

Minutes of the Bromyard Downs Common Association

General Meeting

Wednesday 19th September 2018

7:30 - 9:30 Falcon Hotel Bromyard

Committee Attendees

Jo Stoddart (Chair)
David Boddington
Ben Hiley

James Hawkins (Vice Chair)
Karen Rock
Gil Churchill

Lauren Smith (Secretary)
Clive Brazier (Treasurer)
David Grant

Apologies & Absence;

Jan Densham
Ray Pullen

Graham Cooper
Nigel Shaw

Nicki Howard
Nic Hinchcliffe

2. Action points

- 2.1 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 – Jo spoke with Paddy Nugent from Why Valley Runners who are happy to help out but did not make an offer to run a race – **Action** - To be discussed again in the spring, Gill noted we will need to clear and arrange adequate insurance for the event.
- 2.2 Guides planting of Memorial Tree – David B to discuss with Pam Guiver.
Action - James to forward Pam's contact details to David B to arrange meeting.
Ongoing
- 2.3 Oral History recordings and transcripts – Action – Lauren to download for the History Society and link into the Website – **Action Ongoing**
- 2.4 Coaches Parking on Downs's laybys – Action - James is trying to contact David Morris to discuss the situation – James has spoken with the manager who has promised to have the coaches removed. No sign recently – **Action closed**
- 2.5 BDCA 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 has started the process but will need to meet up with bot proposed signatories to complete the action – **Action** meeting to be arranged
- 2.6 Committee and volunteers meet on the Downs for a walk. To see what has been achieved over the last year – Action Lauren to send out invitations – Successful walk completed - **Action closed**
- 2.7 Remind Residents of byelaws – Action Lauren & Jo to draft letter to new residents and add to newsletter – Letter drafted but currently not necessary to send as James

has had a word with the resident involved who was very apologetic and has promised to remove the obstruction. Note also added to newsletter as reminder to all residents– **Action Closed**

- 2.8 Hereford Council still keen to transfer the Downs to the BDCA for a nominal fee. Action – James to arrange a talk from commoners who have already taken over their common – **Ongoing**
- 2.9 Request by Bill Morgan to fly a drone on the downs to take pictures refused – Action Lauren to inform Bill – Completed very understanding of the refusal – **Action closed**

Minutes of the last meeting discussed and approved;

3. Finance Update

- Account balance still includes the additional contingency fund payment from HLF We will need to hold this in account in case HLF requires repayment.
- The volunteers are holding a £100 float as a contingency fund for volunteer expenses. There have been difficulties trying to cash a cheque to replenish the fund, due to the fact only a signatory can present for cash. Ben would prefer that a card was made available or a separate account. Again, there are difficulties with this in administration and setting up, Clive to 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. Whatever is decided we must be seen to be open in all the dealings with the current funds.
- If the Bingo event is a success we may have a cash fund to keep for volunteer expenses.

4. Brockhampton Group Parish Council Update

- The meeting is due next week so no current update available

5. Town Council Update

- Gil had nothing to report, but noted the reason our recent approach to the Town council for funds to maintain the ongoing management of the Downs was refused. The current council is unable to authorise any funds outside the current Bromyard and Winslow area, this may change in the future if they obtain Quality Council status.

6. Downs Management General

- James gave a summary of the application he has been working on with Natural England for management of the Downs under The Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship scheme
- Agreement start date: 1/1/2019, 10-year agreement

Objectives of the agreement:

1. To restore species rich grassland across the open areas of the Downs.
2. To reduce the areas of bracken and scrub in favour of more open species rich grassland and restore some of the significant views across the Downs.
3. To improve the age structure and diversity of the scrub and bracken habitats.
4. To protect the archaeology on the Downs of both National and Regional importance.
5. To restore some of the significant pollards on the Downs.

Land Management:

Grassland Habitats

Manage by taking an annual hay cut and 1 year in 4 grazing the aftermath. (Grazing to be managed by electric fencing and cattle grids on the common land).

Scrub and Bracken areas

Areas of scrub are to be removed in the first two agreement years, this is by a mixture of clearance and gradual ride widening to create and link up more open spaces across the Downs. Chemical stump will take place to limit re-growth. Some areas will be untouched to retain some of the scrub habitat. Brash can be left in habitat piles.

Scrub is to be cleared around veteran trees.

Bracken will be managed mechanically by bruising / rolling and cutting. No chemical treatment of the bracken will take place. Some areas of bracken will be left with a dense litter for reptile habitat.

The scrub and bracken areas are to be grazed at least 1 year in 4, grazing will be managed by electric fencing.

Capital Works

To support this management the Commoners are also undertaking a range of capital works, these include:

Scrub clearance, bracken management, fencing (on the perimeter of the common), hedge laying, pollarding. To allow grazing management to occur they will be installing cattle grids (on tracks on the common, not on the public highway) and NE is funding a water trough and livestock handling facilities to be store off the common.

The Commoners have also applied for Education Access to encourage more people to visit and learn about the habitats of the Downs.

Payment:

Annual: £16,648/year for the first two years and then £19, 769.00/year/8 years

Capital: £26,000 to be claimed in the first two agreement years.

- **Proposal** – to continue with the application and make a formal application to enter the scheme to Natural England.
 - Proposer – Ben Hiley
 - Proposal seconded - Jo Stoddart
 - Unanimous decision by the committee for James to continue with the application and apply for the grant.

- James completed the hay cut this year himself at a cost of £3,000 and will retained the hay to try and meet his costs. He is hoping to break even.
- Thank you extended to James from the committee for all the work and effort he has put into the application and the general management of the hay cut.
- Lauren and Jo on behalf of the committee have signed an internal agreement regarding the management of the Downs under the CS HT Scheme, Copy attached for information
- James to arrange a November meeting to go through the management plan and co-ordinate with the HT CS Scheme

Funding & Events

- Jo has organised a Bingo night at Bromyard public Hall on Saturday 13th October. Letters along with the Summer Newsletter were hand delivered by Jo with help from Jan, requesting prizes for the event. Jo has been very pleased with generosity of the residents receiving bottles some cash prizes as well as a meal for two from the Royal Oak amongst other things.
- Gil is supplying tickets we can utilise for the event.
- **Action** - Posters have been printed to be placed on notice boards and shop windows to advertise the event– Lauren to add to Bromyard Info Facebook page and our website.
- Summer newsletter has been printed and delivered to most Residents. We will schedule another letter early spring.

Volunteering Update

- We are reaping the rewards of tackling the bracken with nominal regrowth where it was cut back hard. We are trying to leave a 25ft border along the top downs road side.
- If funding becomes available, we will be able to contract out some of the work instead of relying on the volunteers
- The volunteers have had a good year with no health and safety issues bar one splinter.
- 240 litres of Tractor fuel has been used to date.
- The general kit is in good condition, we are waiting for the 4 wheel drive on the tractor to be repaired it has been booked, but awaiting slot.
- A line of Rowan trees has died on the Downs, Gill mentioned there is Rowan tree die back in Wales, which may have effected them, will need to monitor and possibly cut down and burn the effected trees.
- A thank you letter has been received from Kay and Alan Grantham for the management and cutting of the Downs around their property at Quarry Farm

6. Public Member Questions

- Jackie from Linton Brook farm raised the question of Dog waste bags and bins, we explained we have unsuccessfully trialled the use of bags.
- Also question raised why we used TSBC and not the local bank. Explained this was easier for our Treasurer who deals with TSBC and had had problems when trying to open an account with Lloyds

7. Any Other Business

- Jan Densham nominated Nicki Howard to fill one of the empty seats on the committee. Nomination agreed and carried by the committee. We welcome Nicki back as a member.
- Jan also made a request to put up temporary fencing on the common to protect her chickens as she currently has a fox problem. No one saw any problem with erecting temporary fencing as long as it didn't block any access and no complaints were made from residents. Request granted
- Currently there is no Saturday volunteering, although we may organise a litter pick.
- Hugh Davies has made a request to cut back some bracken, brash and a couple of fir trees by the school for the PTA Bonfire. No one had any problems with this Request granted.

Date of next meeting

Tuesday 20th November – Falcon Hotel Bromyard 7:30 – 9:30

Thank You all for Attending
Meeting Close.

Lauren Smith
BDCA Secretary
01885 488223 – Mobile 07808 949 880

<mailto:bromyardbdca@gmail.com>

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