

STOCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Stockland Parish Council Turbaries Management Committee Tuesday, 4th March 2025 @ 1930 hrs, Victory Hall, Stockland.

- 1) **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:

Simon Meers, who has worked as part of the contractor team on the current fencing work under BH175 was present.

- 2) **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 excluded.

- 3) **To record those present / apologies for absence;** and to consider whether to approve the reasons given (Cllrs only).

Present: Cllr Peter Derryman (Chair), Cllr Richard Switzer, Cllr Anna Trott, Dr. David Allen, Barbara Dunkley, Robin Gundry, Gemma Sparks (Managing Agent Blackdown Consulting), Jo Uffendell, Fiona Daggett and Toby Taylor (both RSPB), Damian Clay (Clerk).

Apologies: Cllr Bryan Drew, Rebecca Chance, Robin Gundry, Geoff Pearce.

- 4) **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.

- 5) **Turbaries Management Committee Minutes:** To confirm and sign the draft minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 13th November 2024. The minutes were duly signed.

- 6) **'Team Turbaries' Tools and Grant from BHNL:**

The Clerk has submitted the grant application and evidence of purchases to the Devon CC rep and currently holds all of the equipment. **Jo Uffendell agreed to store the tools for the Committee and will arrange with the Clerk for delivery.**

Jo also mentioned that there are piles of debris in Shore Bottom turbarly following work there. **Cllr Derryman volunteered to take it away in a trailer for burning.**

- 7) **Fauna and Flora updates.** General updates, news and noteworthy observations of fauna and flora on the turbaries:

A Barn owl was seen at Lower Brimpit on Wednesday 26th February at around 4pm; Snipe were both heard and seen today (Tuesday 4th March) on Bucehayes; Simon Meers reported seeing two Snipe whilst working in Quantock.

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

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

Gemma along with Cllrs Derryman and Trott and Dr David Allen met Simon Richardson (Natural England) for a tour of Quantock Turbarly. Simon confirmed that Quantock is 1 of only 100 sites nationwide to be selected for consideration for the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) grants in the new financial year. Payments for pony grazing will not be included in

HLS funding.

Gemma has received the current HLS documentation for Horner Hill from the Clerk.

Current FiPL grant form (BH175) needs to be completed mid-March. The FiPL scheme as a whole has been extended for a further year, with £30M available. **Gemma agreed to find out if any of this money will be available to BHNL.**

The Woodland Management Agreement is in its final year. **Gemma to explore the possibility of obtaining a new Woodland Management Plan with the Forestry Commission.**

A proposal to have a gate put in at Quantock for access to the bird-hide was discussed and a proposed boardwalk around the pond was discussed. **Simon Meers agreed that he and Tom Purling would work up a specification for the boardwalk, which the Committee could put out to tender (3 quotes being required).**

RPA payments received in the current financial year:

Date	Amount	Reason
01/08/2024	£678.60	Basic Payment Scheme
30/09/2024	£678.60	Basic Payment Scheme
05/12/2024	£2067.20	Woodland Management agreement 986346
16/01/2024	£4104.74	?? [Gemma, can you supply please]

b) Funding sources and grants (including SFI and ELMS).

RSPB will be invoicing the Parish Council shortly. There is £1.50 per pony per week available.

c) Work carried out, planned and potentially needed.

i) Bucehayes (AG00287440 & BHP175);

Work is complete.

ii) Quantock (AG00287502 & BHP175);

Work here is being finished off (cherry laurel at Brimpit end and scrub around the pond). Around 20 birdboxes were reported on the ground and these will need replacements. Sed Meers, Dr David Allen and Cllr Switzer will form a 'Bird Team' to carry on the work of Geoff Pearce. They also have a contact who is a licensed bird ringer.

iii) Horner Hill (AG00291818);

Controlled burning is under consideration. A local volunteer team can be assembled when there is a good weather window. There is a requirement to inform the Fire Brigade of the date and location of the burn. Birch growing for use in creating hurdles for horse racing should be suitable for cutting either next year or the year after

iv) Shortmoor (AG00305847 & BHP175);

Birch growth noted.

v) Huntshayes (BPS & BHP175);

Japanese Knotweed is being treated annually for 5 years.

vi) Shore Bottom (BPS):

Track coppicing to be carried out.

- d) **Path from Lillington Farm to Shorelake.**
Awaiting update from Rebecca Chance.
- e) **Woodland Management Plan, work required this winter.**
?

9) **Correspondence and Communications**

To receive updates and review the need for correspondence and communications

It was reported that Geoff Pearce has resigned due to ill health. Geoff has been involved around the Stockland Turbaries for several decades, preceding even the creation of the Turbaries Committee. He has built, transported and erected hundreds (if not thousands) of bird and bat boxes or varying designs around the turbaries. He has meticulously recorded occupation of these boxes and taken numerous photographs having formerly been a BBC wildlife cameraman. Stockland Parish Council (and the parishioners) owe a debt of gratitude to Geoff for all the thousands of hours he has given to this parish over the years. He will be sorely missed.

The Committee resolved to provide Geoff with a formal recognition of the huge contribution he has made over the years:

Dr David Allen agreed to provide the wording of a suitable letter of thanks; Cllr Derryman will provide a copy of the book of photographs of aspects of the turbaries over the years. Target date for both is 6th May 2025.

On 24th February Jo received an enquiry from a member of the public asking if there is a document in existence that explains the Turbarry management strategy and why management needs to be undertaken i.e. the benefits to residents and wildlife? A document that combines the woodland management plan and the strategy / aims & objectives -could be useful.... An online document would be useful.

Clerk to look through the folders of paper information on the turbaries for some suitable concise information.

- 10) **Items of Future Business** for the next agenda:
BTO co-ordinating a National Survey of heathland birds (first since 2006).
Fiona to send a link to information on this to Cllr Switzer.

Meeting Closed at 2145 hrs

Peter Derryman
Chair, Stockland Parish Council Turbaries Committee

/ /2025