

Trustee Update 29th June 2020

A lot has been going on behind the scenes and we feel it is time to update everyone on the current situation and our plans.

Firstly, our sincere thanks to Lucy in the office and to John Goulden who have been working with Lyndon to update and streamline the processes in the office, particularly around property changes and sales plus the email system.

Trustees

Sheila Bowker has found it necessary to step down as a Trustee for personal reasons. The other Trustees would like to express their appreciation for all the work that Sheila has done over the last couple of years. We will miss her input and help, and wish her the very best for the future.

The Trustees have co-opted Stephen Parsons to step into the vacancy. Steve has been working hard for the Park for some time, firstly as a member of the gardening sub-committee and for the last year or so he has been working with Taylor Wimpey to resolve the amenity land ownership problems. We all look forward to working with him as a Trustee. In accordance with the Deed of Trust, Steve will stand down at the OGM and will of course be eligible to stand for election if he so chooses.

Re-opening the facilities

The Trustees, working with the Bar Manager and the Head of Office Services, have spent a lot of time considering the various Government Guidance and performing risk assessments for various options. As of the current time, we are not allowed to open the swimming pool or squash courts, and “mass meetings” are prohibited. It is possible from 4th July to open the bar under very strict limitations. The Trustees do not believe that under the current restrictions it is safe to open the bar for indoor drinking. However, from 4th July we will be opening the bar on Friday evening from 4pm till 10pm and , Saturday and Sunday afternoons from 2pm till 8pm for outside consumption only. Drinks will be delivered in disposable plastic “glasses” to a table positioned at the fire door at the front of the bar, with a one-way queueing system. Hand sanitiser and paper towels will be available and ONLY contactless payment (card or phone) can be accepted. You are welcome to sit at the tables on the patio (which will be spread out to include the lawn outside the swimming pool) or if you prefer to set up your own gazebos etc on the main green. We would have no objection to gazebos being left up from Friday afternoon until Sunday evening, but they would need to be removed so that the gardeners can mow the grass on Monday mornings. It will be your own responsibility to respect social distancing.

We also now have the option to reopen the play areas from Saturday. We are currently looking at the risk assessment and the gardeners are checking the equipment and surroundings for safety and removing weeds etc. We will issue a further update once these checks are complete. Please do not allow children to use the play area until we send out a formal notice that it is open and the conditions for safe use.

Obviously, the rules are changing quite quickly, and we are reviewing the situation on a regular basis.

Email systems

The previous mass email and contact database had numerous issues, not least that more than one “master” copy was in use. Our apologies to anyone who received unwanted emails as a

consequence. We have done our very best to collate all the information to provide a single clean list. The new system is now live, and you will soon be receiving emails from info@delamerepark.co.uk.

One of the major improvements is that we now have 4 levels of opt-in for you to choose how many emails we send to you. The first email will invite you to check that you are in the correct list for the information that you wish to receive. The 4 levels available are:-

1. **No mass emails:** If you do not want to receive any emails from DPML except for individual communication from us when we need to contact you for a specific reason, then we are happy to hold your email address on that basis. However, you will not get any notifications of general meetings or important updates relating to Covenants, Bye Laws etc. We strongly advise that at least one plot owner for each plot is registered to receive at least level 2 emails as below.
2. **Contractual emails only:** Necessary information relating your contract with DPML (via the Covenants and Deed of Trust) such as General meeting notices, plot fee information, trustee updates, Bye Law changes and other information related to the Covenant etc. **It is really important that at least one of the owners of each property is subscribed to these emails** otherwise you may miss really important information.
3. **Contractual emails plus Property change requests:** All the emails contained in 1) above plus notifications of new property change requests. This group will get a notification email whenever a property change request is submitted to the Trustees. It is entirely your choice as to whether you receive these or not, but if you choose not to get these notifications then you would need to frequently check the notice board (or front door during lockdown) to see what change requests are awaiting comments before a decision is made. Otherwise you are likely to miss the deadline for your comments to be considered.
4. **All emails:** This includes 3) above plus emails notifying of events in the bar or run by community groups, homewatch news and other information which the trustees have approved as being relevant to residents of the Park.

All emails from the new system should have a link at the bottom for you to email the office if you wish to change your email preferences. Several residents at the same property may be listed, and each may have a different preference level.

We hope that this will be a more flexible system to deliver information to residents and plot owners and to better comply with GDPR etc.

Property sales

The property sales market seems to have had a massive revival this month and we have had several enquiries from both buyers and sellers. During lockdown we have made substantial changes to how we will process property transfers, new plot owner covenants and compliance certificates etc.

All parts of the sales process are now handled in house by Lucy and her team. We no longer subcontract any part of the process to Rowlinsons.

The “pack” information is now freely available to all plot owners/purchasers via the office (Most of it will be available on the website soon, see below). There is now a single fee of £200+VAT (£240) payable to DPML by the purchaser before a Compliance Certificate will be issued. There are no fees for sellers of properties.

To support this process, we have produced a Seller information sheet which is attached to this update. We have also produced a companion sheet for purchasers. Both are available from the office.

It will be an enormous help if plot owners can keep the office up to date with any sales processes. Please let us know as soon as you put your house on the market and then when you have accepted an offer etc. We will do our best to make things work as smoothly as possible.

A few issues have arisen recently with rented properties on the Park. Probably the most concerning is tenants who are not aware of the terms of the Covenants and are potentially putting their landlords at risk of action against them under the Covenants. There are now information sheets for landlords and tenants available from the office. These give advice on how to minimise problems for all parties.

Property change requests

We have also made significant changes to the property change system. We attach a copy of the guidance that we will use going forward to manage change requests. We have had a flurry of requests recently, some of which probably do not need approval (e.g. low level changes in back gardens or removing recently planted trees without a TPO) but the Trustees feel that this is not necessarily a bad idea and are happy to approve a few extra change requests rather than have far more work investigating reports of possible breaches of Covenants later on.

One significant change is that if approval is given work must be completed within 3 years, or the approval will lapse. It is possible to apply for an extension in due course if needed. Over the next few months, we will be contacting any plot owners where our records show approvals but where there has been no obvious change to the property - so we can tidy up any lapsed approvals.

Key Fobs

Obviously, these have not been in use for a while. However, as lockdown is eased we understand that we will be required by government regulations to keep much more rigorous records of who has been in the building for "track and trace" purposes. Entry to the building when we are allowed to re-open will be strictly by Key fob/card only and "tailgating" will not be allowed. We also now have a new electronic sign-in system for guests, which you will also need a key fob to access.

If you haven't got a key fob or card, please contact the office now and Lucy will set up new fobs to be available for you when we re-open. If you leave it till the last minute, there may be delays before you can access the facilities. Key fobs are free of charge to all plot owners and their resident household. If you have previously been issued a fob but lost it, there is a charge of £5 for a replacement. Tenants who have been assigned access rights by their plot owner/landlord may apply for fobs. In the case of tenants and their resident household, a deposit of £5 per fob is required. The deposit will be refunded if the fobs are returned at the end of the tenancy.

Gardeners

We have had a lot of compliments from residents about what a good job the Gardeners are doing, The Trustees entirely agree with these compliments and have thanked Aiden and Chris as well. You may have noticed the gardeners trialling a new ride-on mower this week. It seems to be much faster and does a very neat job, and will hopefully save them a lot of time during the summer grass cutting season.

OGM

It seems very unlikely given social distancing rules we will be able to fit over a hundred folks into the Park room anytime soon. Also, even if restrictions are eased, we are aware that a lot of plot owners are in high risk groups and will probably not feel safe attending a large group meeting. In view of these facts, the Trustees have concluded that a "live" OGM is not a realistic option this year.

The Deed of Trust does in fact only require an OGM "at least every third year", but the Trustees feel that it is important that we report to the plot owners this year in particular, so we will need an alternative way to run the "meeting".

Unless there are major changes to the social distancing rules, we will be sending out a request for motions and nominations during July. These motions will then be sent out along with as much for/against information as we can collate alongside Trustee reports, accounts, budget etc in mid August, with a request for questions on any of the papers/motions etc. We will then re-circulate the motions along with answers to the questions (from the Trustees or motion sponsors as appropriate) a couple of weeks later and ALL motions/approvals/nominations etc will have postal/email voting papers sent out (note there will be no formal proxies this year though of course you could delegate a third party to send in your postal vote if you so choose). The votes will be collated and reported towards the end of September.

We appreciate that this isn't ideal, but it seems to be the only option in these strange times.

DPML Website

We are currently working on substantial changes to the website. The first change is to remove the Oak leaf logo (which isn't our copyright anyhow) and replace it with the much-loved squirrel logo.

We hope we will also have a live view of the room booking calendar. You won't be able to book through the website, but you will be able to see when given facilities are already booked. We will also be able to give access to most of the paperwork and advice/guidance for property sales and changes. However, these changes will take a while so don't be surprised if the website seems a bit disjointed in the meantime.

If anyone has any attractive photos of the Park that you are happy for us to use to update the site please could you email them to estatesmanager@delamerepark.co.uk. Any photos need to be copyright-free and not have identifiable people on them.

Finally, Lyndon would like to see if it is possible to set up a history page on the website. If anyone has any photos of the Park through the years that you would be happy for us to use, please let him know via the estate manager email above. If they are hard copy prints, we could possibly arrange at some point to borrow them and scan them.

The Trustees