

Henfield Commons Committee Meeting Minutes  
**Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2024**



Attendees:

**Voting Members (HDC & HPC)**

Gill Perry (acting Chair), Josh Potts, Mike Morgan, Andrea May, Roger Noel

**Committee members**

Eddie Colgate, Tony Baker Pete Crawford, Jake Everitt, Neal Matheson. Philip Bailey

**Guest**

Mike Ainscough

**Apologies:** Malin Anderson

**Approval of Minutes of 7<sup>th</sup> December**

Minutes were agreed by members.

**Chairmans' Announcements**

The committee noted with much sadness, that Julie Coultas, resident of Henfield Common North, will no longer be able to attend the committee. We would like to thank her for all her input, especially her representation of residents and her advocacy for horse-riding as one of the user groups of Henfield Common.

**Matters Arising**

**5 a. Governance / restructure update**

- Pete Crawford advises the legal department at HDC will be involved with the constitutional review this year regarding the management committee. Paul Anderson and the Cabinet member will also be involved in this.
- Pete to circulate a draft Terms of Reference document for comment and arrange a date with elected members to meet with HDC officers to discuss a way forward.

**5 b. Parking for Alma Terrace residents**

- Parking sign at Alma Terrace has now been removed. No permit system is now in effect. Further talks will be needed on how we plan to address the residents' concerns over parking and the management of this site going forward.

**5 c. Fixed point photography.**

- Mike Ainscough asked about the value of continuing his fixed point photography. General consensus that it was valuable to continue and that could aid future management not just in the short but in the long term as well. All in meeting agree

that a dedicated cloud storage should be set up, so the photos could be easily distributed and viewed. This service will need to be included in a budget.

- Malin and Mike Ainscough reviewing fixed point locations and have met at Broadmare and Oreham Commons already. Meeting at Henfield Common on 18 April

#### **5 d. Update on arboricultural survey for all commons.**

- The survey report was circulated. It is a useful overview of the woodland areas and should be used to guide future management, complementing the site management plans. It flags the importance of the veteran oaks in Henfield Common and there was discussion around proceeding with 'haloing' – clearing younger trees that have grown up around the oaks to reduce competition for light and water. Any rope swings should be removed from the veterans and consideration given to fencing around the trees to reduce compaction.

#### **5 e. Recent broken pipe and drainage issues on Henfield Common - current situation**

- The broken surface water drainage pipe has been repaired and unblocked and water is flowing freely into the reedbed again. Some temporary fencing has been left in situ on site, as the ground has been very soft where the sink hole was filled. It can be removed when the ground becomes less soft and waterlogged.

### **6. Open Forum**

No questions raised.

### **7. Tanyard**

#### **7 b. Tanyard mowing.**

- Until governance has been agreed, mowing at the Tanyard will need to be organised by the HCJC.
- HDC will include the Tanyard in the IdeVerde mowing contract if we take back control of management. It will be an annual cut and collect in late August/early September (weather dependent).
- PC confirms quote has been obtained by Richard Blower.
- It was agreed that the mowing of the short grass area around Tanyard Pond should be placed in the HDC grounds maintenance contract. The possibility of getting the hedge re-laid by Green Gym hedging volunteers to be explored by Jake / Malin. HDC to respond to Richard Blower.

#### **7 c. Update on fencing and plans for grazing.**

- HDC still currently undertaking grazing review.
- The new fencing installation at Tanyard was booked with Nick Blunt Fencing for last week in March, but due to all the rain we have had lately, the field was too

waterlogged and ground too soft for the fencing contractor to be able to fence without ruining the field.

- Nick Blunt has quoted £8,320 (excl VAT) to renew the Tanyard livestock fence. This was to be completed using the surplus of last year's budget, so there is a decision to be made if this amount is still going to be spent on fencing the Tanyard field this year. It may be a higher priority spending that money elsewhere this financial year. E.g. scrapes on Henfield Common reedbed as discussed with Wilder Horsham. A request will be made to HDC's Director of Finance to request a carry forward of this underspend into the 24-25 budget for the fencing works.

#### **7 d. Update on Red Oak tree removal.**

- Neal Matheson advises that the red oak tree is being cut back to a monolith, not removed.
- HDC currently waiting on response from UK Power Networks so works can be undertaken to reduce the tree down to 2 meters.

#### **7 e. Craggits Lane hedge**

- Management of this hedge to be added to the HDC Grounds Maintenance contract.

#### **7 f. Henfield shed planning application update.**

- No further updates on status.

### **8. Henfield Common**

#### **8 a. Gas main realignment and replacement proposals – Plans and timescales.**

- Committee are in support of proposal from South Gas Network to put a gas pipe across the common, parallel to the Causeway, as opposed to along Henfield Common North and along the A281, as this was the least disruptive to Henfield residents. There is a requirement by SGN to have an easement across the area. Pete Crawford advised that SGN are preparing paperwork to submit to the Secretary of State for approval, and the legal process is likely to take several months to complete. There may be a financial benefit from agreeing the easement.

#### **8 b. Update on recent conservation works on common and future plans – rangers.**

- HDC will not take on management responsibility for the Commons until the details of the governance have been agreed. If HDC are going to be taking on conservation works, the aim will be to follow the management plans. If HDC take on management, the mowing contract to be added the grounds maintenance contract, either with Idverde or a specialist contractor. Timings may vary depending on weather and ground conditions.
- North Common Marsh – HDC are hoping to cut and collect the marsh area using a power scythe and rake and compost the arising. Will liaise with Henfield Conservation Volunteers re their assistance.

- Discussion about mowing arrangements across Common, with some confusion as to what has been agreed / happened in the past. Following list is believed to be correct, but Members to review past files and minutes:
  - Western triangle – cut and collect 2 x per annum – early cut (April/May) and late cut (Aug/Sep/Oct). All timings may vary depending on weather and ground conditions.
  - North Common: wet grassland west of the causeway – cut and collect 2 x per annum – early cut (April/May) and late cut (Aug/Sep). All timings may vary depending on weather and ground conditions.
  - North Common: Areas east of the causeway. Leave unmown edges and corners.
  - Roadside bund – cut and collect 3 x per annum (April, July, Oct)
  - South Common grassland – cut and collect 2 x pa early (April/May) and late (Aug/Sep).
  - Area for Henfield Fair on 13-20<sup>th</sup> May to be cut
- Meeting held with Wilder Horsham at Henfield Common. Plan to do a joint volunteer task to improve the current leaky dam and create further leaky dams in the stream – this is an autumn/winter task.
- Reedbed improvement works – local group could apply for funding from Wilder Horsham e.g. Henfield Birdwatch could apply.

## **9. Broadmare Common**

### **9 a. Recent review**

#### **b. Current tree works and scrub clearance.**

- The plan is to follow the management plan.
- Management that was agreed with the late Malcom Eastwood last year and has since been completed on Broadmare Common include:
  - Removal of black plastic sheeting from Black Pond.
  - Reed mace management by HCV. Failed attempt by HDC to brush cut, as silt too deep. Management due in winter.
  - Area 1 and 2 were cut and collected by a HDC contractor in Sep 2023.
  - Parish cleared compost/burn site.
  - Neal M has completed safety inspection of site and some diseased and dangerous trees have been felled. There is an additional section along the road and near Honeysuckle cottage that it still outstanding.
  - Willow coppicing has started in area 1, along stream and in area 2. A lot of the brush has been burnt and dead hedge have been created in the compost area with the help of HCV and parish/community payback.

#### **c. Pond management and surveys**

- Frog and toad survey carried out during the day in February and March. No evidence of frogs, toads or other amphibians found. We may need to search after dark with torches.
- Can volunteers help complete GCN surveys on 20 April for 6 x ponds at BC?
- Breeding Bird Survey in April and June– MA to complete – perhaps ask if Henfield Birdwatch can help?
- Request to add BC as a hot spot on eBird.

- GCN eDNA - we would like to test 3 main ponds, Black Pond, Lilly Pond and Pond House Pond. Can Tony and HCV help with sampling on 20 April?
- Dragon and damselflies survey to be carried out in June, July, August
- Wetland and aquatic flora surveys - May, June, July

- a. Dead hedge created in compost/burn site.
- b. Too early to assess effects on increased management as have only just started collecting survey data
- c. The bales near pond 1 have had plastic taken off and partly broken down, are too broken apart to be easily removed by a digger. The bale next to Black Pond is now in Black Pond (we don't know how it has ended up there). We may be able to remove in summer if water level is low enough.

## 10. Oreham Common

- a. Scrub clearance undertaken by community payback.
  - Community payback have cleared a linear section of blackthorn scrub by the pond, where scallops can be created this autumn/winter. Alternatively, we can create scallops along the lane where the blackthorn scrub is getting 'leggy'. Willow around ponds still needs coppicing on rotation.
  - The scrub clearance needs to be managed with a ranger on site, to ensure the works are completed to the required standard. This will only be possible if HDC are given control over management.

## 11. Correspondence

- a. A resident of Henfield Common North wrote asking for the creation of a new pond. Reply issued to requestee stating that HDC & Henfield committee are currently following a management plan for this land and enhancing the existing marsh and reedbed.
- b. A resident at Nightingale House, Broadmere Common at written asking to renew her three yearly parking permit. This arrangement was unknown to current Committee members, so resident advised to continue parking as before, until after results of governance process.

## 12. Budget/Expenditure

- £20k budget committed for 2024-25. Management plan and haloing to come out of this fund.
- Pete Crawford stresses the importance that we must make sure all funding provided be spent as last year we underspent.
- Pete Crawford to talk to finance regarding obtaining £10k for fencing works.

## 13. AOB

None

## 14. Date of next meetings

HDC to circulate date for meeting re Terms of Reference discussion.