

Minutes of the Bromyard Downs Common Association

General Meeting

Tuesday 17th July 2018

7:30 - 9:30 Falcon Hotel Bromyard

Committee Attendees

Jo Stoddart (Chair)
David Boddington
Jan Densham

James Hawkins (Vice Chair)
Nic Hinchcliffe
Ben Hiley

Lauren Smith (Secretary)
Clive Brazier (Treasurer)
Nigel Shaw

Public Attendees

Judy Mallet
Paul Symonds

Joseph Alsop

Anne Sayce

Nicki Howard

Welcome & Apologies for absence;

David Grant
Ray Pullen

Gill Churchill
Graham Cooper

Karen Rock

2. Action points

- 2.1 School poetry and art competition** – A poetry competition has already been covered by the poetry club; Decision made to leave for the time being.
Action closed
- 2.2 Closure of Dog bag dispensers** –noted on Facebook and on the website.
Action closed
- 2.3 Funding – Round the Downs Race** - Jo has discussed with Nigel but it's really not a profitable option and although Jo has offered her help in future event organising it's not an option for the BDCA.
Action closed
- Ben mentioned that the local Herefordshire Harriers running club would like to run an event on the Downs utilising the racecourse.
 - **Action** - Jo to contact the local Harriers club and discuss options
- 2.4 Guides planting of Memorial Tree** – David B to discuss with Pam Guiver.
Action ongoing - James to forward Pam's contact details to David to arrange meeting.
- 2.5 Funding** - Contact Parish and Town Council to see if any further funding is available to help with maintaining the Downs for the Town and Parish residents.
Action ongoing
- 2.6 Flower Survey** – The initial surveys are being held at Queenswood, Wildlife Trust, the Meadows group have also recently completed a survey on grasses.
Judy has discussed with her friend Hillary a botanist, and will take forward and maintain a survey of flowers through the seasons on the Downs. Also try and forge link with other groups i.e. the Bonkers on Botany group and volunteers who undertook the field training under the HLF scheme; take this forward possibly as a sub group.
Action closed

- 2.7 Old Willow Tree by Trap House** has had the remedial work completed.
Action closed
- 2.8 Link to Drop Box** – Link has been e-mailed to all Committee members.
Action closed
- 2.9 Oral History recordings** and transcripts – Held by the secretary;
Action – Lauren to download for the History Society and link into the Website
- 2.10 Coaches Parking on Downs's** laybys, parking has continued and at one-point last month, completely blocked the parking area by the benches and a Downs access point. This is unfair to visitors and picnickers on the Downs;
Action ongoing - James is trying to contact David Morris to discuss the situation

Minutes of the last meeting discussed and approved;

3. Finance Update

- Accounts show a balance of £10,250.44,
(This amount still includes the additional contingency fund payment from HLF which was not utilised in the last two years. We will need to hold this in account in case HLF requires repayment)
- Ben is now holding a £100 float as a contingency fund for volunteer expenses.
- Clive is going to make check with HSBC and see if it is a viable option to hold a limited debit card on the account to enable quicker expenses for easier payment.
- The account requires to signatories to clear a cheque; currently only two signatories (Clive Brazier & James Hawkins) are registered on the account. To ensure we have adequate cover when anyone is away – Jo Stoddart and Lauren Smith to be added

Action Clive to arrange addition signatories on the account and see if a card option on the account a viable option is

4. Brockhampton Group Parish Council Update

- Karen not in attendance to update. But sent a note re recent discussions regarding the parking situation at Brockhampton School.
 - A suggestion has been made to create a further 10-15 parking spaces by moving the boulders in the current carpark back to make more room. This idea was also put forward some years ago and George Thompson from Hereford Council was approached for his approval. He was content for the idea to go ahead but no further action was taken at the time possibly as the cost would have had to been paid by the school.
 - Noted that although this may create more space it will not improve the poor and inconsiderate parking which at times completely blocks the road outside the school at peak dropping off and collection times.
 - The BDCA would not really have any say in the scheme if Hereford Council as owners of the common agreed.
 - Also noted that if the current car parking spaces were defined and the scrub cleared from the edges you would achieve just as much additional space for cars as with moving the boulders.

- Expanding the carpark will not help the fundamental of speeding outside the school and across the Downs, which is still designated as a 60 mile per hour area.
- Nigel noted that the reduction in the speed limit outside the school is the subject of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and is currently standing at number 62 in a queue, to be considered.

5. Town Council Update

- Nothing to Report.

6. Downs Management General

- Jo thanked all the volunteers for their continued efforts in maintaining the Downs, and James and his crew for cutting, baling and taking away the hay on the lower Downs. The top Downs will be cut shortly.
- David B mentioned that he would recommend leaving an uncut space in the middle of the hay cut to retain habitat; James is aware and will consider.
- Question asked, what is the Ragwort policy on the Downs? – Ann Sayce mentioned she regularly pulls out and disposes of Ragwort, the volunteers also do a Ragwort pull and James confirmed he also walks and pulls out any Ragwort prior to the cutting the hay; which because of the quality, will only be used for bedding.
- **Drainage** - David B noted that there is a water flow in heavy rain storms that runs down from the Top Downs road onto muddy lane and the Linton area. To mitigate further flooding David has set a flexible drain under the track and diverted some of the water into a large drain at his own expense.
- Jo suggested, that the Committee and volunteers meet on the Downs for a walk. To see what has been achieved over the last year and finish by having a drink at the Royal Oak, to foster good relations with the local pub – It was agreed to meet at 6pm on Tuesday 31st July at the Main Downs carpark next to the Royal Oak.

Action Lauren to send out invitations to all the committee and volunteers.

- Jo has sent an article to the record this month introducing herself as the chair and promoting the Downs and the work of the volunteers.
- **We need to recruit more volunteers;** currently the volunteers are really stretched trying to keep on top of the maintenance work, we have a core group, but it would be a good idea to be proactive and try and involve more people;

Action

- Ask Herefordshire Wildlife Trust to advertise our days along with the conservation volunteering days, to see if we can gather any more interest,
- Contact National Trust volunteers
- Advertise in Hereford Times

- Specify the type of volunteering needed i.e. litter picks, scrub clearance etc., there is something everyone can be involved in.
- Under the HLF scheme fund a number of people were trained, to help with maintaining the Downs; we do have several who have really become involved, but sadly many trainees have not been back to help. If we do any further training, we must be sure that any persons trained earn their place on any courses we offer.
- James noted that if we are able to secure ELS funding the money raised will help to pay contractors to do some of the heavier work freeing up the volunteers.
- Some residents on the Downs are using the Downs to dump rubbish from their properties, this is becoming a problem. Golf lane is nearly unpassable due to the amount of rubble left and a site off the Malvern road has had rubble, pipes and a cistern left from local building work.
Also, residents are parking on the common instead of their own property, this is in direct contravention of the byelaws.

Action Jo and Lauren to draft a letter regarding parking and dumping of rubbish and also note in the summer newsletter.

Funding & Events

- Jo has organised a Bingo night at Bromyard public Hall on Saturday 13th October. Tickets will be sold on the night, Jo is canvassing the Downs residents for prizes. We will also advertise the event on Facebook, the website and arrange for posters around the town.
- A Christmas social is also to be arranged for Wednesday 5th December, Jo intends to canvass local businesses for prizes for a grand draw. The first prize to be £100 cash. Jo is to arrange for the tickets to be printed and will apply for a license from Hereford Council nearer the date
- We have been asked if we could attend the Kemson Players event in September, currently no one is available to attend and run a stall, but we will ask again nearer the time.

Volunteering Update

- It's been a difficult time for the volunteers due to the excessive rainfall at the start of the year which made it impossible to work on the Downs safely
- Bracken rolling should have been carried out in May but due to the weather it was impossible to get the equipment onto the Downs. Although flailing is now well underway the volunteer groups need to cover a large area to keep the scrub and bracken in check. Next year subject to weather conditions, the volunteers will

borrow the equipment from Bringsty common to bracken bash the new growth in May.

- It is recognised that some areas of the Downs are too steep to use the tractor safely and we will need to contact some of the work out subject to securing funding.
- The ponds on the Downs which were set up as part of the Ponds project are getting very overgrown; we do not have the time to fully maintain all of the areas with just the volunteers.
- Promote the Butts pools as an area of interest on the Downs; the proposal is to promote the area as a tranquil place to visit and to erect a large stone as a memorial base for people to fix plaque's on in commemoration for family members.

We hope this would become an acceptable alternative to a bench or planting of trees with associated plaques; As these are often not maintained or as in the recent case, whilst flailing a young memorial tree and plaque were destroyed as they had become buried in the undergrowth.

With some aesthetic sculpturing of the area it would be an ideal place for people to visit and contemplate. Funding may be available via a council grant.

Action - Ben to put forward a plan of the area.

Downs Ownership

- Hereford Council are still very keen to transfer the Downs to the BDCA for a nominal fee. This would mean setting up a separate body with charity status, to manage the ownership. We must be fully aware of all the responsibilities and liabilities in taking over the Downs. **Action** – James to arrange a talk from commoners who have already taken over their common.

Construction of wooden plank bridges

- Discussed request to set up wooden plank bridges over the ditch from the top Downs road on to the Downs, effectively creating more easy access points: There was mixed feelings regarding this request, the main argument against was under the Health and Safety issue of accessing the road over the ditch between, what at the moment is tall bracken and grass. Drivers cannot see anyone, and any small child or dog could easily emerge into the path of a car. James has taken advice from Hereford Council, they were also not keen on the idea. A majority vote was taken against setting up any further access points from the road. Dr D Boddington abstained.

Newsletter

- The summer newsletter is now due to go out mid-August and Lauren is collating ideas and will put together a draft to send out to the committee shortly.

Survey

- Lauren with Louise Scott carried out a BAT survey last night along the top Downs around Brockhampton Wood. 37 common pipistrelle passes were recorded along with 2 Noctule passes. This was a good count for the bat population on the Downs. Lauren will run the bat surveys next year from the beginning to end July.

6. Public Member Questions

- The request by Bill Morgan a qualified drone operator, to fly a drone on the Downs to take some aerial shots, was discussed. Due to the fact there have been complaints from residents regarding drones flying on the Downs and the byelaw which does not allow model aircraft to be flown it was decided we couldn't grant permission at this time. **Action** – Lauren to contact Bill Morgan to let him know the committee decision.

7. Any Other Business

- We have received a lovely thank you letter from Mr and Mrs Stone from 'The Fox' thanking the volunteers for mowing the grass by their access to the Downs so they can now see to drive out from their track.
- We also received a letter from Carol Raven expressing concerns regarding the Downs management and the buses parking in the layby. James responded promptly to these concerns, and we have since had a vote of thanks for all the volunteers work in managing the footpaths.

Date of next meeting

Wednesday 19th September – Falcon Hotel Bromyard 7:30 – 9:30

Thank You all for Attending
Meeting Close.

Lauren Smith
BDCA Secretary
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BDCA Meeting Schedule for the coming Year - <i>subject to change</i>	
General Meeting Dates	
Wednesday 19 th September	Falcon Hotel, Bromyard 7:30 -9:30
Tuesday 20 th November	
Wednesday 23 rd January 2019	
Tuesday 19 th March	
Wednesday 22 May	
2019 AGM - Wednesday 26 th June 2019	