

Bringsty Common Manorial Court

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting on 13th September 2017 at Whitbourne Village Hall

Present:

1. Apologies for absence

none

2. Chairman's report

There was nothing to report that was not being covered by the agenda.

Allan had a question about insurance, for which we currently pay approximately £300 per year, which he felt was too much. This was discussed and it was agreed that he would ask the brokers for a review. Paul said we should also check with George Thompson. Mike suggested that 3rd party cover might be sufficient.

3. Treasurer's report

The cheque made payable to Whitbourne Village Hall for £12 outstanding from the previous financial year has now been cashed and we have had a direct debit paid to Open Spaces for £45. We have received £4883.65 from the Rural Payments Agency.

Audit

This is in the process of being prepared. The treasurer, with the support of the committee, stated that he wished to clarify some points with the auditor before the report was finalised.

4. Official Business

None

5. Parish Reports

a. Ward Councillor - Nigel Shaw

HCC has now disposed of all smallholdings and farms so George Thompson should be more available.

The recent re-surfacing of the A44 and accompanying road closures were done without prior notification to Nigel. Worcestershire County Council and HCC are planning a joint bid for money to re-surface all of the A44 west of Worcester.

The acquisition of grit bins for the track to the Live & Let Live is in hand.

Peter Hall asked what is going to be done about the large potholes on the track by the pub. Allan said that George Thompson is trying hard to get all the issues associated with these resolved.

b. Brockhampton - Paul Friend

Brockhampton group parish council approved funding for the refurbishment of the footpath at Upper Norton, which has been done.

It was suggested by the group that The Commoner should be published on their new website. This was agreed by the committee.

A meeting has taken place to discuss the issues relating to increased use of the access to the motocross venue on the Malvern road.

c. Whitbourne – Anne Evans

Anne asked if The Commoner could be published on the Whitebourne website as well. This was agreed.

The local PCSO is holding a few meetings in the village hall about cyber theft. Future dates are 21st September and 30th September.

Action: Tom to arrange for The Commoner to appear on both the Whitbourne and Bromyard Downs websites.

6. Public Questions

None

7. Matters Arising from Minutes of last meeting

a. Stewardship grants

Our application for this grant was turned down by Natural England. Allan has arranged another meeting with them for 20th September, when he intends put the case very strongly for a re-assessment. A lot of hard work went into our application which seems to have been arbitrarily dismissed.

Action: Allan to report on the outcome of the meeting with NE

b. Marley Cottage

There has been a lot of correspondence on the subject of a fire break around this address. Allan has spoken to the occupants who are not concerned and happy to deal with it themselves. The committee expressed various views on the subject which were discussed. Finally it was proposed that we will mow round it annually at the same time as the fire breaks are cut. This was put to the vote with a majority in favour. Allan will speak to Dave Manton. This item is carried forward to the next meeting.

Action: Allan to speak to Dave Manton

c. Constitution – response from HCC

Nigel has chased George Thompson who has promised to reply by the end of September.

d. Hay disposal

The incineration plant are not interested in taking the hay and no-one else wants it so we are disposing of it as best we can by distributing it at various places on the common.

e. Scrub work

Paul thinks Brackenburn are doing a good job of scrub control but if there are any areas of particular concern they should be mentioned.

f. Owl boxes

The rough cost will be £50 per box. Our plan to put up owl boxes had a mention in the June edition of the Commoner. As a result we have had several offers of sponsorship and an also an offer to help putting them up. Paul intends to make 5.

g. Woodland management scheme

Dan Wencek has put in an application on our behalf for a grant to pay for a woodland management plan, which he thinks will be successful. If so, it will pay for the production of a plan for a further grant for the work. There are approximately 10 ha. of woodland on the common.

h. Mowing

The mowing has been completed. The contractors do not seem to have stuck to the detailed plan which was supplied to them but at least they did cut it as high as they could, and later than in previous years. It was decided that we will make it easier in future; cut later and to a simpler plan.

i. Dormouse training/monitoring

36 of the recently installed boxes were checked on 31st July. No dormice were present but a pygmy shrew was. They will be checked again soon.

Paul and Claire have received training but have not yet applied for licences to handle the animals.

8. New Business

a. Trees on south slope of Jubilee

There are some trees on the south slope that are blocking/will block the view, which is one of the special features of the common. Allan proposed that they should be felled and left in situ as they are in an area that is never cut. Paul suggested making a log pile for the benefit of wildlife, and it was also felt that a few of the branches might need

trimming. Allan said he would talk to Hugh Davies and get some idea of the costs. This will be discussed further at the next meeting in November.

Action: Allan to talk to Hugh

b. Visit by Butterfly Conservation

The main purpose of this visit was to see how we could improve the late food supplies for butterflies. Tom reported there was a positive reaction to the way we are managing the common. They did suggest collecting green hay from somewhere like Bromyard Downs and spreading it to increase the diversity of flowers. The committee agreed to the idea, so the chairman suggested a small group to plan, organise and cost the project for next year. The group will consist of Peter, Paul and Tom who will make an initial report to the committee at the next meeting.

Action: Peter, Paul and Tom to start planning for the green hay in 2018

c. Football pitch – change of use?

Peter thinks the pitch should be turned into a conservation area as its use as a football pitch is limited. Allan felt that the local councils should be consulted, as they have been annually funding the mowing of the pitch. Sport England also check annually that it is still in use as a recreational area. Tom felt it should remain as a football pitch as it is the only dedicated recreational area on the common. Having listened to everybody's views Allan said that we should maintain the status quo, unless funding is withdrawn.

No further action.

d. Track to Home Farm – enquiry from the National Trust

Allan reported that he had received a request from the National Trust for a contribution towards the cost of maintaining the track to Home Farm, because the council intends to withdraw refuse collections owing to the poor state of the track. Allan refused the request, as neither we nor HCC have any obligation to maintain the tracks on the common, apart from the BOAT. He has heard nothing further.

e. Brackenburn

They have been and cut the bracken, and seem to have cut a bigger area than last year. The committee all feel that they are doing a good job which will hopefully help to improve the overall biodiversity.

9. AOB

Sue mentioned that she has applied to HCC for permission to create a new access to her property. She was told to gain permission from the Manorial Court. This was put to the vote and passed unanimously.

Claire said she had seen motorbikes on the Jubilee. If they can be identified then the police should be notified as they are aware of the problem and will take action. Tom suggested a mention in The Commoner that this is the case. The concern is the danger they pose to users of the common. As a committee we take this issue very seriously.

Peter mentioned that Butterfly Conservation suggested rolling up the bracken along the sides of the rides, as this could help to encourage the return of butterflies such as fritillaries. There is a possibility of a small grant from them for this work. This was discussed briefly and it was agreed that Paul would talk to Ashley about the cost of doing it. Allan suggested that Paul could also ask him about the idea of cutting the grass in late September, rather than the end of August.

Action: Paul to talk to Ashley

Nigel mentioned that the latest Ofsted inspection of Brockhampton school, which had been in 'special measures', has now rated them as 'good'.

Next Meeting

The AGM will take place on Saturday 14th October 2017 in the large room.

Claire and Carol volunteered to organise the refreshments. The speaker will be Martin Harvey, who will be talking about online recording systems for wildlife.

The next ordinary meeting will be held in the small room on Wednesday 8th November 2017 at 7.30 p.m.