**Bringsty Common Manorial Court**

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting**

**on Monday 13th February 2023, by Zoom**

**Attendees:**

Catherine Fuller (Chair), Tom Fisher (Vice-Chair), Peter Bridge (Treasurer),

Elizabeth Hesketh (Clerk), Jenny Creek, Niall Waller, Tim Phillips, Donna Simcox-Bird, Martin Boote, Cllr. Nigel Shaw (Ward Councillor), Sally Knowles (Whitbourne Parish Council), Peter Stoddart (Conservative Councillor Candidate)

1. **Apologies for absence**

Kirsty Udall

1. **Minutes of the meeting of 29th November 2022**

Approved.

1. **Questions and comments from the public**

 Peter Stoddart, prospective conservative councillor, introduced himself. He has been a parish councillor (Brockhampton) for 7 years and now hopes to be elected to represent Bringsty / Bromyard East when Councillor Nigel Shaw steps down.

Chair has received email from Bringsty Common residents concerning (i) request for large scale cutting of trees outside their property and (ii) planting occurring on the Common. Agreement that these issues would be discussed within agenda items.

1. **Chair’s report**

The Chair had nothing to add to comments within agenda items below.

Priorities for this meeting were (i) Woodland Management Plan (ii) tree planting occurring currently on Common.

 Chair gave notice that she would not be standing for re-election at next AGM (23.10.23)

1. **Treasurer’s report**

Statement of Accounts (circulated prior to February meeting): Treasurer outlined two additional expenditures and one outstanding payment but reported that BCMC finances are currently healthy.

BCMC has a main interest paying bank account with Lloyds. Some funds will shortly be transferred to a second fixed rate (Lloyds) account where funds will reside for 6 months and will accrue a higher rate of interest. The Treasurer invited suggestions from Committee members re other accounts which would (i) pay competitive interest and (ii) only tie up money for a short period.

1. **Official Business**
2. **Dates of meetings for 2023:** Suggestion that it would be helpful to schedule BCMC meetings on a fixed day / time within a month. Monday was identified as the most convenient day of week. Agreement that once decided, meeting dates should be honoured as far as possible.

**BCMC meeting dates for 2023**

(i) Wednesday, 31st May, 19-30 - 21-30

(ii) Monday, 4th September\*, 19-30 - 21-30

(iii) Monday, 13th November, 19-30 - 21-30.

BCMC AGM Monday, 23rd October, 19-30 - 21-30

\*Clerk has two week holiday in September (yet to be confirmed but will try to avoid including this date)

1. **Format of meetings:** Discussion (i) whether meetings should all be face-to-face or alternate between face-to-face-and zoom and (ii) venue for face-to-face meetings. Agreement that all future 2023 meetings will be face-to-face and held at Whitbourne Village Hall.
2. **Matters Arising and Actions from meeting of 29th November, 2022**
3. **Draft Welcome pack:** This is now complete and has been circulated, but possibly requires a little crafting to make generic for Bringsty Common.

**ACTION**: Contact Cllr. Shaw with suggestions / comments **All**

1. **Generic email address:** Clerk now has a generic email address clerk@bringstycommon.org.uk)

**ACTION:** To ask Phillipa Clayburn, Editor ‘The Commoner’, whether she wants a generic email address **Niall**

1. **Woodland Management Plan (WMP):** Vice Chair relayed the excellent news that the 10-year funding agreement for implementing the WMP has now been ratified by Rural Payments Agency (RPA) and is effective from 01.01.22 (funding back dated from this time is anticipated). Money will be transferred to BCMC bank account every 6 months. The Vice Chair confirmed the need for an auditable evidence trail of work (e.g. record of what has been done / before and after photos showing increased light / plant growth below trees) and has asked RPA for clarification re what is required. The Vice Chair proposed a contractor to carry out the work and has checked their insurance and chainsaw licence. The Vice Chair proposed that work for WMP should commence in a small-scale manner to get a feel for how things will proceed (suggested a small area of woodland between Jubilee and A44).

All in agreement that (i) the donation from RPA should be accepted and that work should commence as soon as possible (ii) the contractor proposed by the Vice Chair should be employed at their specified day rate for a maximum of 10 days for this year, 2023.

Email received from a Bringsty Common resident who wants a number of trees felled outside their property. The Vice Chair confirmed that the WMP, as approved by the Forestry Commission and agreed by Herefordshire Council, only concerns the thinning and some limited coppicing of trees rather than wholesale felling of trees. Cllr Shaw advised that permission would be required from Herefordshire Council if work was carried out over and above that stated in the WMP and that this would be unlikely to be granted.

Niall raised the concern that the current management approach looked to have the long-term effect of turning areas of open Common land into woodland and that this would not be welcomed by all residents and users of Bringsty Common. The Vice Chair advised that specific objectives of the WMP should not be confused with the more general issue of scrub management. Agreement that this issue requires further discussion.

**ACTIONS**:

(i)To publish a timetable and schedule of work for WMP and to send to Chair for circulation **Vice Chair**

(ii) Bringsty Resident (who requests felling of trees outside their property) to be provided with a copy of the schedule of work **Vice Chair**

(iii) Scrub Management – to carry forward to May agenda **Clerk**

**d. Plant a Tree for the Jubilee:** Nothing further to report. To remove item from future agenda

**e. Platinum Jubilee ‘lessons learnt:** Chair thanked contributors and has circulated this document to committee members. Further contributions welcomed. Learning should support future community events.

**ACTION:** To upload document to ‘Google Documents’ **Clerk**

**f. Draft Plan of Works – Herefordshire Council funding:** Three-year funding focusing on grassland track enhancement. This to be achieved through (i) track cutting twice a year; first (high) cut in May, second cut in September (ii) grassland cutting in September (iii) native wildflower planting by conservation group (ongoing) (iv) bracken bruising during recommended time of July/ August.

Advantages of bracken bruising by horse (competitive pricing, allows invertebrates to escape and more effective cutting of undulating ground) vs. tractor were discussed. Chair clarified that the aim of bracken bruising is not complete destruction of the bracken but facilitation of more biodiverse areas including wildflowers, grassland and patches of bracken. The literature suggests it will take about 3 years before effects are evident (Cllr Shaw).

Jenny volunteered to take photographs 4 times a year to keep a record / proof of work carried out and its effects.

Treasurer volunteered to work with the Chair to decide the trial area to bracken bruise, how work should be carried out (e.g. via tractor / horse), costings etc.

**ACTION**: To firm up plan for bracken bruising; to liaise with contractor **Chair**

**g. Tree planting:** Forty-three saplings have been planted in an open area on the top of the Jubilee, beside the new oak trees. Mike Davis is happy with this positioning but is amenable to moving the saplings to a nearby downhill area of bracken (marked in pink in aerial photograph supplied by Niall) if this is consensus of BCMC. Reasons for doing latter include (i) preservation of a popular open area which affords a lovely view and (ii) to facilitate the control of bracken growth (iii) to ensure that community events such as lighting of beacon will continue to be possible.

Discussion took place and included the option to cease planting further trees on Common, including within bracken, as this would eventually turn over open Common land to woodland and change the nature of the environment.

Treasurer and Councillor Nigel Shaw suggested that trees should be planted with enough space between them to allow bracken bruising to occur which would help the saplings establish themselves more quickly. This would entail planting in fairly uniform rows and would have the short-term effect of turning the area into grassland.

Majority agreement (one abstention) that the new saplings should be moved from current location to ‘pink area’.

Majority agreement (no abstentions) to replant the new saplings in a grid pattern with channels / pathways between the trees to allow bracken bruising to occur.

Chair asked for volunteers to replant the saplings – Niall, Peter, Martin, Nigel, Tom, Jenny offered to help**.**

**ACTION:**

Volunteers to replant the saplings as soon as possible. Chair to circulate date **Chair**

**h. Guidelines for residents:** These are now in third iteration (includes new section on bonfires) and have been circulated to committee members. Cllr. Shaw proposed that guidelines be placed on the website and advertised within ‘The Commoner’. Cllr. Shaw also to explain rule re mowing within 10 metres outside the boundary of a resident’s property as some residents are unclear about this.

**ACTION**: To publicise guidelines for residents **Cllr Shaw**

 **(i) Dog Mess /Control notices**: Cllr. Shaw has erected four A4 sized aluminium notices – 2 in the car park as turn down to the pub and two on the big gatepost at entrance to the football field. To mention these on website. **Niall**

1. **New Business**
	1. **Commemorative tree planting / ashes / plaques – policy**: Cllr Shaw has followed up with Helen Beale, Herefordshire Council. Has informed that scattering of ashes is acceptable but that ashes should not be interred, or commemorative trees planted (e.g. in the football field).

**ACTION**:

To follow-up with Helen Beale (HDC) to check resident has been contacted **Cllr Shaw**

* 1. **The Commoner**: Cllr Shaw highlighted the need for BCMC committee members to be proactive about providing the editor with copy for ‘The Commoner’.

**ACTION**: To retain issue of contributing to ‘The Commoner’ on future agendas  **Clerk**

* 1. **Role of Clerk**: Discussion re advantages of having a shared area (such as Google Documents) to store and collate documents. Majority agreement that this would be useful.

**ACTION**: To set up shared area **Clerk**

* 1. **Harlequins Orienteering Club:** Not discussed during this meeting.

**ACTION:** To carry forward to May agenda **Clerk**

1. **Parish Reports**
	1. **Ward Councillor Shaw.** Raised issues re sugar beet, a resident’s concern re an ‘encroachment’ and speed camera van operating in the car park opposite the Smithy’s. Cllr Shaw has reported lack of signage on the Bringsty bends (have disappeared).

Chair thanked Cllr Shaw for the 8 years he has acted as the Herefordshire council representative for the Manorial Court.

* 1. **Brockhampton (no current representative)**
	2. **Whitbourne – Sally Knowles:** The Live and Let Live Pub is open and offering a small menu on Friday and Saturday. No news re Wheatsheaf. The Garden Society is having a Spring Show on Saturday 25th March 2023 in the Village Hall (entry forms in magazine).

Next committee meeting, Whitbourne Parish Council is on1st March 2023.

There was no further business, so the meeting was closed.

**The next ordinary meeting will be held at Whitbourne Village Hall**

**on Wednesday, 31st May 2023, from 19:30 – 21:30**