**Minutes of Bringsty Common Manorial Court**

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

**at Whitbourne Village Hall**

**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, Kirsty Udall, Bringsty Common Resident

1. **Apologies for absence**

Sally Knowles (Whitbourne Parish Council), Cllr Peter Stoddart (Hereford County Council)

1. **Minutes of the meeting of 13 02/ 2023**

Approved.

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

Bringsty Common resident reported that he has walked on the Common over the last 13 years and is concerned that scrub and tree growth are increasingly obstructing paths and obscuring views. Enquired whether BCMC (Bringsty Common Manorial Court) had plans to trim back trees. Chair advised that these issues would be addressed within later agenda items.

Jenny Creek reported that a neighbour had observed willow cuttings left - possibly by an electricity company during their recent maintenance work- at the back of the cricket pitch and was concerned that they were impeding access to the three scrapes area of BC (Bringsty Common) and may ultimately turn into willow scrub if not removed.

**ACTION:**

To contact the identified Electricity Company to ascertain whether they were responsible for the waste and, if so, to request its removal Chair

1. **Chair’s report**

Chair has given notice that she would not be standing for re-election at next AGM 23.10.23

Other issues for discussion by The Chair to be raised within agenda items.

1. **Treasurer’s report**

Statement of Accounts for this year has been circulated. Treasurer reported no activity since this time other than a small amount of interest accrued from the BCMC Lloyds bank account. Treasurer advised that the interest rate will drop after 20.07.23 when the 6-month fixed rate period terminates. Treasurer queried whether Committee Members wanted to renew the fixed rate in July or preferred to wait until the AGM in September when new Committee Members may be elected and have different views re management of the funds. Discussion ensued re whether and how to invest BCMC funds for maximum effect. Chair confirmed that outgoings for BC upkeep over a 12-month period are largely predictable. It should therefore be relatively straightforward to identify an amount of money which could be put away for a longer period to achieve a better rate of interest. Committee members acknowledged that banking services offered to clubs and societies are more restricted than for regular personal or business accounts but agreed that attempts should be made to achieve the best interest rate available.

**ACTION**:

To investigate options and to circulate a proposal to Committee Members. To consult with Donna Simcox-Bird’s husband who may be able to advise. Treasurer

1. **Official Business**

Clerk asked for feedback re minutes in terms of length and relevance of content. No changes suggested by Committee Members. Agreement that minutes and agenda should be posted on the two Bringsty Common noticeboards as well as on the BC website and Facebook page.

**ACTIONS**:

1. To post minutes and agenda on noticeboards Clerk
2. To post minutes and agenda on Facebook Chair
3. To post minutes and agenda on BC website Niall
4. To circulate minutes and draft agenda asap following BCMC meetings and to finalise and circulate draft agenda two weeks prior to following BCMC meeting Clerk
5. To set up Google Docs resource for BCMC and to feedback re its usability Clerk, Jenny
6. **Matters Arising and Actions from meeting of 13th February, 2023**
7. **Dog mess/control notices**

Several notices have now been placed around BC (e.g. football pitch, Live and Let Live Pub)

**ACTION:**

To circulate where notices have been placedChair

1. **Woodland Management Plan (WMP)**

As discussed in February BCMC meeting, the 10-year funding agreement for implementing the WMP has been ratified by Rural Payments Agency (RPA). Vice Chair has had email confirmation that the agreement ‘is now live’. However, no payment has yet been received. Funding back dated from 01.01.22 is anticipated and the expectation is that funds will be transferred to BCMC bank account every 6 months. The Vice Chair has contacted RPA re the lack of payment. To date, email have received an automated acknowledgement. Vice Chair is reluctant to proceed further until the funding appears but envisages work commencing Winter 2023. A contractor has been appointed and a schedule of work will be circulated.

**ACTIONS**:

1. To continue to chase up RPA re payment of agreed funding Vice Chair
2. To circulate schedule of work for WMP Vice Chair

**Bringsty Common Tree Planting Map:** Vice Chair, with help from Mike Davis, has produced a map of which trees have been planted on the Common and where these trees are. Map includes fruit trees planted 10 years ago as well as the recent planting. All agreed that the map is a very useful record of tree planting activity. Ideas were mooted re. further developing this resource: (i) including activity generated through the WMP; (ii) making a digital version of the map that could be posted on BC website and Facebook page; (iii) including information within The Orienteers’ map of the Common; (iv) including information about dates and numbers of trees planted at particular points.

**ACTIONS**:

1. To update BC Tree Planting map to include information re WMP and to consider further development of map. Jenny and Donna offered help Vice Chair
2. **Herefordshire District Council (HDC) funded Plan of Works:**

Chair reminded BCMC of the terms of this recent, one-off, lump sum paid by HDC into BCMC bank account. After consultation with residents, BCMC have a signed agreement with HDC specifying how the money will be spent (i.e., primarily on track cutting but also on grassland cutting, native wildflower planting and bracken bruising). This is essentially our plan for the next 5 years of expenditure. Further money from HCC is unlikely to be forthcoming so it needs to last as long as possible. There was agreement that the lack of future funding for the day-to-day management of BC was a concern as funds will run out within 10 years, and that there is a need to seek a longer-term and sustainable solution. Currently, the costs for the upkeep of BC can largely be anticipated and outgoings are captured in the Annual Statement of Accounts circulated by the Treasurer. Discussion ensued concerning the possible benefits and need to protect commercial sensitive information when drawing up a budget with costings. This would be reviewed annually to ascertain whether it had been exceeded. A budget would also support the development of a financial plan for the management of BC which could support future applications for funding from other agencies.

**ACTIONS**:

1. To upload agreement between HDC and BCMC on Google Documents for members of BCMC to consult. Clerk
2. To start a proposal for a financial plan Treasurer, Niall

Agreement with HDC includes taking photographs to evidence changes in biodiversity resulting from the Plan of Works. Photographic record is needed of biodiversity currently as well as resulting from the plan implementation. The Plan of Works has been circulated previously to members of BCMC and is now being implemented (i) **Track cutting**: to occur twice a year, wider cut than previously, with the first and higher (to allow more light for wildflower growth) cut of 12-18 inches occurring in June. Second cut will occur in August-September when bracken is fully grown (ii) **Grassland cutting**: to occur, as currently, annually and as late as possible (September / October) to support biodiversity. Have already been positive comments made by users of BC re increased wildflower growth. (iii) **Tree and wildflower planting**: this has been occurring over recent months (iv) **Bracken bruising**: to trial the effectiveness of bracken bruising using horsepower on a small, predetermined area adjacent to grassland during late July / early August. Treasurer informed that in previous years, bracken cut on a three-year rotation had impeded growth / spread more effectively than bracken cut on a five-year rotation (where, at the end of year five, there was no appreciable effect). Discussion ensued re *why* bracken is to be bruised. Chair informed meeting that trial bracken bruising of a small area of BC is one of the conditions of the funded agreement with HDC and so funding might be at risk if the trial did not go ahead. Chair reminded the meeting that the inclusion of the bracken bruising trial had previously been approved by members of BCMC.

**ACTIONS:**

1. To select 10 locations over BC to photograph annually and to pinpoint these areas. Jenny,

Chair

1. To meet with contractor to discuss bracken bruising; to circulate proposal re area / hours of work and to liaise with Jenny re area to photograph Chair, Vice Chair

A concern was raised that some residents are continuing to mow outside the permitted boundary of their property which is likely to be detrimental to the wildflower initiative. BCMC has no jurisdiction here but will request that the HDC ‘Guidelines for Residents’ are followed once these have been approved by Helen Beale, HDC.

**ACTIONS:**

1. To ask Cllr Peter Stoddart to chase up the ratification of ‘Guidelines for Residents’ with Helen Beale and to report back to next BCMC meeting Chair
2. **Scrub / bracken management**

It was queried whether devising a long-term management plan for BC would be useful, our current plan is for 5 years. It was noted that funding applications would have to fulfil the specifications of the funding source - which may well differ from residents’ preferred vision for the Common. It was suggested we revisit the previous long-term plan for BC presented to Natural England. Both the current plan and that to Natural England were devised after consultation with residents. Natural England plan has now ceased chiefly because the proximity of A44 makes grazing (a key criteria for Natural England funding) on BC unviable.

Agreed any future tree planting will be checked with BCMC before proceeding.

**ACTION:**

To examine current mission statement and previous long-term plan for BC and to propose a way forward re the formulation of an updated vision for Common Vice Chair, Martin

1. **Generic email address for Editor of ‘The Commoner’**

Current editor declined offer of generic email address.

1. **Contributions for ‘The Commoner’**

Current editor of The Commoner has assumed this role for the last 2 years and is now stepping down. Chair to formally thank the Editor for all her hard work. Discussed how the role could be split into several constituents e.g. someone to (i) actively seek and receive contributions (ii) edit and format contributions (iii) organise the printing (currently ‘The Commoner’ largely distributed electronically but probably would be more widely read if paper copy) (iv) distribute the magazine. Discussed simplifying ‘The Commoner’ to a short newsletter for residents concerning things that are happening on BC.

**ACTIONS:**

1. To post on Facebook / BC website request for volunteers for ‘The Commoner’ Chair, Niall
2. To contact The Chair if interested in volunteering. BCMC Committee, BC Residents
3. To check whether Graham is happy to print ‘The Commoner’ Chair
4. To thank existing editor Chair

1. **New Business**
   1. **Dumping of waste on BC**

Have been reports of dumping of waste on BC. Chair requests that visitors and Residents refrain from dumping waste on the Common.

* 1. **Planting proposal to mark Coronation**

Discussed tree, scrub and wild-flower proposal from Mike Davis, which was not approved due to scale and costs, and lack of demand for a further commemorative tree at this time.

* 1. **Butterfly conservation funding**

Butterfly Conservation have contributed to BCMC funds on the understanding that grasslands are cut late in the year to support the butterfly population on the Common.

* 1. **Damage to Jubilee plaque**

Treasurer has repaired plaque – which now looks a little battle scarred - and suggests that it requires a higher stake as it is low to the ground and may get stepped on (again).

**ACTION:**

To buy a stake, screw on plaque and replace stake and plaque beside Jubilee oak Treasurer

* 1. **Harlequins Orienteering Club / Bringsty Common House Map**

Orienteering Club will be orienteering on BC on 17.08.23 and have also offered to talk at BCMC AGM.

Vice Chair informed meeting that the Orienteers have updated the BC House Map which will be a useful resource for residents (ideal size - A3)

**ACTIONS:**

1. To put supply of house maps on noticeboards Clerk
2. To put house map on Facebook Chair
3. To put house map on BC website Niall

1. **Parish Reports**

None received for this meeting.

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

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

**on Monday, 4th September 2023 from 19-30 - 21-30**