide the necessary base line information to support grant applications. A draft plan will be completed for early summer.

PROTECTING OUR ASSETS

Details of proposals aimed at significantly reducing unauthorised use of the CAMS area were set out for discussion at the Scheme's recent Forum.

The proposals represent the first comprehensive package of works aimed at protecting this important area and are the culmination of many months of discussion and legal consultation.

"Looking at the proposals now it is difficult to imagine the amount of work it has taken to get this far"

Says David Standen, Scheme Manager.

"The Steering Group recognised from the start the importance of consulting the widest range of groups and individuals if a workable solution was to be found to what is a widespread and long running problem.

We have also had to pursue the necessary legal consents involving approval of the Local Authorities, who have the responsibility of ensuring that the legal rights of users are not compromised, as well as all landowners with rights of access - a task complicated, not only by the fact that Cobham Wood is in receivership but also by the leisure plot area, covering Lodge Wood, Norwood and Norwood

Grove where there are over 70 registered but absent landowners.

We are still awaiting some formal consents and may still find new problems. However, we are confident that the proposals represent the right way forward.'

In addition to the barriers shown, plans are in hand to widely publicise the proposals, provide information on alternative legal sites, contacts for off-road organisations as well as the reasons for the current works.

Following a suggestion at the Scheme's Forum, the Steering Group have also approved funding for a number of signs to be erected at the main access points.

Once barriers are in place, use will be monitored by the police and Gravesham Borough Council's ranger service who will play a vital role in providing information to existing users on legal alternatives and to the Scheme on the levels of success.

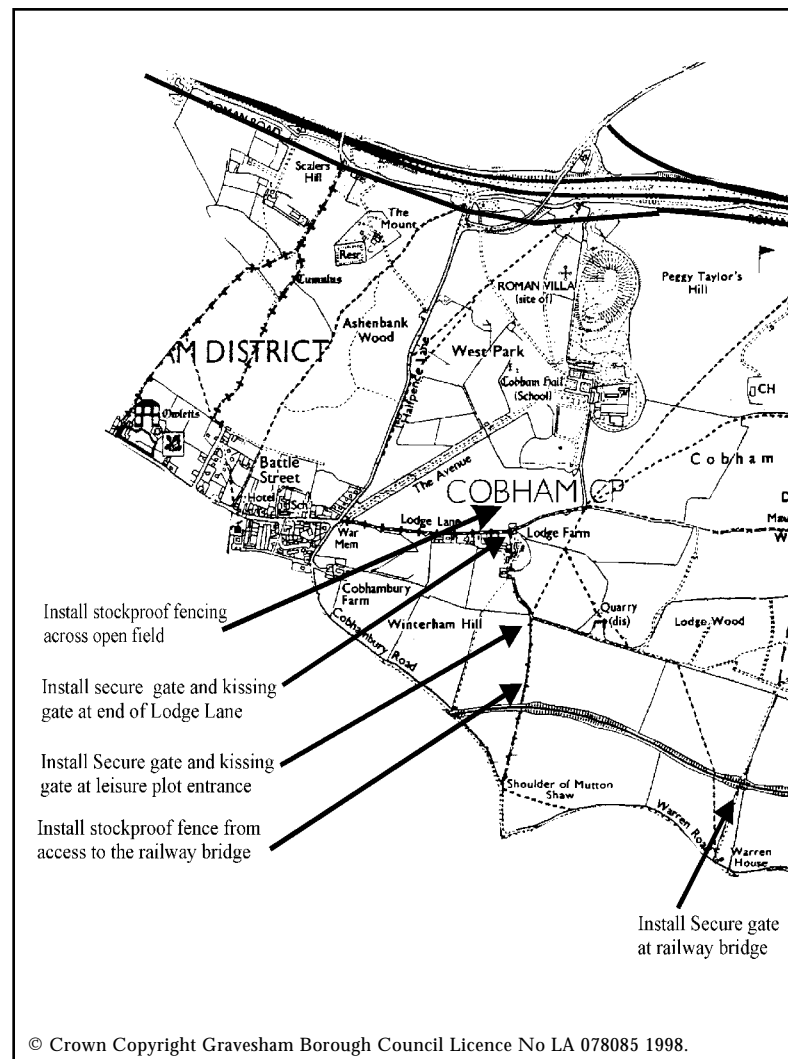
The possibility of creating new, legal facilities for off road users has not been ignored and it is hoped that continuing discussions between the wide range of organisations brought together by the Scheme will provide a range of options for consideration.

THE WAY F

Unauthorised access is a long running and complex problem if the Scheme is to achieve its' objectives. It is important that solutions and problems are avoided. As Ted Allett, Steering Group member said:

"Problems of unauthorised access have been reported for many years and will not stop overnight. However, it has become apparent that there has never been a forum to bring together all interested parties on a range of projects protecting the whole site. Just despite this, I am optimistic for the future of this important area and am optimistic that with the continued support of the Scheme we can start to make a difference and am hopeful that we can achieve this that in turn will encourage appropriate use of the site."

We would welcome any further suggestions on the barriers to be made to David Standen at the Scheme office."



FORWARD?

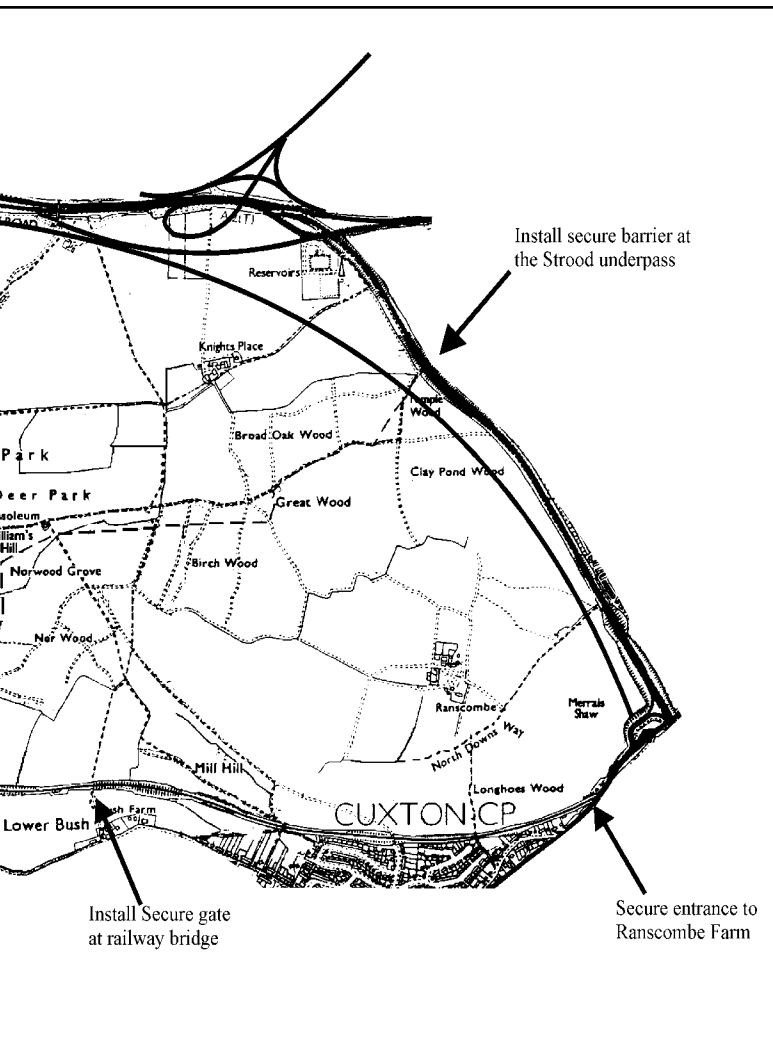
icated problem but one that needs to be resolved
ortant that the right action is taken from the start
Group Chairman explains.

rted in the area since 1959 and we accept that they
pparent during discussions that until now there
ested parties and implement a comprehensive
scussing proposals has resulted in a renewed
ongst landowners, users and potential investors.
f all those that have been involved to date we can
will see a rolling programme of improvements
site.

proposals and would encourage comments to be



Footpath NS183 looking a little dog eared



Another car gets buried in the mausoleum

DEAD GOOD

'Dead wood plays a variety of roles in woodland providing essential nutrition and homes for a wide range of wildlife. In particular, dead wood is invaluable for bugs, beetles and the major recyclers, fungi. In addition, hollows are used by nesting birds and roosting bats and rotting logs form safe sites for seedlings to germinate.'

That's why it's important that woodland managers seriously consider dead wood content and why every effort should be made to save large trees with signs of rot from being destroyed during management and construction operations.'

At least this is the opinion of Ted Green co-founder of the ancient tree forum, well respected mycologist and woodland expert. It is also an opinion gaining increasing support as conservation and forestry experts realise that a

tidy wood is not necessarily a healthy wood.

Recent investigations in Britain and Europe show that, as a result of management operations, woodlands contain a fraction of dead wood that would naturally be expected and that few woodlands contain valuable large standing or fallen dead timbers.

Ashenbank Wood provides a welcome change from the norm with significant quantities of dead wood

and is becoming increasingly recognised for the potential contribution it could make to the National debate.

As Ted enthuses:

'It has taken hundreds of years for some of the larger trees to develop their structure and range of habitats. Large dead wood is a scarce resource that for many years has been sorely neglected. Ashenbank Wood provides an ideal opportunity to further our knowledge on the contribution of dead



An ancient oak at Cobham Hall

wood and to further develop positive management techniques that could provide an example to managers across the country'.

RETHINK AT REPTONS

Rail Link Engineering have submitted revised plans for landscaping around the historic Repton Ponds.

In response to concerns from a range of local and national groups that the original proposals would spoil the tranquil setting of the ponds, Rail Link Engineering have redesigned the area to allow for significantly more landscaping between the ponds and the railway.

Lord Darnley described the revision as:
"An excellent example of how continued co-operation and discussion between the railway contractors, landowners and interested groups can result in a planned and sympathetic approach to the important environment in and around Cobham Hall."

NEW FRIENDS FOR TRUST

Over 100 local people accepted an invitation for tea and a tour at Cobham Hall on Sunday 29th March when the Cobham Hall Heritage Trust launched its new Friends Society.

Dedicated to preserving and restoring the historic grounds around Cobham Hall, the Trust is keen to encourage wider involvement.

Everybody is welcome and no specific skills are required as experts are available to help with the myriad of tasks at hand. For the less active, the Friends are

organising a series of talks and tours throughout the year as well as a range of social activities.

Membership is £10 a year for individuals, £15 for a couple and there is a 50% reduction for the over 65's. Anyone wanting more details should contact Mr Terry Curran, Estates Manager at Cobham Hall on 01474 823371.



Cobham Hall - Learning to Trust new Friends

GOOD LUCK



Peter Griffiths, The National Trust's Director of the Kent and East Sussex Region as well as Steering Group member, is moving to take on a similar role in the Trust's Southern Region.

Peter was actively involved in the establishment of the CAMS project and has subsequently played an important role as a member of the Scheme's Steering Group and the Historic Working Group.

We wish him well.