**Minutes of Bringsty Common Manorial Court**

**on Monday, 4th September 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, Martin Boote, Kirsty Udall, Peter Stoddart (Hereford County Council), Sally Knowles (Whitbourne Parish Council)

1. **Apologies for absence**

Tim Phillips, Donna Simcox-Bird.

1. **Minutes of the meeting of 31/05/23**

Approved.

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

No member of public present

1. **Chair’s report**

The Herefordshire management plan is now in operation. The horse-powered bracken bruising has taken place, and the outcome was positive; the first cutting of the grass tracks occurred in May with the second cut scheduled for October. Records of work (inc. photographs) are being kept. The Orienteering Club held a successful event on the Common. The speaker for October Bringsty Common Manorial Court (BCMC) AGM will be from the Orienteers.

1. **Treasurer’s report**

The end of year accounts (August 22 – July 23) have been circulated. Cost for bracken cut has increased, as anticipated. No queries from committee members re. accounts.

1. **Official Business**

Cathy confirmed that she will stand down as Chair and BCMC committee member at the coming AGM. Jenny will also be standing down as a committee member. Cathy thanked Jenny for her 12 years of invaluable service. Discussion ensued re. contingency planning in the eventuality of no chair being elected at the November BCMC meeting. Clarification was given that the newly elected Chair needs to be an actual resident of Bringsty Common (BC) and a BCMC committee member. Cathy offered temporarily to perform essential duties until November meeting so that actions such as countersigning payments made from the BCMC online bank account could continue to happen. The Vice Chair would also be able to do this. Cathy outlined the duties she has performed as Chair and agreed that a number of these tasks could be delegated to other committee members. Anyone considering putting themselves forward for the Chair role is encouraged to approach Cathy for a more depth discussion. Currently, residents of BC have been alerted concerning the need for new committee members / Chair via the BC Facebook site. Committee members agreed to enhance awareness raising by means of a ‘Your Committee Needs You’ type leaflet. This could possibly be distributed to BC residents by the five volunteers who used to deliver the ‘The Commoner’. Martin and Elizabeth also offered to help with this task.

**ACTIONS**:

* + - 1. Committee members to ask friends and family who live on BC to consider joining BCMC committee. All
      2. Advert re. AGM and request for new committee members to be placed on BC Facebook, website and the noticeboards. Cathy, Niall, Elizabeth
      3. Leaflet to be devised and volunteers organised to distribute across BC Kirsty, Niall

1. **Matters Arising and Actions from meeting of 31/05/23**
2. **AGM Planning**

Refreshments: Kirsty volunteered to take lead in organising light refreshments (e.g. cheese, bread, wine, soft drinks) for around 30 people for the AGM. A small budget is available to cover costs. Help offered from Elizabeth, Martin and possibly via. Peter. Jenny offered self as ‘first reserve’.

**ACTION:**

To buy, prepare and set up the refreshments at AGM. Kirsty supported by Elizabeth and Martin

Chair’s report and Speaker: Cathy has organised a speaker and will write a Chair’s report to read out at the AGM. Cathy may not be present to deliver this report in person.

**ACTION:**

Cathy to let Clerk know details of speakerCathy

1. **Investing BCMC funds**

Peter has approached a couple of financial institutions since the May meeting, but no progress has been made in locating a bank account which pays a more competitive rate of interest. Banking services offered to clubs and societies are a lot more restricted than for regular personal or business accounts. Peter has reinvested the BCMC funds which matured in July ‘23 with same bank but on a slightly higher 6-month fixed rate of interest (matures January 2024).

**ACTION**:

Inform Peter if know of financial institutions which pay more competitive rate of interest. All

1. **Proposal for a Financial Plan**

Niall and Peter shared the BC Financial Plan that they have been developing. Outgoings for BC upkeep over a 12-month period are largely predictable so it is feasible to identify an amount of money which could be tied up for a longer period to achieve a better rate of interest. However, although the current interest rate is low, interest paid does go some way to BC upkeep and is a main source of income. This year, as previously, donations have been received from the Butterfly Conservation Society (on condition that grasslands are cut late) and from Brockhampton and Whitbourne parishes (on condition that the football field is cut). Ongoing funding from the latter sources cannot be assumed. Discussion ensued re the proportion of money to hold in the instant access account (e.g. sufficient for 2 years’ BC upkeep) and the proportion tie up for 1-2 years to maximise interest. Cllr Stoddart suggested approaching Lloyds, where BC account is currently held, to see if another product is available. Other means of generating income were discussed (i) approaching residents on BC to ask for contributions to the upkeep of the Common (ii) revisiting the stewardship scheme with Natural England whereby payments would be made for actions such as clearing bracken and hosting school trips (iii) applying for National Lottery Heritage or Community Funding. This would require some development of BC as a resource for the wider community e.g. increased signage for walks, disabled access for BC view point, cycle track for children (see information from Martin circulated with September BCMC Agenda). Tom reviewed previous relationship BC had with Natural England whereby a stewardship agreement of 20 years came to an end in 2017. A feasibility study was carried out to secure a further 10 years of funding, but this wasn’t awarded largely due to absence of grazing on BC - concerns about animals escaping into the fast-moving A44 traffic being a factor here. This situation may be changing. Some grazing of sheep and horses is now occurring on a quieter area of BC. Cllr Stoddart suggested inviting James Hawkins to the next BCMC meeting to share his experiences of the current Stewardship Scheme and informed committee members about a traffic calming movable speed sign which will be used between the three local parishes. This will record the speed of every vehicle that goes past giving useful data re. compliance with speed limit.

**ACTIONS**:

* + - 1. To approach the Butterfly Society and the Parish Councils each year to report back how money has been spent and to ask for further donations. Chair or delegated Committee member
      2. To review available products which pay a higher rate of interest and to identify amount of money to tie up in a 1-2 year investment (from January 2024) Peter, Niall
      3. To forward information re current stewardship scheme with Natural England Cllr Stoddart

1. **Dissemination of info re BCMC minutes / agenda / use of Google Docs**

Information re actions of BCMC is being disseminated via BC Facebook page, website and noticeboards. Elizabeth reviewed benefits and limitations of using Google Docs to support effective information sharing between BCMC committee members. One positive is the facility to access and add to a discussion document rather individuals emailing comments for someone to collate. However, Google Docs does not have the flexibility of a ‘shared drive’. Elizabeth’s understanding is authorisation can be granted for committee members to view / edit individual documents, but not to access to Elizabeth’s organisation of BCMC documents. There was agreement that it would be useful to have a repository for organised documents that all committee members could access. Kirsty suggested the use of Drop Box for this purpose.

**ACTION:**

To investigate the use of Drop Box for the organisation of BCMC documents. Elizabeth

1. **Electricity Company and green waste left on BC.**

Cathy followed this up and discovered that no green waste had been left on BC by the Electricity Company.

1. **Dog mess / control notices**

There are two notices by the Jubilee and two by the football pitch.

**ACTION**: To place remaining notice on way marker post. Kirsty

1. **Damage to Jubilee plaque**

Peter has fixed the plaque.

**ACTION**: To buy and attach plaque to a post and to re-erect. Peter

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

Tom has circulated schedule of work for WMP including map of relevant areas of woodland. Tom has chased up Rural Payments Agency (RPA) re. when payment will be received and has now submitted a grant claim which should release the funds. WMP should have been operational from 01.01.22 but wasn’t formally approved by RPA until February 2023. Some uncertainty about whether funding will materialise for the 2022 year. However, this is a 10-year agreement which gives adequate time to complete all identified work. Initially, veteran trees in the specified area of woodland will be identified and then thinning will commence (compartments 16 and 17 by A44) during this winter.

1. **Bringsty Common Tree Map**

No further developments to report. Tree map will evolve to include woodland work within WMP etc.

1. **Bringsty Common House Map**

House map has been revised. To put on Facebook and BC website and to use BCMC funds to print and distribute copy of map to BC residents. Map to be delivered along with notification of AGM and nomination forms for BCMC committee membership.

**ACTION:**

To print and organise distribution of A4 sized BC house map to BC residents. Kirsty and Niall

1. **Herefordshire District Council (HDC) funded Biodiversity Plan**

Plan is now being implemented. The first cut of the tracks has occurred, and the second cut is scheduled for October 2023. The first grassland cut was high to preserve wildflower growth and the second cut will take place after end of September. Pilot bracken bruising of two different areas of BC (on east and on the south of Jubilee) has occurred and photographic evidence of outcome in terms of improving biodiversity is being kept by Cathy. Discussed possibly making a social occasion of a future horse-powered bracken bruising event e.g. use football pitch for refreshments, invite local school children to view spectacle etc. Further wildflower planting is included in Biodiversity Plan and will need to be organised with Mike Davis. Committee members agreed a budget for wildflower planting which needs to be included in the BC Financial Plan

**ACTIONS**:

1. Short report re. work being carried out to be written and sent to Helen Beale Cathy

1. To continue Cathy’s photographic record (x4 year) of biodiversity occurring on BC Niall (Peter)
2. **Scrub / bracken management – vision for BC**

Cathy reminded the meeting that a vision for BC for next five years does already exist. A survey of residents’ priorities for BC was carried out in 2018 as part of the Natural England feasibility study – this was used to inform writing of vision. Survey took about 12 months to design, administer, analyse and write up. Cathy has a copy to share if requested.

**ACTION:**

To refer to vision and ask for comments in Chair’s AGM report Cathy

1. **Guidelines for Residents**

Cllr Stoddart forwarded the draft ‘Guidelines for Residents’ to Helen Beale (Land Agent, HDC), as requested, who approved the document. This was then circulated to BCMC committee members for comment. A clarification is required (point e). The sentence ‘No trees or shrubs are permitted to be planted within 10 metres of the boundary of the property other than native trees (see appendix 1)’ needs to be included.

**ACTIONS:**

To contact Helen Beale to check that she is happy with suggested amendments Cathy

1. **‘The Commoner’**

No one has come forward to take on any part of producing ‘The Commoner’. Cathy suggested that a page could be written for the Whitbourne parish magazine outlining key things that were happening on BC. However, this would not be accessed by about 25% of BC residents. Cathy suggested that her AGM report could be distributed to BC residents along with House map and nomination forms.

**ACTIONS:**

1. To consider volunteering to organise regular BC update for Whitbourne parish magazine All
2. Chair’s report for AGM to be sent to Kirsty and Niall for distribution to BC residents Cathy

1. **New Business**
   1. **Fencing around the Gospel Oak**

Broken fencing has been reported by Cllr Stoddart and the repair has now been included in a council work programme.

* 1. **Upkeep of the football pitch**

Council funding is supporting the upkeep of the football pitch which is being cut about once a month. The football pitch is not suitable for hosting football games (too bumpy / too much dog mess) and so there is a need to report back on how the football pitch is being used as a community resource. Hosting further social events on the football pitch would be a good example of the latter.

1. **Parish Reports**
   1. **Ward Councillor: Peter Stoddart** (see report circulated with September BCMC agenda).

Outlined the re-siting and development of Hereford Library and the Hereford Museum. Filling of potholes is planned.

* 1. **Whitbourne**

Ron James continues as chair of parish council and two new members are Liz Kershaw and Nigel Shaw. Sally Knowles to continue in her role. The Wheatsheaf pub has been granted planning permission for one house and the Live and Let Live pub in the village is now for sale. Two new police officers have been employed in Bromyard, one of which will join Whitbourne meetings.

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

**The AGM will be held on Monday 23rd October 2023 at Whitbourne Village Hall from 19-30 - 21-30.**

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

**on Monday, 13th November 2023 from 19-30 - 21-30**