

Westleton Common Advisory Group

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 10 February 2022 at 7-30 pm in the foyer of Westleton Village Hall

Present: Nick Shearme (NS), David Rous (DR), Roy Jones (RJ), Julian Alexander (JA), Joyce Burtenshaw (JBU), John Bebbington (JBe), Andrew Turner (AT), Amanda Freeman (AF), Chris Freeman (CF).

1 – *Apologies.* None

2 - *Minutes of meeting held on Monday 15th November 2021.*

Agreed to be correct.

3 - *Matters arising not on this agenda.*

No matters were raised. As this meeting was arranged at short notice to discuss specific matters JBe will put any items from the November meeting that require following up on the agenda of the next meeting.

4 – *Clearance work on common.*

NS reported that all the clearance work arranged on the Noddle and near Ralph's Mill had been completed. The waste material on the Ralph's Mill site had been burned but that on the Noddle was still to be dealt with. The contractors are expected to return to complete this clearance. At JA's suggested we will advise Westleton Parish Council to withhold part payment till this work is completed. Because of the high soil content burning may not be practical so alternate disposal arrangements may be required. This may require an adjustment of the invoice.

Clearing the Noddle will allow regeneration of, mainly, heather. This would not be possible with previous surface material and the overgrown gorse. Signs of regeneration should become apparent during the coming year.

NS also reported that the area near the beehives had been opened up. The hides are now more visible, so people are less likely to approach them. NS has been assured that the hives will be maintained.

As part of the updating of the Management Plan NS, JBU, JA, DR, and JBe had walked the common and, with the earlier advice of Suffolk Wildlife Trust, had decided to recommend that the next clearance project would be the willows and birch in the wet area in Compartment 14. This would allow regeneration of wetland. This will be included in the updated Management Plan, funded by the High-Level Stewardship grant. The need to restore fire breaks was also identified during this exploratory walk and contractors will be required for that work.

A part fallen silver birch in Compartment 2 near the notice board was the result of woodpecker action.

In response to a question from AT DR advised that the restoration of fire breaks should be done this year as part of the current management plan.

4a – *Local dissatisfaction.*

DR had been the victim of an aggressive incident by a Westleton resident expressing dissatisfaction with the clearance work done. This incident has been reported to Westleton Parish Council who have sought advice from the Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC). The parish council's response has yet to be finalised but is expected to include a warning that the public need to be respectful to councillors, volunteers and contractors. Abusive conduct will not be tolerated. Abusive behaviour could be reported to the police.

4b – Proposed Mission Statement.

SALC have advised the parish council to publish a “Mission Statement” outlining its responsibilities towards the management of common and affirming its insistence on respect for councillors, volunteers and contractors and that safe working practices are followed.

JBe circulated a draft of this document and asked that all members of the group responded to him very soon with their corrections and improvements. It is hoped that the parish council can agree a final wording at its meeting due at the end of February.

5 – Changes to GeoSuffolk Report.

Following a request from a Westleton Resident GeoSuffolk have amended their report. JBe will include the amended report in the copy of the Common Annual Report in the village hall and on the website. He is writing a note to explain this change and will circulate a draft.

It would be useful if we had large scale maps that clearly show the boundaries of the common and the compartments. DR is checking maps he has available to see which are suitable for enlarging.

JBe will ask Ian Haines if he has access to maps showing the boundary when the common was purchased.

(Note JB – following this meeting Ian Haines emailed JBe saying that NS had raised this matter with him. Ian does have a set of historical documents among which is a Land Registry A3 plan of the common showing boundaries. He has offered to let us have a look at these documents to see if any are suitable. JBe will accept this offer.)

6 – Management Plan from April 2023.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust have advised that the bulk of the existing plan is fine and only requires updating. Members of the advisory group have walked the common, once with Graham Hart from SWT, to work out what should be included in the updated plan.

JBe is currently updating the plan. He offered his apology for this taking longer than expected, but other issues have arisen.

9 – AOB.

JBu and Juliet Bullimore are leading a walk of the common for the Blyth Valley branch of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

DR – we should ask GeoSuffolk if they want us to clear the slope in their area of interest. JBe to contact GeoSuffolk.

10 - Date of next meeting.

Unless other issues arise, we do not need to meet again till September 2022.