Stockland Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Turbaries Management Committee held in Stockland Victory Hall on Wednesday, 6th November, 2019 at 4pm.

1) **Public Participation Time** (SO 1e & f); There were no members of the public present.
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** D Allen (chair); Cllrs R Griffiths, Learmouth and Amanda Thompkins; Alasdair Bruce (resident); Paul Spencer (resident), Geoff Pearce (DBW&P), Toby Taylor (RSPB); and Tim Youngs **(**AONB Manager) were welcomed to the meeting; in attendance Ken Pearson (PC Clerk) and Mr Richard Switzer (RSPB, new resident) as observer; apologies from Cllr Drew and Justin Gillett (Natural England).
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 Wednesday, 10th July were confirmed and signed by the Council on the 30th July.
6) **Action Review Summary**: to receive and review the following items
   i): **AONB Facilitation Fund**; resolved to receive a verbal update from the chair with a fungal foray held on 19th October in Young Wood, Staple Fitzpaine, as part of the training component of the Blackdowns Farming & Woodland Group.
   ii) **Woodland Management Plan**; resolved to note that the chair, Cllr Drew and R Stonex met on 15th Aug and 20th Sept to see the main wooded areas of the turbaries after which the draft plan would be completed soon, but deer & squirrel population may need looking at.
   iii) . **Higher Level and Basic Payment Schemes (HLS and BPS);** resolved to receive the;
   - update on BPS and HLS payments and outstanding issues; extension at Shortmoor still to be sent out; extension for Quantock signed, agreed and returned; overpayment as a result of removing HC15 on Quantock of £100.13, now paid back.
   - Note that the Environmental Land Management System (ELS) trials currently being done by AONB to take over extensions in 2021 from RPA and that the new Countryside Stewardships, 5 years agreements, need to be checked, as being more beneficial?

   iv) **Finance**; resolved to; receive the Clerk's report on the finances showing an amount of £14390 available; with the following work yet to be invoiced, Grazing the N enclosure on Bucehayes; Grazing (Brimpit enclosure) using ponies, invoice not due until after September; agree tree removal on Horner with an extra day outstanding by Contractor1, for £250; agree to pay £7.64 for pony nuts, agree to pay £200 for Topping at Horner Hill by Contractor2. Invoices still to come from RSPB and D Allen.
   v) **Review Policy of Hunting on Horner**; resolved to agree amendments by the Cotley Hunt; offering to provide volunteers to assist work to be completed; and limiting the extent of hunting between Oct –March each year. The Clerk to check the issue of motorised vehicles with dogs on.
   vi) **Motorised vehicles on Turbaries and footpaths**; resolved to agree to warnings and/or restricting access as a result of damage (note that PCSO Chris Bolsover advised signage to be put up and to inform the police if any pattern emerged with their visits); agreed Cllr A Thompkins to order signs to a maximum of £100.
7) **Turbaries**; resolved to; receive an update on current work completed or scheduled; agree future work plans and finance for each site, identified in App 1 below;-
8) **Communications**; resolved to; receive updates on the website and volunteering opportunities not already covered.
9) Items of Future Business for the next Agenda; agreed place Information Boards on next Council Agenda, costs from an SDF AONB Application; agreed dates for the meetings next year to be, 11th March, 8th July and 4th November.

Signed ……26th Nov, 2019
Chairman; Meeting closed at 5.30pm

Appendix 1.

(i) BUCEHAYES; Grazing of both North and South Enclosures has relied on 7 Exmoor ponies. Bucehayes North had received a total of 945 grazing days (29 April-11 July; 13 Aug-14 Oct.) and the area is much improved as a result (it had been under-grazed in recent seasons). 357 grazing days (11 July-13 Aug; 14 Oct-01 Nov) were spent on the Southern Enclosure which is also improving ecologically. A measure of this improvement is shown by the period that can sustain grazing animals: 168 days in 2017 and 282 in 2018.
Supplementary water was provided during hot, dry spells to a bath in Bucehayes South where Bryan pulled Ragwort. Movement between the two enclosures was simple and did not require transport of the animals. "Lookering" was provided voluntarily twice/week throughout the season.
Some herbicide control of brambles was done on 8 Aug, with funds in-hand with RSPB. There is need for further scrub removal from the NE corner of the site, near the gate to Bucehayes Farm, and there is sparse, scattered scrub re-growth in the southern enclosure. Agree to schedule 2 days contract work with Toby.

(ii) QUANTOCK; Eight Dartmoor ponies grazed the main (Brimpit) block of Quantock turbary, giving a total pressure of 1001 grazing days (03 May-01 Oct x 5; 11 July-01 Oct x 3). Sward height was satisfactory thereafter, following a grazing pressure of 1232 days by cattle in 2018. The "Kennels" enclosure received 213 days of grazing by three ponies. A day's brush cutting was done on contract on 8 Aug, in the unenclosed triangle near Hillgrounds. A poorly attended volunteer day (with three committee members with combined age of 223 years!) was held at the pond on 01 Oct., under foul conditions. We succeeded in removing a substantial amount of excess Watercress, but another bout of work is needed. David to schedule. Geoff reported that the supplier of Carp has postponed delivery until the spring. A bench has now been beautifully installed near the pond. Access to the hide is now much improved by the installation of a stile from the crest of the permissive path.
No contract work over winter is sought. The need for a winter swale by volunteers will be assessed later.

(iii) HORNER HILL; The wood-pasture at the ruined cottages was topped by Robin Gundry on 24 Sept. and was looking lovely until it was marred by off-road bikers soon afterwards. Amanda will investigate having appropriate signs installed, to a ceiling of £100. A tree has fallen across the bridleway; agreed that clearance was the responsibility of the landowner (Donald Pike). The bracken-clad most northerly 100m of the open hillside was sprayed on 21 Aug and, in mid-Sept, 3 fire-breaks were brush-cut. There remains a substantial area of the heathy open area in need of more clearance. Discussion of the possible use of a mountain tractor (used to good effect by the National Trust on similarly steep terrain) led to the conclusion that brush-cutting remains preferable, chiefly because removal of the litter-arisings after cutting is essential to decrease soil fertility with the tractor not able to do so. Two days winter brush cutting approved.

(iv) SHORTMOOR; Three Dartmoor ponies exerted a grazing pressure of 129 days (29 Apr-30May; 01 Oct-14 Oct x 3), lighter than in 2018 (180 days). No winter work is envisaged though the possible need for a swale should be assessed later.

(v) SHORE BOTTOM; Volunteer Balsam pulling took place this year on five occasions: 22 June, 13 and 27 July, and 10 and 17 August. Progress was encouraging, largely due to increased participation through Paul's contacts and organisation. We have now been at it in Shore Bottom since July 2012.

(vi) HUNTSHAYES; No work and no plans.