

FRIENDS OF QUANTOCK

Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 5 September 2016 at Dodhill Firs

Present: Mr Alan Hughes (Chairman), Mrs Laetitia Kelly (Vice-Chairman), Mr Chris Paul (Treasurer), Mrs Mary ter Braak (Secretary), Mrs Barbara Shaw, Mrs Sandra Samuelson, Mr John Fawcett, Revd. Stephen Campbell, Mr Ian Kett, Mr Tim Whittingham, Mr Mike Pitcher, Mr Chris Edwards, Mr Andy Stevenson and Mrs Carol Waterman-Smith (Minutes Secretary).

The Chairman welcomed Mr Andy Stevenson to the meeting and congratulated him on his recent appointment as the new full-time Quantock Ranger. He commented on Mr Stevenson's previous experience with Somerset County Council and with Natural England and gave a brief résumé of FOQ and its close links with the AONB.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Apologies were received from Lady Gass.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: There were no declarations of interest.

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 15 June 2016: The Minutes were approved as a true record of the Meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:

- CE confirmed that the potholes at DWD had been repaired and a bill for the raw materials would be forwarded to CP. In reply to a question from AH, CE said he would chase up the new DWD sign which was not yet in situ.
- IK reported that the Kilve footpath was on hold pending the results of negotiations over the sale price of the land belonging to Lady Dory.
- AH asked whether any money had been received following Roger Habgood's walk. CP had received two amounts of £44.00 and £17.50 which he believed to be the proceeds but would confirm. AH said he would write to thank Roger Habgood.
- LK commented that she had yet to receive a copy of the Code of Conduct for cycling but that complaints over cyclists had ceased, as a result of far less activity in the problem areas.
- AS confirmed that work on the steps in Hawkridge Wood was nearing completion.
- With regard to the CPG survey and landscape assessment, CE agreed to ask Emma-Jane whether she might be able to take on this work on behalf of FOQ, possibly in addition to her AONB hours.

OFFICERS' UPDATES:

CHAIRMAN - AH commented on Brexit. To date he believed there had been no relevant impact but it was important to keep up the pressure on funding and protection until it was known which aspects of EU environmental law would be carried into UK law.

AH suggested the possibility of forming an association of voluntary societies involved with National Parks and AONBs with a view to creating a nationwide group that could work jointly as an independent body.

AH brought attention to the current proposal to merge WSDC and TDBC. CE believed that such a merger would create a more balanced Council but would result in just one funding body rather than the current two.

AH thanked those who had helped at the Quantock show. The show had resulted in new members and various items of interest including Paul Savage's Quantock calendars and a hedge laying day at Cothelstone, details of which would be posted on the website. AH had also spoken to a charcoal burner from Hestercombe who was looking for a suitable woodland area. CE said that

there might be an option at Cothelstone. Future shows at Milverton, Nether Stowey and Dunster were discussed and CW-S said she would contact the Dunster show secretary for details.

TREASURER - CP commented that finances were good but there had been an inevitable reduction in interest rates. He noted that the £20K bond with Nationwide would mature on the 29 October 2016.

SECRETARY - MtB said that membership had decreased over the past year but this was acceptable, given the increase in subscription rates which had resulted in a number of non-renewals. There had however been 31 new family members over the last year and 2 new business members.

EVENTS - BS reported that the Nigel Phillips talk at Nether Stowey on 16 September had been well publicised and there would be catering for around 75. Members would be reminded by email. The fee for the speaker was £40.

BS suggested that Peter Hagget could be invited to talk on Quantock Art at the AGM and IK kindly offered to provide transport.

Bob Croft was keen to lead an archaeological walk in April.

BS was investigating a possible garden visit to East Quantoxhead and also a guided walk in the old landscaped garden at Crowcombe.

BS would be attending the unveiling of the memorial at Crowcombe for the crew of the plane which crashed in WW2.

AH thanked BS.

WEBSITE: In response to a question from AH, TW reported that the electronic membership system was now in operation.

NEWSLETTER: MtB said that she would be arranging a meeting of the newsletter sub-committee in September/October. AH appealed for more contributions for the e-newsletters.

HINKLEY C AND FRACKING: MP reported on the continuing uncertainty over Hinkley C and drew the Committee's attention to four main areas of concern:

- the proposed HPC technology has not been used before in commercial operation
- the cost of this technology has risen significantly since the initial plans
- at full capacity, the proposed reactor/generator will produce 28,000 GWHrs in a typical year. The current 737,000 renewable energy installations in the UK produce 54,000 GWHrs, 92% more than the forecast production from HPC.
- HPC, if approved, will not produce any power until 2026 at the earliest.

AH asked CE whether, should the decision be taken to cancel the Hinkley project, this would have an effect on the Big Bid. In reply, CE confirmed that EDF had already released £600K in total for groundworks mitigation, landowners and the Forestry Commission and this was being used as match-funding for the Big Bid.

Concerning fracking, MP was of the opinion that further evaluation was work in progress by interested parties. The new government is currently consulting on direct 'fracking' compensation payments to home owners.

DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP: Nothing to report.

OUR LAND: AH reported that Sedgemoor Council had removed the burnt-out car on Custom Common. AH had cut down the large rhododendron on Custom Common and suggested that IK might circulate observers asking them to notify him of any rhododendrons so that they can be removed.

An observer for Halsway Combe to replace AH has not yet come forward. AH asked IK whether he would be willing to liaise with the AONB over Events Management. IK agreed.

BIG BID: CE reported that the result of the first stage would be known at the end of October. The Lottery Assessors' visit had gone well but CE warned the Committee that competition for Lottery funding was fierce and the success of the Big Bid was by no means certain.

PLANNING: CP reported that there was no further news on **Cricketer Farm, Nether Stowey**. Concerning the **Staplegrove** proposal, AH would re-submit his letter of support for Emma-Jane on behalf of FOQ. Comments had been submitted by the QC on the plans for the **Bicknoller** barns. AH mentioned that the **Merridge** barn conversion to provide holiday accommodation to which FOQ had objected but which had subsequently been approved, had now had a change of use to full-time accommodation approved. According to the QC, this could not be contested.

ISSUES: AH reported that an outbreak of Phytophthora Ramorum had resulted in the felling of considerable numbers of larches on Hugh Warmington's land at Cothelstone.

ITEMS OF REPORT: None

DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS:

12 December 2016

3 April 2017

12 June 2017

The AGM will be held on 22 March 2017 at Nether Stowey Church Centre.