STOCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Stockland Parish Council Turbaries Management Committee on Wednesday, 13th November 2024 @ 1830 hrs, Victory Hall, Stockland.

1) **Election of Chair:** ToR Turbaries Management Committee item: [Committee Meetings (i) 1]: **Cllr Peter Derryman was proposed, seconded and duly elected as Chair.**

2) **Public Participation Time** (SO 1e & f): 15 minutes in length with each person to speak once only, for no longer than 3 minutes, or shorter, at the discretion of the chairperson: **There were two members of the public present but neither wished to speak.**

3) **Resolve to exclude members of the press and public**: To agree any items to be dealt with after the public and press have been excluded as publicity would prejudice the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted [Public Bodies(Admission to Meetings Act) 1960]. **No items to be excluded.**

4) **To record those present / apologies for absence;** and to consider whether to approve the reasons given (Cllrs only).
Present: Cllr Peter Derryman (elected Chair), Cllr Anna Trott, Cllr Bryan Drew (see item 9(a) below), Cllr Richard Switzer, David Allen, Rebecca Chance, Barbara Dunkley, Robin Gundry, Jo Uffendell, Fiona Daggett and Toby Taylor (both RSPB), Damian Clay (Clerk).

Apologies: Geoff Pearce; Gemma Sparks (Managing Agent, Blackdown Consulting).

5) **Declarations of Interest**: All members to declare any interests they have in agenda items that accord with any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (s31 & 33 of the Localism Act 2011) or Personal/ Prejudicial Interests (Code of Conduct, 2012). None stated.

6) **Turbaries Management Committee Minutes**: To confirm and sign the draft minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 9th July 2024. The minutes were not signed due to a query over the species of bats found roosting in Shortmoor Turbary. **David Allen to contact Adrian Bayley to confirm which species were found. This was the only possible correction deemed to be necessary to the minutes.**

7) **Fauna and Flora updates.** General updates, news and noteworthy observations of fauna and flora on the turbaries:
Adrian Bayley has sited 50 dormouse boxes in Quantock as part of a three-year study organised by the Peoples Trust for Endangered Species (PTES). Two boxes were found to contain Marsh Tits, and 12 Blue Tits were also nesting in the boxes. The boxes are to be checked regularly on the 15th and 22nd of each month. Adrian Bayley has a Dormouse handling licence.

8) **Appreciation of Turbary Volunteers.**
It was noted that there have been many hundreds of voluntary hours contributed by both Cllrs and members of the public to this Committee over the years. There is a need for grazing to be one of the means of managing some of the turbaries, and this requires volunteers to assist with moving the animals from their original location to the turbaries; moving them between the turbaries as required; returning the animals to their original location at the end of the grazing season. The volunteers also provide a 'lookering' service to ensure animal welfare is maintained, and additional food on a regular basis. All of this is time consuming and specialist work, often carried out in difficult to get to places.

The Cllrs present resolved to provide a thank-you to 4 'lookerers' each one to receive a commemorative mug, a card and a box of chocolates, maximum spend of £25 per person and £100 in total. This is permitted if the funds are taken out of the money held under the general management revenue line item.

On the subject of volunteers, Jo Uffendell wants to create a calendar to help co-ordinate the volunteers against the seasonal work requirements for the turbaries throughout the year. The Clerk and Cllr Derryman will assist with this.

Cllr Trott wants to involve local tree-surgeon John Parry as part of the group of volunteers.

9) **Action Review Summary**: to receive updates and review the following items:

a) **Managing Agent's activities.**

Please refer to the note from Gemma Sparkes contained in the appendix to these minutes.

For the RSPB, Toby Taylor stated that there were structural changes happening within the organisation and he has lost 25% of his available staff. Consequently, decisions have to be made around the continuing use of ponies for grazing having lost the equine handler from the team. The ponies will be available in 2025, but might be retired in the autumn of that year.

Cllr Drew left the meeting at this point as he had another engagement.

At the moment RSPB has 11 Dartmoor and 4 Exmoor ponies. Regarding welfare there were two incidents this season. One early on at Bucehayes (foot problem) and another at Quantock where a pony required treatment with antibiotics. No long-term health problems were noted apart from the age of the animals.

David Allen noted that the ponies were not the only management method, and that the turbaries need to be regularly checked for regrowth.

Toby Taylor believes there is enough work required for an RSPB team to spend 1 day a month on the turbaries. They have liability insurance covering their volunteers. Toby is willing to lead a party in this work.

b) **Funding sources and grants (including SFI and ELMS).**
Tim Youngs of BHNL says there is funding available for community projects.
Cllr Derryman went through the fencing quote from Tom Purlin and it was noted that the Full Council has already approved this expenditure which can be reclaimed under the BH175 agreement.

c) **Work carried out, planned and potentially needed.**

i) **Bucehayes (AG00287440 & BHP175);**
Birch regrowth noted at north end, scrub clearance required. Ragwort noted at north and south sides. David Allen will examine and report back. **The three Cllrs resolved to engage an RSPB team led by Toby Taylor for up to two days work at £500 per day**.

ii) **Quantock (AG00287502 & BHP175);**
There is the possibility of having a boardwalk built at the Brimpit end.

iii) Horner Hill (AG00291818);
It is two years since this turbary was last flailed. The birch saplings could possibly be used for making steeple jump fences if they are allowed to grow for another year. Cotley P2P would possibly collect the birch if it was cut and piled (this might become a regular occurrence if it can be arranged). Needs to have a 1-inch girth at the bottom end of the birch. **Robin Gundry will have a look to see how the growth is doing.**

iv) **Shortmoor (AG00305847 & BHP175);**
Birch growth noted.

v) **Huntshayes (BPS & BHP175);**
Japanese Knotweed is being treated annually for 5 years under BHP175.

vi) **Shore Bottom (BPS):**
Various branches encroaching on the road from Horseplot Cottage up to the Sawmill opposite Hillcrest. Blocked ditch also needs sorting out. **Cllr Switzer suggested local volunteers plus John Parry might be used.**

d) **HM Land Registry application near Brimpit Farm.**
Completed, item can be dropped from future Agendas.

e) **Path from Lillington Farm to Shorelake**.
[No notes recorded for this item?]

f) **Woodland Management Plan, work required this winter.**
Some work required at Huntshayes [No other notes on this item]

10) **Election of additional new community members to the Turbaries Committee**
Review whether there is a necessity for new community members. As might be necessary, vote to approve new members.
The local community members of the Turbaries Committee were confirmed as David Allen, Rebecca Chance, Barbara Dunkley, Robin Gundry and Jo Uffendell. Fiona Daggett is also confirmed as a member and is the deputy for Toby Taylor (both representing RSPB). Gemma Sparks remains the Managing Agent.

11) **Correspondence and Communications**
To receive updates and review the need for correspondence and communications.

The Clerk has received the signed wayleave documentation from National Grid for the new stay required on turbary land near Lane End Cottage which will raise £9.63 per annum.

12) **Items of Future Business** for the next agenda:

Andrew Branson now lives near Stockland. Andrew and Anne Branson founded British Wildlife Publishing in 1989. He is involved in a survey over the winter. Rebecca Chance is involved in this. Toby Taylor would like to show him around Aylesbeare.

Meeting Closed at 2105 hrs

Peter Derryman
Chair, Stockland Parish Council Turbaries Committee

/ /2024

Appendix – Note from Gemma Sparks, Management Agent, sent 7th November 2024

Peter,

Following our telephone conversation yesterday afternoon, I have now had the opportunity to look back through my notes from the turbaries meeting on 9/7/24 and can offer the following:

- Hard to find fencing contractors available and wanting to quote to do work on the turbaries
- Japanese Knotweed treatment is due to go ahead - also some areas of other knotweed around the turbaries, which are not to be confused with the Japanese Knotweed.
- Toby was going to email me a breakdown of the pony grazing (dates on each turbary & numbers, but believed that there was 11 ponies at Quantock currently & 4 at Bucehayes (Could you please chase Toby up for this please)
- There is lots of birch re-growth, with areas at north end of Bucehayes reaching 4/5ft tall. Scrub clearance needed here.
- Organisation of this to be organised.
- Talk of this being used for National Hunt Fences.
- Gemma not sure of who HLS officer is for the area at present, used to be Charlotte Selway. (Toby chased this and confirmed to be Simon Richardson)

Notes for meeting next week [The meeting of 13th November 2024]

FIPL

Funding here runs out in March.

Jane is to use the quoted figures from Tom Purlin quote in agreement to avoid extra auditing - all works here need to be completed by the end of March.

HLS - Gemma in contact with Simon Richardson. HLS announcement now due mid December. But he has visited the turbaries and is aware of the desire to make an application here. Will provide guidance when available.

Other agreements - next agreement end date is the woodland agreement (31/12/25) Once HLS announcement made can review whether worthwhile to go ahead for new agreement. Will there a woodland management option announced for 2025 through SFI? Currently unknown.

Basic Payment Scheme

Budget announcement that BPS to reduce by 76% next year (currently proposal only)

Averaging figure: £2714.41

Likely payment for 2025: £651.45

No news on what would then happen for 26/27 - but likely no payment at all.

This means only income will be from other agreements in 26/27

Do let me know if any further queries.

Kind regards,

Gemma