

BLAXHALL COMMONS and OPEN SPACES CHARITABLE TRUST

MINUTES OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

Saturday 25th March 2023 at 4:00pm at Vine Cottage

Attendance: Andrew Derrick – Trustee (Chair)

Rosy Thornton - Trustee

Mike Livesey - Trustee

Karen Baker - Trustee

Eve Rossor - Trustee

Joy Shaw - Blaxhall Tree Warden

Apologies: Mark Oakley

1. *Minutes of the meeting of 12th February 2023:*

These were agreed as correct, and will be put on the website.

2. *Matters arising:*

There were none not otherwise on the agenda.

3. *Finance:*

Mike informed the Trustees that there was currently £2,903.29 in the bank, following receipt of a contribution from Karen for the bench on Jasper's Pightle.

Mike drew Trustees' attention to mention in the East Suffolk newsletter of the Greenprint Forum which was calling for bids for small grants for projects which "contribute to the enhancement of local biodiversity and/or its understanding and appreciation by the local community". www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/nature-first-small-grants-scheme. It was agreed that this grant source should be borne in mind for future needs.

Mike suggested that BCOST should open a savings account so as to earn interest on our small reserve of capital. He also reminded Trustees of the need to create a formal annual budget. **Action:** Mike to look into opening a savings account.

4. *Planning for AGM:*

It was agreed that Joy will give a short talk (approx.10 minutes) on trees and hedges. It was noted that Joy will need facilities to show PowerPoint slides. Karen and Rosy can both bring screens; Rosy has a projector but it is not clear whether this will work with a laptop. **Action:** All will look into sourcing a projector which works with a laptop.

It was noted that Andrew has kindly offered to wrote a draft Annual Report. **Action:** Andrew to draft and circulate to Trustees for comment.

Mike will produce a short Finance Report. **Action:** Mike to draft this and circulate to Trustees.

It was noted that no Trustees are due for re-election at the AGM apart from the two Parish Council nominees. Karen reported that Mark had raised this issue at the last meeting of the PC, and that the paperwork was in hand.

Actions: Karen to bring teabags and sugar to the AGM; Rosy to bring coffee, milk and biscuits. Eve to arrange for notices of the AGM to go on village noticeboards. Rosy to publicise the AGM on the BCOST website.

5. *Insurance:*

Following the last Trustees' meeting, Eve had contacted a number of insurers who have stated that they do not deal with the kind of cover sought by BCOST.

Rosy had received an outline online quote from the insurance company Markel Direct which was considerably lower than our current policy with NFU. She has emailed Markel back to discuss details and try to firm up the quote, but has so far had no reply.

Action: Rosy to chase up.

Joy noted that the Tree Council does not offer any insurance for tree wardens, who are therefore uninsured and operate at their own risk. On the other hand, it was noted that having insurance for volunteers on work parties was regarded as good practice – although not compulsory - by the Charity Commission.

Eve noted that it was primarily our litter picks, taking place on the public highway, which appeared to be responsible for raising the cost of our insurance. It was suggested that the Parish Council might take on the nominal leadership of the litter picks, but with BCOST still doing the organisation. **Actions:** Eve to email Jo Peters, Parish Clerk, to check whether the PC has any employer's liability insurance covering volunteers. Karen and other Trustees to talk to Graham Bowles informally about this matter. Eve to check whether other parish councils have employer's liability cover.

6. *Income from Electricity Installations:*

The Trust has recently received the annual (26.03.22- 25.03.23) payment from UKPN of £62.80 (covering the period 26th March 2022 to 25th March 2023), in respect of the electricity poles and wires on Jasper's Pightle. It was noted that this was considerably lower than last year's payment, possibly because last year's payment included a period of back payment. **Action:** Eve to contact UKPN for clarification of this discrepancy and for confirmation of the annual sum we can expect going forward.

It was noted that Mark (who had sent apologies) had agreed to contact Fisher German to clarify the possible agreements offered with the National Grid in respect of the pylon and wires at Stone Common. It was agreed to defer until after Mark reports back any further discussion of whether to agree a new annual wayleave with the National Grid, or an easement yielding a one-off capital payment which could be invested.

7. *Jasper's Pightle:*

It was reported that the hedge along the B1069 had been completed by the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB volunteers. It will need further mulching in places, and ongoing watering in dry weather. Eve had written to thank Neil Lister (Countryside Projects Officer at the AONB) on our behalf.

Eve had obtained a first aid kit for use by anyone working on Jasper's Pightle. This will be placed in Rosy's woodshed (to the left of the gate) at Shepherd's Cottage.

It was agreed to schedule a work party to remove more wire fencing at the Pightle. This was fixed for Monday 10th April, starting at 2.30pm. **Action:** Eve to put up notices and email supporters publicising the work party.

It was noted that the Management Plan indicates that the gorse at the Pightle will need reviewing this year, after the ground nesting birds have left (i.e. from the second half of July) with a view to removing older and less vigorous plants. Joy suggested that branches of gorse from the Pightle might be used to scatter seed on bare earth at Stone Common following bracken clearing there.

8. *Stone Common:*

It was reported that a work party on 11th March had cleared several bags of waste plastic from the open area to the left of Provost's Path, and Andrew had put up bird boxes. Joy had mulched the fruit trees that were planted last year.

It was noted that mulch will be needed for the hedges that we have planted. This could be derived from on-site bracken raking following cutting later in the year, from cutting of Alexanders, or possibly from manure from David Moyse's horse, or other local horse owners. **Action:** Karen to talk to the horse owners at Lark Rise about possible disposal of manure at Stone Common.

It was noted that the house sign which had been on BCOST land has been moved; its new position was agreed as very acceptable by the Trustees. The Trustees were also pleased to note that access to allotments numbers 26 and 27 has been greatly improved. **Action:** Eve to email thanks to the allotment holders.

The next Stone Common work party was scheduled: this will take place on Saturday 22nd April, starting at 2.30pm. Tasks to be carried out will be reviewed on arrival on site.

There was some discussion of the possibilities for light grazing of areas of Stone Common. Joy has hurdle fencing which can be used to keep sheep to a small area. Joy is looking into the possibility of having sheep on loan from Allonsfield House, Campsea Ashe.

9. *AOB*:

It was reported that a litter pick had been conducted in the week of 18th-25th March. All the roads around the village had been covered, as well as some areas of the B1069 near the Pightle and the road along from Sandgalls car park.

Eve reported that, following the litter pick, the Trust had been invited by Norse to become Plastic Champions. On discussion it was felt that this, although an important initiative, was not a priority for the Trust as it does not fall within our core activities.

Dates of next meetings:

Annual General Meeting: Saturday 15th April, 2:00pm in the Village Hall.

Next ordinary Trustees' meeting: Saturday 10th June, 4:00pm at Vine Cottage.