**Minutes of Bringsty Common Manorial Court**

**on Monday, 15th January 2024 from 19:00 – 21:00**

**at Whitbourne Village Hall**

**Attendees:**

Niall Waller (Chair ), Tom Fisher (Vice Chair) Peter Bridge (Treasurer),

Elizabeth Hesketh (Clerk), Martin Boote, Kirsty Udall, Ruth Lyon, Rob Randall, Cllr Peter Stoddart (Hereford County Council), Sally Knowles (Whitbourne Parish Council).

1. **Apologies for absence:** None
2. **Minutes of the meeting of 13.11.23**

Approved.

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

No member of public present

1. **Election of Bringsty Common Manorial Court (BCMC) Committee member**

Rob Randall elected as member of BCMC

1. **Chair’s report**

BCMC will no longer receive money from Butterfly Conservation Society (BSC) unless appropriate plan of intended work is submitted by BCMC and approved by BCS.

A Bringsty Common (BC) resident is concerned that a blue Honda has been parked in same place for two weeks by Bringsty Forge. This has been reported to the police and Herefordshire District Council (HDC).

Mike Davis conveyed through email conversation with Chair that he will no longer head up the BCMC Conservation Group unless BCMC develop a plan re way forward in terms of encouraging biodiversity, the aftercare of initiatives and rebuilding the volunteer group. Discussion ensued re (i) liaising with and benefitting from Mike Davis’s expertise and (ii) the health of tree whips recently planted on the Common.

**Action:** To invite Mike Davis to attend next BCMC meeting **Chair**

1. **Treasurer’s report**

Treasurer proposed proportions of BCMC funds to be retained as (i) instant access (ii) accessible after 6 months (iii) accessible after 12 months. No objections to proposal.

BCMC spends a considerable amount each year on insurance (public liability) but HDC appears to be meeting all or much of this cost for Bromyard Downs. Furthermore, Vice Chair raised issue that BC does not get income from wayleave payments - these monies are paid to HDC

**Action**: To seek clarification of what BC insurance covers and whether this insurance is appropriate. Chair; Cllr Stoddart to discuss with Helen Beale

1. **Official business: Meeting dates / use of Dropbox**

Clerk reviewed current arrangement re holding bimonthly ordinary meetings until BCMC elect to revert to previous meeting frequency.

Clerk confirmed that whilst documents concerning BCMC business could now be accessed by members of BCMC via Dropbox, minutes and agendas would continue to be circulated as previously at least for the time being. Two members of BCMC are not currently accessing Dropbox.

**Actions**:

1. To continue to circulate agenda and minutes as email attachments as well as uploading docs to Dropbox **Clerk**
2. To monitor whether BCMC members are notified when new documents are uploaded to Dropbox **Clerk**
3. To invite Rob Randall to Dropbox **Clerk**
4. **Parish Reports**
   1. **Ward Councillor**

Cllr Stoddart discussed local objectives as outlined in his recent Ward Councillor’s report (as circulated by Chair on 12.01.24). Additionally, the following issues were raised:

**Application for TOC** (Transformation of Communities) Community grants. This might be a source of funding that BCMC could access. Cllr Stoddart offered to invite a TOC Community coordinator to attend an ordinary meeting if this was an avenue that BCMC wished to explore.

**Action:** To send Chair information re TOC Community Grants **Cllr Stoddart**

**New 420 bus route** to Worcester (passing through Bromyard and Whitbourne). This service will operate 6 days / week and should commence February 2024

**Moveable safety camera** bought by Brockhampton PC – sites have been agreed and so it will soon be operation.

**Clearing drains and ditches, cutting hedges, cleaning signs** **on local C and U roads**. Work will commence shortly and will include the BOAT (Byway Open to all Traffic) on BC by ‘The Live and Let Live’ but not the other roads and tracks on the Common.

**Vehicles parked in lay-bys on A44**. Some BC residents are having problems driving onto A44 due to parked vehicles obscuring their visibility. Removal of these lay-bys has been requested and is being considered. Members of BCMC Chair agreed that whilst the safety of residents must be the first priority, maintaining visitor access to BC is also an important consideration.

* 1. **Whitbourne**

**Good News Story**: A dangerously large pothole appeared and was obscured by recent flood waters but was filled immediately the Emergency Team.

**Crumpleberry** has now been leased to a large Events Company who are looking to increase weddings / events. from 10 to 100 p.a. Whitbourne PC has requested a formal meeting with new managers to discuss what has been proposed

**Smartwater drop-in sessions**. Smartwater kits are being registered and distributed to residents during a series of 10 - 1 pm drop-in sessions. Details of these sessions are on Whitbourne Facebook page.

**Action:** To post the dates of sessions on Bringsty Facebook page Kirsty

(Cllr Stoddart left the meeting at this point)

1. **Matters Arising and Actions from 13.11.23.**
2. **Woodland Management Plan (WMP)**

Vice Chair has had contact with Rural Payments Agency (RPA) who assured him that outstanding payments for 2022 and 2023 would be made shortly. Some good news - DEFRA will be increasing rate of payment for work carried out in 2024.

Discussion ensued re the aims of the WMP. The WMP was developed in liaison with the Forestry Commission and was finalised in 2018. It encompasses a detailed specification of the work to be carried out and has the aim of improving the quality of BCMC woodland areas by carrying out modest amounts of trees thinning. The contractor has now completed work on compartments 15 and 16 (beside A44, Pudding Lane).

* 1. **Identification and delegation of responsibilities for routine management of BC**

Chair distributed a document entitled ‘Bringsty Common Management Summary (Nov 2023)’ to members of BCMC which outlined the following areas: Sources of income (HDC, WMP, Butterfly Conservation, maintenance of football pitch); Management activities (track and grassland cutting, bracken bruising trial, wildflower planting); Regular activities (Annual report and audit, AGM, Insurance, requests for money); Commitments (HDC funded management plan, WMP)

Discussion ensued re delegating the activities to fulfil the requirements of the HDC funded management plan:

**Track cutting twice a year:** Kirsty to take on the responsibility of liaising with Dave Manton

**Grassland cutting once a year:** Martin to take on the responsibility of liaising with Hugh Davis

**Bracken bruising:** Responsibility to be delegated.

**Wildflower planting:** None occurring currently – last planting of wildflower plugs carried out in December ‘23

**Photographic record of work carried out for HDC management plan**: Peter and Rob – Chair to advise re where photos need to be taken.

Discussion re timing of grassland cut – late enough to allow for seeding of wildflowers but early enough to allow for bad weather. Discussion re whether cut grass could be used for hay by local farmers. Challenges with this include the grass includes dog faeces and ragwort (a good source of nectar for moths and butterflies but considered dangerous for horses) and the ground is not organically certified.

**Actions:**

1. To seek advice / research the benefits and costs of different ways of managing the grassland cutting, including approaching local farmers who might cut and take away the hay

**Martin and Ruth**

1. To approach Whitbourne and Brockhampton PCs to request contribution for cutting of football pitch **Chair**
2. To advise re where photos need to be taken. **Chair**

**b. Identification and prioritisation of objectives for BC maintenance and development**

Current management plan runs from 2021 – 2025 which includes objectives for what is managed but is not specific re how objectives will be achieved and does not include a vision of what BC might look like 5 – 15 years hence. There is a need to review the BC Mission Statement.

Agreement that objectives should include (i) maintenance of work that has been carried out (e.g. Drovers’ Pond, scrapes) (ii) greater engagement with projects from BC residents (iii) making BC an interesting place which will attract visitors.

Chair proposed this agenda item should be the focus of the next ordinary meeting.

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

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

**on Monday, 11th March 2024 from 19-00 - 21-00**