Stockland Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Turbaries Management Committee held in Stockland Victory Hall on Wednesday 7th November, 2018 from 4pm until 6 pm.

1) **Public Participation Time** (SO 1e & f); There were no members of the public
2) **Resolve to exclude members of the press and public**. There were no confidential items [Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings Act) 1960].
3) **To record those Present/Apologies for absence** Cllrs D Allen (chair) D Clay and P Maitland; Alasdair Bruce (resident); Justin Gillett (NE); Geoff Pearce (DBW&P), Toby Taylor (RSPB), in attendance Cllr R Griffiths and Ken Pearson (PC Clerk). **Apologies**: Derek Boyland and Tim Youngs **(**AONB Manager).
4) **Declarations of Interest**: There were no declarations of any interests.
5) **Turbaries Management Committee Minutes**-resolved to note that the draft Minutes of the meeting held on the 11th July were confirmed and signed by the Council on the 28th August.

6) **Action Review Summary**: to receive and review the following items:
   i) **AONB Facilitation Fund**; resolved to note the scheme is being implemented.
   ii) **Higher Level and Basic Payment Schemes (HLS and BPS);** resolved;
   - to note that the Rural Payments Agency now manage the Countryside Stewardship (CS) and Environmental Stewardship (ES) schemes and agree to submit Higher Tier Stewardship Expression of Interest Forms for each turbary by mid-December via the Managing Agent with the proviso that the Council can withdraw; this means protection of the Woodland Options in the Agreements and would require a Woodland Management Plan(WMP) to be completed by early 2019;
   - to accept the offer from Natural England(NE) of a four-year extension to three of the HLS Agreements (Bucehayes, Quantock and Horner Hill) that come to an end in 2019, with Shortmoor, ending in 2020, to be determined later; **agreed** to delay the CS Application by a year to allow for the WMP creation and not to remove the ex-woodland parcels from these HLS agreements until the Council are ready to make a CS Higher Tier Woodland standalone application; request the Managing Agent to advise if this is financially beneficial.
   - to receive the update on the bid for supplementary funding for scrub control from NE that additional ad hoc capital funding for this is currently on hold.

   iii) **Finance**; resolved to; receive the Clerk's report on the finances available showing an amount of £6135 available.

7) **AONB Catchment Communities Conference19th October** (attended by Cllr Maitland and the Clerk): resolved to; note the Council agreed at its meeting on the 30th October to a Joint Parishes meeting with Membury, Stockland, Yarcombe and Hugh Davey of the Environment Agency to decide what schemes can improve water quality and what projects to work on across the river catchments of East Devon and the Blackdown Hills; inclusion of other parishes to be discussed later.

8) **Turbaries**; resolved to; receive an update on current work completed or scheduled; agree future work plans and finance for each site;- see App 1

9) **Communications**; resolved to receive updates on the following:
i. **Information Boards**; the Clerk had made contact with both Pete Burgess at Devon and David Northcote-Wright at Somerset Wildlife Trusts to get contacts for Board layout, design and production.
ii. **Blackdowns Biodiversity Forum;** a group of ecologists, led by Cllr Allen and G Pearce (DBW&P), went across Quantock turbary on 6th September, as part of the forums bi-annual meeting when features of interest including bird, bat and small mammal nest boxes, the hide and a range of fungi were all pointed out.

iii. **Nest box occupancy**; G Pearce (DBW&P) presented data on bird nesting in 2018; finding 76 of the 145 nest boxes had been occupied (51%), including 36 blue tit broods, 23 great tit, 9 nuthatch, 4 tawny owls, 1 kestrel, 2 jackdaws and 1 stock dove and will be put up on the website.

iv. **Involving Schools**; Cllr Maitland pointed out the way that the AONB had engaged with schools during the crayfish project and how that could be applied to the Turbaries

10) **Items of Future Business for the next Agenda** and to note the date of the next meeting; Ash dieback, present locally and need to be aware of careful planning required to be rid of it and likely to be worse attack this year; RSPB identified some Turbary fence posts as not being as good a quality and now looking at replacement.

Next meeting Wed. 13th March 2019

Signed ……27th November 2018

Chairman; Meeting closed at 6pm

Appendix 1

a) **Bucehayes**

In the absence of Mr Boyland the extent of further of cattle grazing in the North Enclosure is unclear, beyond that reported previously; six Exmoor ponies had grazed the southern Enclosure in the periods 18 May-10 June and 07 July-31 August, giving a total of 282 grazing days.

Work on contract to RSPB has cleared scrub that was encroaching northwards into the open mire from the woodland fringing the cottage; whilst volunteers, supplementing RSPB staff, have focussed on scrub and brambles in the southern enclosure and is improving ecologically.
Agreed Two days' work at £800 by RSPB, and in consultation with Mr Boyland, a winter swale in the North using volunteers was approved.

b) **Quantock**

Eleven cattle grazed Brimpit Enclosure from 02 June-22 September, giving a pressure of 1,232 days. (cf. 1500 in 2017; 999 in 2016; 1220 in 2015); six Exmoor ponies grazed the Kennels Enclosure from 10 July-07August, for a total of 168 grazing days.
Asulox was applied to control bracken in the northern blocks in mid-July. Its efficacy should be assessed in May 2019.
Winter scrub clearance required in the open area towards the South of Brimpit Enclosure and **agreed** two day's work by RSPB at £800.

The pond at Brimpit gate using Volunteers to plug the leak have failed, yet the presence of underlying clay was confirmed, leading to a day's re-excavation by the contractor on 11 October, at £250 and has improved it and the deeper pond is full.

It was **agreed** that; RSPB would submit specifications for a new bench and stile, to give better access to the bird hide from the permissive path, and be positioned near the pond; £30 for more marker arrows on the route of the permissive path, together with two Statutory notices positioned at each end of the path provided by DCC ROW.

c) **Shortmoor**

The six ponies grazed the open turbary from 10 June-10 July, giving 180 grazing days.
No winter work is planned.

d) **Horner Hill**

Agreed that; topping of the wood pasture surrounding the ruined cottages, completed on contract by R Gundry in late September for £200 was successful; that the principle for him to top the area twice a year, in May and September, for £400 was agreed.
Spot spraying with Asulox was done in July to control bracken on the open hillside; birch seedlings are becoming re-established and there is too much European gorse in the North section; the central section is in fair condition; bracken and brambles dominate the South section;
Agreed RSPB to schedule two days brush cutting in late winter, at £800.
A winter burn of the heathy hillside should be scheduled among volunteers, when conditions allow.

e) **Huntshayes**

No work is planned.

f) **Shore Bottom**

No winter work is planned.