

Minutes of the Bromyard Downs Common Association

General Meeting

Wednesday 9th October

7:30 - 9:30 Falcon Hotel Bromyard

Committee Attendees:

Jo Stoddart (Vice Chair)
David Boddington
Karen Rock

Lauren Smith (Secretary)
Nigel Shaw

Ben Hiley
David Grant

Apologies & Absence;

Jan Densham
Graham Cooper
Ray Pullen

Clive Brazier (Treasurer)
James Hawkins (Chair)

Nic Hinchcliffe (NT)
Fred Clark

2. Action points

- 2.1 HLS Agreement and Woodland Management Plan has been laminated, a copy is to be kept in the lock up for the use of the volunteers. – **Action closed**
- 2.2 The Voice recorder used to record the history recordings has not yet been located. The actual recordings have been found and can be downloaded on to a CD which can be played on a PC or CD player for listening. **Action** - Lauren to copy to CD and continue to try and source the actual recorder.
- 2.3 Seeking volunteer to take forward promotion of the Downs for educational visits, as part of our HLS scheme – No one has yet volunteered but we do need someone to take this forward – possibly draft an article for Bromyard Info to see if anyone is interested – **Action** Jo to draft a poster combining a request for volunteers
- 2.4 Trees need removing by Buckenhill Drive as they are too large for the volunteers to remove professional quote to be sourced – **James to action ongoing**
- 2.5 Downs Committee becoming involved with the Victory in Europe celebrations next year; possibly hosting a beacon on the Downs – **Action ongoing** James to have a word with the Town Council and find out exactly what they would like us to do.
- 2.6 Please take your litter home signs to be posted on the Downs – action to see what signs we have available in the lock up – **Action for Jan ongoing**
- 2.7 Memorial stone to be set by the Butts pool area – James to liaise with the Town Council to see if any additional funding is available – **Action Ongoing**
- 2.8 Discuss with Nic re offer to supply posts for the notice board and also source an auger to drill new holes for the posts – Posts have now been collected ready to erect

the notice board – **Action Closed** – **Further action** - source an auger to erect the posts recommended a tractor mounted auger as the ground is very hard in the area.

- 2.9 Place advert/plea for more volunteers on the Downs in Bromyard Record – **Ongoing** and will be combined with a poster see 2.3

Minutes of the last meeting discussed and approved;

3. Finance Update

Current Financial spreadsheet plus cash account balance attached

- Current funds stand as follows;
 - Current Treasurers Account - £14,058.49
 - Card Account - £ 500
 - Cash in Hand - £90

Question was raised whether we had a budget forecast for general running expenses– This had previously been calculated as £1,500 per annum which takes into account Tractor running, insurance and general incidental expenses.

Noted that James had taken on the task of cutting and storing the hay which we have been unable to sell – Need to compensate James for his effort – **Action** discuss with James

4. Brockhampton Group Parish Council Update

- Noted that there were still 3 vacancies on the parish council if anyone was interested
- The Development Plan discussion meeting took place on 3rd October.

5. Town Council Update

- Mr Paul Healey raised the problems of illegal use of the Downs Carpark after dark and asked if we could consider closing the carpark in twilight hours to try and mitigate the problem.
- The problem is exuberated by the tall hedge which conceals activity in the carpark, could this be lowered so the carpark could be easily overlooked from the road which may deter use after dark.
- The Council used to maintain and cut the hedge but haven't completed over the last couple of years, apparently council estates have taken a conscious decision to stop cuts as they haven't the appropriate equipment.

6. Downs Management

- Several comments were put forward by Paul Healey regarding flail cutting and his concerns over BDCA practises and management of the Downs. He considers the flail cut is too low and this is impacting on the diversity of the Downs, and that the timing and depth of cut is impacting on the diversity we should be encouraging.

- The flail is used predominantly for preserve the rides and paths on the Downs, due to the roughness of the terrain the cut is always going to be erratic it would be impossible to maintain a perfect meadow height cut
- The Downs covers over 400 acres of diverse landscape; within that area our small group of volunteers can only maintain a small percentage as they work within the agreed management plan. The volunteers give their time freely to maintain the Downs, it would be impossible to try and please everyone

Tree Planting

- Karen noted the current climate change crisis and encouraged the BDCA to review the management plan and re-wood part of the Downs in response to environmental demand
- Nigel Shaw noted that Herefordshire Council will be encouraging Tree planting as a way of carbon offsetting, but that the management of a tree environment is very different from managing grass
- Dr Boddington noted; the Downs can boast of having one of the top three hawthorn scrub areas in the UK situated by Brockhampton School and Buckenhill and the largest unwooded patch of gorse in Herefordshire; so the planting of trees within this area would have a detrimental effect on the established habitat.
- The Principle task of the volunteers is to clear scrub and remove many of the ash saplings which spring up where they are not wanted, to maintain the views and keep the grassland clear.
- It was noted that there are concerns re the carbon emissions from Brockhampton the school pick up and drop off as there can be upward of 50/80 or so cars parking at certain times
- According to the Woodland Trust 95% of Ash trees are predicted to be wiped out from Ash Die back disease over the coming years. There may be a need to replace some of the trees with disease resistant species.
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- There were several points of view discussed for and against the removal and planting of trees.

Action - take a look at the current Bromyard Downs management plan and see if the planting of trees is actually allowed under the plan prior to any further decisions regarding tree planting.

Action – Lauren to print a copy of the woodland management plan for Paul H who has been unable to view or download from the website.

6.11 Volunteering Update -

- The current chainsaws are still working well but looking forward, we will need to plan their replacement as they are now over 3 years old; we could consider electric chainsaws in the future, but need to research if this is a viable option.
- Still need to encourage more volunteers; we currently have some very keen people but not everyone can make every volunteer day so a larger contingency of willing helpers to invite would be a great help. Although there is a limit and we must be realistic as to what our volunteers can actually achieve.

- There is budget available from the HLS scheme to engage contractors to help in doing some of the heavier and more specific clearance and ditching work and this should be utilised as and when needed.
- Tractor Insurance is now due – **Action** - Lauren to pay from cash account.
- There have been suggestions put forward that if anyone is noticed camping on the Downs or on one of the Downs parking areas overnight they should be asked for a donation. Camping is against the byelaws, however, it does happen and is difficult to police, so realistically this is probably not achievable. Although it was noted if there were camper vans in the carpark overnight it does discourage the local youths and the anti-social behaviour

7. Public Member Questions

No Questions

8. Any Other Business

- Mrs Stone from the Fox noted that a sofa has been fly tipped on the Downs, this had already been noted on the Website and reported to James.
- On Saturday 19th October there is a Bringsty Manorial Court talk on trees at Whitbourne Village Hall

Date of next meeting

Wednesday 3rd December – Falcon Hotel Bromyard 7:30 – 9:30

Thank You all for Attending
Meeting Close.

Lauren Smith
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BDCA Meeting Schedule for the coming Year	
General Meeting Dates	
Tuesday 3 rd December 2019	Falcon Hotel, Bromyard 7:30 -9:30
Wednesday 5 th February 2020	
Tuesday 7 th April 2020	
Wednesday 3 rd June 2020	
AGM – Wednesday 1 st July 2020	