

Stockland Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Turbaries Management Committee held in Stockland Victory Hall on Wednesday 13th July 2016.

- 1) Public Participation Time (so 1e & f); There were no members of the public.
- 2) Exclusion of the press and public. There were no items to be dealt with.
- 3) Present; Cllrs D Allen(chair), Damian Clay and P Maitland, Derek Boyland (resident), and Toby Taylor (RSPB). In attendance Ken Pearson (PC Clerk).
- 4) Apologies for absence; Linda Bennett (AONB), Geoff Pearce (DWT), Nic Hill (resident) and Sarah Machin (NE);
- 5) Declarations of Interest: There were no declarations of any interests.
- 6) Turbaries Management Committee Minutes-of the meeting held on 16th March, were received, confirmed and signed at the council meeting on the 26th April.
- 7) Action Review Summary: to receive and review the following items:
 - i) Interpretation Panels; resolved to agree that; cllrs Allen, Clay and Maitland rewrite the content leaving the design to Acorn; once completed the Clerk would progress an SDF application via BHAONB with matched funding between 50-75%; the project requiring completion by end of Mar 2017.
 - ii) Whitehayes flooding; resolved to receive a report from Cllr Maitland on the proposals for alleviating the risk, identified as a probable cost of approximately £875 plus VAT; agreed cllr Maitland to seek one other quote.
 - iii) Higher Level and Basic Payment Schemes (HLS and BPS); resolved to; receive the update report on 2016 claims completed by Charlotte Furnival who found discrepancies between hectares claiming for and the lesser amount of usable land on some HLS sites; agreed for extra 2 days investigation from her for the approx. cost of £800 +VAT, which requires council approval; Cllr Maitland reported on some minor amendments on boundary changes mostly in Shorebottom and presented a £20 invoice for copying of plans, which was agreed.
 - iv) Finance; resolved the Clerk to contact the tree contractor as a cheque of £100 for previous work had not been received.
- 8) Turbaries; resolved to receive an update on current work scheduled and agree future plans (App 1)
- 9) Communications; resolved to; receive reports on the, now updated, website site and volunteering opportunities available (App 1).
- 10) Woodland Grants; resolved to request support from Charlotte Furnival to see if feasible.
- 11) Items of Future Business for the next Agenda: grazing or burning Bucehayes and report back from any Natural England view
- 12) Date of next meeting is at 4pm, Victory Hall on 16th November, 2016.

Signed

30th August 2016

Chairman

Meeting closed at 5.45pm

APPENDIX 1

a. BUCEHAYES.

Thirty cattle had been put on to graze the northern enclosure on two occasions. On each, one animal had gone missing for a while, probably among the taller gorse near the northern extremity. Agreed to approach Natural England to decide whether it is better to burn overgrowing vegetation, or to continue grazing as well as remove smaller trees, although the ecological quality of this area remains very good. Four moorland ponies will be moved on to the southern enclosure later this season.

The northerly fence-line requires urgent maintenance with many strainer posts needing replacement. Agreed RSPB be asked to run a stockcheck, estimate what is required for Bucehayes and Quantock so that a stock of top quality creosoted posts and strainers is built up for maintenance of both enclosures. Agreed that replacement work would be on a phased programme to be completed before summer 2017.

Nest box occupancy this season show that 7 of the 20 boxes placed on Bucehayes were occupied, with 4 Great Tits, 1 Blue Tit, 1 Nuthatch and 1 Tawny Owl.

b. QUANTOCK

Peter Lane, as agreed, has provided nine Galloways to graze the Bripit enclosure from the 13th June. Use of Longhorn cattle from another supplier would have been much more expensive. Four Exmoor ponies had grazed the kennels enclosure (25 April-06 July), but proved reticent to move into the *Molinia* mire and the bracken clad slope above but, after heavy persuasion via the road, they have done a reasonable job in the mire where Pale Butterwort is now frequent. Bracken control in the kennels enclosure, despite the ponies' activity, is still needed and RSPB will undertake this.

The fence-line of both Quantock enclosures is in need of maintenance work (see Bucehayes, above).

The new pond has leaked so that the water level is now very low but as there is a Floating Sweet-grass infestation, the leak will be plugged and the leat re-connected to the stream when the sweet-grass is under control. Hand removal has proved only partially successful and chemical control will be tried noting the need for a qualified operator and dangers to invertebrate activity.

Some Himalayan Balsam has re-appeared below the pond, which needs to be hand-pulled, as do the few plants from the spring head above.

There were 79 flowering spikes of the rare Early Marsh Orchid counted this June, much the same number as 2015.

Of the 60 nest boxes on Quantock, 28 were in use this season: 10 Great Tit, 11 Blue Tit, 5 Nuthatch, 1 Marsh Tit (a nationally declining species) and 1 Tawny Owl.

c. SHORTMOOR

Four Exmoor ponies were moved on to the Shortmoor enclosure on 06 July. The fence-line here is not so old, so the need for repair is probably less urgent.

The bracken on the hillside needs spraying as soon as possible.

A survey of the open area on 21st June confirmed that biodiversity is improving with the frequency of the heathers increasing, especially at the base of *Molinia* tussocks, dense patches of Pale Butterwort and Bog Pimpernel, one spike of Heath Spotted Orchid but no Sundew or Bog Asphodel, suggesting a later survey is also needed.

Eleven of the 20 nest boxes were used, by 4 Great Tit, 5 Blue Tit, 1 Nuthatch and 1 Jackdaw (in an owl box).

d. HORNER HILL

Contract work supplemented by volunteers made excellent progress in brush-cutting the open wood-pasture at the ruined cottages on 25th May, followed by another on 16th June under foul conditions. There remains one more day's work to clear the whole area scheduled for 21st July, when the job would be concluded and most of the fallen trees removed. Hopefully, this opens the way to more mechanised means of keeping the area clear in future seasons.

Ten out of the 20 nest boxes were used: 4 Great Tit, 3 Blue Tit, 2 Nuthatch and 1 Tawny Owl.

e. HUNTSHAYES

Work near Whitecroft had been done satisfactorily on contract to Steve Billett of East Devon Timber Contractors. Work near Whitehayes is under negotiation.

Ten of the 15 nest boxes were used, by 4 Great Tit, 4 Blue Tit, 1 Nuthatch and 1 Tawny Owl.

f. SHORE BOTTOM

A leaning Cherry tree on the track to Brimley Fold needs to be felled and it was agreed for Steve Billett to do the job in one day's work at £100.

Volunteer Balsam-pulling continues, now without Natural England support, and are advertised on the web and via Stockland Tree emails.

Some leaning willow branches near Shorms need removal, which the RSPB are scheduled to complete on 22nd July.

Six of the 10 nest boxes used, by 3 Great Tits, 1 Blue Tit, 1 Nuthatch and 1 Tawny Owl.