

HENFIELD COMMONS JOINT COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the **Henfield Commons Joint Committee** held on **Wednesday 5th February** at **7.00pm** in the Parish Council Office.

Present: Mr A Sharp Mr M Morgan Ms G Perry Mr J Potts Mr R Noel Ms E Goodyear Mr E Colgate

In attendance: Mr D Nye Mr John Willis

1. **DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS**

There were no Declarations.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF 18th September 2019**

These were approved by the meeting and paper copies will be signed by the Chairman as soon as possible in the absence of Mrs P Grant.

3. **APOLOGIES** : Mrs P Grant, Mrs S Matthews, Mr P Hudson, Mr C Simmonds

4. **CHAIRMAN`S ANNOUNCEMENTS** The Chair explained that Mrs Grant has been unwell and measures to support her and the administration of the committee during her absence were considered.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting.

OPEN FORUM: There was none

The Chairman reconvened the meeting.

5. **MATTERS ARISING**

(a) **Oreham Common**

(i) No issues were reported.

(b) **Broadmare Common**

(i) Coggers Field drain: The recent works by Conservation Volunteers appear to have solved the drainage issues satisfactorily.

(ii) Bins: Some fly-tipped gutter brushes were left in bins area this week but have been removed by Parish Council staff. The bins are likely to be there longterm.

(iii) Pond: HDC legal and property departments are continuing to work on this issue. It was confirmed that there is a fence on neighbour's side.

(iv) Broadmare Common - Lane trim: contractor Mark Streeter has carried out a close hedge trim but this will grow back in time. Also tree work to make two trees safe has been carried out with HDC approval, by Southern Beeches.

(c) **Henfield Common**

(i) Tree works

Memorial trees: Discussed the trunks which have not been removed from the Memorial Field following the tree work recently. Some of these are now in the disused drain and it was considered that this is an acceptable way forward.

(ii) Cows/Management Plan:

Recent visit to Headley Heath (a fenced NT site in Surrey) by several members of the Committee to see Boviguard cow management system in action. Surrey Wildlife Trust manages the herd of cows at Headley Heath and they are loaned out to graze at other SWT and NT properties where land would benefit from grazing. They learned:

- a. Training the cows to recognise the virtual and electric barriers takes about two weeks
- b. At Headley Heath the cows are regularly moved from one area to another but each is very large and the cows cannot see beyond the area to other parts of the heath.
- c. National Trust has paid for the Boviguard barriers to be installed and for the batteries. Surrey Wildlife Trust purchases the collars and a GPS system for the leading cows to help locate them.
- d. Regular inspections needed- methods to manage any cows when they are sick will be a consideration
- e. The small herd of 5 cows seen was not bothered by people or dogs and horses at all
- f. The herd manager felt that if she was given a choice she would opt for simple electric fences.
- g. Ashdown Forest had given up using the system
- h. Andrew has a contact at the City of London parks who may be able to answer more questions on grazing cows near busy roads.

Discussion on what was learned at Headley Heath: There was a long a detailed discussion. Members of the committee were concerned that Henfield Common is much smaller than Headley Heath and that it is bounded by very busy roads. It was acknowledged that during World War 2 there was a herd of cows successfully kept on the common without fencing systems, but also noted that there was little traffic then. Risks of cows bolting were still considered to be high. Overall it was felt that the Boviguard system would cost too much money and will also require a great deal of effort to manage for something that we are not convinced will work in our setting. In theory members supported the idea but they did not feel they could support it for our common now they have seen it in practice.

- (iii) Other aspects of Common Management Plan: The Normal cutting regime on the common will continue but we will take care to remove all bales. PC Works Officer (Dick Nye) and Andrew Sharp will meet with Peter Booth to work out a cutting regime to allow this- with flexibility around the weather. Wilson's Honeysuckle has now been removed as suggested in plan.

- (iv) Reed Bed cut: Dick and Peter to meet to plan this for the next year. Conservation Volunteers have been cutting willow saplings but cannot dig them out. Hope they will reduce over time.
- (v) Causeway Trench: PHB have now dug a trench alongside the east side of causeway and three shallower areas in the reedbed to offer varying depths to support wildlife. Water is now flowing from the triangle into the ditch, but there were concerns about it draining into clay pipe at southern end of causeway instead of reedbed. Also discussed if the trench had been dug too deep for the water to drain into the shallow areas towards reedbed.
- (vi) The area of Marsh to the left of reedbed is the most valuable ecologically and we will make sure any works carried out take this into account. Bog Pimpernel can be found in this area. Removal of Hemlock water dropwort was considered. Michaelmas Daisies and another plant have been suggested for removal by the ecologist.
- (vii) Pothole in area south of reedbed: This deep hole has recently emerged and been fenced off as a risk, particularly to horse riders. It is the result of a broken pipe which was installed by WSCC to drain the roads. Andrew Sharp reported that WSCC pothole team are looking into the case. Agreed to put details on Facebook.
- (viii) Meadow cut: see item (iv) above
- (ix) Arun's Commemorative bench: Dick Nye expects this to arrive in a few weeks and to be in place by end of March. The exact location was considered.
- (x) Two large trees on roadside of Henfield Common South have recently been felled by HDC contractors. They had bracket fungus and were considered a safety risk.

(d) Tanyard

- (i) Southern pond: water level is now high following rodding of the pipes.
- (ii) Chestnut End – further minor works to make a small ditch to prevent mud going into a drive area are to be carried out.
- (iii) Field cut: being planned as for other areas- Eddie Colgate asked that the pathways cut for the gardens and arts week are made carefully to avoid yellow rattle.
- (iv) Gate post has been replaced and invoice submitted for the work by PC works officers.

6. **FIXED POINT RECORDING:** Mike Ainscough will take winter pictures soon. Drone footage may not be possible now as the law has changed regarding licences and flying over land near other people's boundaries.

7. **HENFIELD CONSERVATION GROUP:** The next session will be joint work with the PC works officers at Broadmare in February this Sunday it is planned to remove a willow in the pond and removed to low braches. High winds may intervene and the event may be postponed. John Willis proposed that the Conservation Group could put in forms for them to

benefit from Horsham Community Lottery. This was considered and agreed by all as a good way forward to raise necessary funding.

8. **POSITION OF UPKEEP OF PRIVATE ROADS ON COMMONS**

Andrew Sharp, Mike Morgan and others have looked at the potholes in the access road and report on this to HDC. Photographs were shown. There was much discussion on the liability for getting any works and repairs arranged and how they should be financed. Mike Morgan advised that we are responsible as a commons committee but that residents should be asked to make a contribution towards the works if carried out. Andrew Sharp proposed that we establish a clear way forward for all the roads on all the commons. At this stage it was agreed to contact the residents affected in this area first and then consider other possible areas later. We will request a draft letter to residents from HDC legal department (action MM) and hope this letter may prove suitable for all the residents an all commons.

9. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None was available

10. **FINANCE:** Due to sickness absence we do not have the information available. However, Andrew Sharp has arranged to have a meeting with Mrs P Grant next week and will be able to update us on the financial situation after this. There may therefore be a requirement to meet in the near future before the end of the financial year. All outstanding invoices need to be submitted by the end of February.

11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** Dick Nye suggested the coppicing of a hazel tree along the back path of the common and this was agreed, subject to not disturbing foxgloves, snowdrops etc. coming through in the Glade area and near where the cherry laurel has been cleared.

12. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** TBC