

**Minutes of the Boughton Fen Committee (BFC) meeting
Held at 19.00 on 3rd October 2014
at All Saints Church Boughton**

Present: Mark Pogmore (MP) Chairman, Angela Faherty (AF) Treasurer, Allan Hale (AH), Frank Reid (FR), David Cooper (DC), Kevin Fisher (KF), Paul Smith (PS) and Alan Pickering (AP) (minutes).

In attendance: Peter Agate (PA) Boughton Parish Council (BPC) RFO.

1 Apologies

None, all members were present.

2 Declaration of interest

MP declared an interest in that he had previously worked for the three contractors who had been approached to carry out works of bank reconstruction. He had discussed this with the BPC Chairman and it had been agreed that this was acceptable if, when he met said contractors on Fen business, he was always accompanied by another member of the Committee. This was accepted by the Committee.

3 Minutes of AGM

All present agreed that these could be signed as representing a true record of the meeting. It was noted that PA was in attendance.

4 Minutes of BFC meeting held on 3rd July 2014

All present agreed that, with the addition of the initials of Peter Agate, these could be signed as representing a true record of the meeting.

5 Minutes of BFC meeting of 19th September 2104

All present agreed that these could be signed as representing a true record of the meeting.

It was noted that all comments made by those persons unable to attend the meeting were read out at the meeting.

6 Matters arising/action points from 3rd July meeting

These matters are taken by member rather than in chronological order.

MP

184 - see item 8 below

194 - ongoing

195 - ongoing

203 - being reviewed with Natural England (NE)

206 - see item 10 below

207 - AH has been dealing with this. He mentioned that reed bed cutting is not simple as some is pure fen whereas other pure reed. He has spoken to BfB and has emailed them but so far without any success. In order to maintain progress he has spoken to NWT to ascertain how they approach such matters and who they use and has a meeting with them next week to discuss (Plan B). There was a general discussion as to whether BfB were interested with AF remarking that we do owe them money albeit that they seem ambivalent about payment of that as well. Although the work is not to be done until next Feb/March the fact that we do not know the likely price is not helping us to budget for other works to be done. Action – AH to also contact Little Ouse Headwaters Project to see if this will give us a Plan C option.

208 - Ongoing – Bank works put out to tender 3rd September.

212 – Completed. AP will take the minutes for this meeting and Carole Woolnough will do future meetings.

FR

211 - FR has contacted Stuart Mann and discovered that the price of a good second hand steel container was of the order of £1,000 and Geoff Proctor had agreed that this could be sited in his yard. However as the need for storage was dependent upon the decision as to whether to outsource any further discussion was deferred to item10 below.

AF

213 - AF queried what period the payment was for as she wished to make it clear when she sent the check out. It was confirmed that it was for the financial year 2013-2014.

DC & PS

210 - DC reported that Lawn Boy had suggested that it would be possible to get a good grass cutter to suit our needs for around £750. PS reported that a second hand Kubota unit would cost around £1,000. However, as the need depends upon the decision regarding outsourcing the cutting to a third party, it was decided to side-line this issue until that decision is made.

AH

209 – The Management Plan has been update and circulated. Comments received have been incorporated with one exception (whether to include reference to our desire to move forward on Oxborough Broad) as it was felt right to seek the Committee’s view on this matter. After a brief discussion it was agreed that it was right to remain silent on this issue.

The revised plan was accepted but, at the suggestion of MP, it was agreed that future reports the Committee could consider incorporating lists of all species that inhabit the Fen, either as residents or migrants, on the website.

The Committee also concluded the annual forecast/budget be attached to the Annual Winter Works document that AH produces.

Through the Chairman, and for the record, the Committee expressed their thanks to Allan Hale for an excellent piece of work.

All

These items were not discussed. 205 and 212 have now been dealt with (and the action plan lists noted accordingly). I feel we should raise 199 and 204 at the next meeting.

Furthermore Action points 177 and 182 were moved from the chronological list to the individual lists – They are both ongoing and have been added to AF and DC (177) and AF 182.

7 **Financial Report**

AF reported that, following receipt of the HLS payment, net assets stood at c£11,600.

8 **Change of signatories**

It was agreed that, following his resignation from BFC, Tim Madgwick would be removed from the list of signatories and replaced by David Cooper.

PA agreed to complete the necessary documentation which was done at the meeting and signed by the relevant parties.

9 **Budget 2014/15**

MP presented his revised Budget/forecast taking into account the receipt of the monies for HLS and the initial proposals for work as agreed with NE and the Environment Agency (EA).

AH asked whether the accounts broke the monies spent down into the various categories of work carried out or whether reliance was placed on detailed invoices/receipts to deal with any queries from funders. It was confirmed that the latter option is used.

AP queried whether the individual breakdowns between various categories of work as shown in the HLS agreement were followed. MP explained that, broadly, this was the case and that NE were happy with how money was being spent.

MP explained that, following discussions with the two agencies, it was likely that we would be receiving some £4,000 from each of NE and EA but that these amounts were not shown in the revised Budget/forecast as we had not had confirmation in writing.

In response to a question regarding the need for a carry forward float of £3,000 MP mentioned that it was possible that we may need to take out a tree near the houses.

FR pointed out that NCC had previously intimated that if we cut the verges they may give us credit in some form or another. As this affected the Parish generally FR agreed to take it up direct with NCC.

PA commented that, as the Budget/forecast is a living document it needed to be updated as and when figures were agreed or plans changed.

It was agreed that, with the addition of the a £200 risk contingency for unforeseen minor expenditure such as tool replacement etc and by reducing the existing forecast expenditure for the cutter/fuel/repairs and maintenance to £300 works the budget/forecast would be accepted by the Committee.

10 **Winter works**

Bank alongside the Stringside Drain

MP opened by informing everyone that tender documents for the bank works had been sent to West Dereham Plant Hire, W R Chapman and Koval Plant Hire at Setch.

Bearing in mind that we were likely to receive some £8k from NE and EA MP felt that, depending upon the level of the quotes received, and taking into account the £3k that BFC could commit from their reserve funds, this would take us nearly all the way along the bank.

AF suggested that, if the £11k were insufficient to complete the work it might be sensible to contribute more from our reserves and that, if we could afford it, we could even close the gap to Oxborough Road. MP and AH both felt that we did not need to go as far as the road as we had only experienced flooding there once recently and that had not recurred despite subsequent periods of heavy rain. It was also suggested that if we constructed a spillway and sluice gate between the Fen and the river we could manage the water levels ourselves and thus prevent the bankside walk becoming too wet. AH commented that this had been discussed but that the cost of such a spillway was way too expensive for our resources.

There was some discussion as to what we would do if the total costs fell below £8k. MP argued that, as everything we were doing with NE and EA was seen as a joint venture we should still be seen as contributing from BFC funds. However, given the cost of the most recent work, MP felt the likelihood of the work costing less than £8k was very remote

It was confirmed that the costs were high because of the number of trees to be removed – trees being the “root of the problem” (sorry, too good to omit).

Reed cutting

We are waiting for discussions with either BfB, NWT or Little Ouse Headwaters Project to be concluded. However AH confirmed that our SSSI status was partly because of the existence of the Marsh Carpet Moth and that the reed cutting would be sympathetic to their habitat.

DC queried whether the Fen should be regarded as a “wet fen” and that he was concerned that the works we were carrying out were putting something back that had not always been there. He mentioned that peat digging had taken place in the past (this would have been impossible had the Fen been wet) and that during his childhood (in the 1960’s) the Fen had been largely dry and the rivers much fuller with good fishing. There was much discussion on this point and it was accepted that we had to be sure that we were doing the “right thing”. MP and AH took comfort from the fact that NE were the experts in this field and that they were fully up to speed and supported our actions. In the event it was agreed that NE would be asked if they would come and address the Committee (and perhaps the wider community) on the topic. Action MP/AH to pursue.

Fen Wildlife Walk Cutting

Whilst many of the matters tendered could not be concluded we had received two responses in respect of this issue. The two quotes were £80 per cut from Greenfingers (based on a fixed price of 8 cuts per year for three years) and £160 per cut from Treelink (based on an annual contract). MP mentioned that he had spoken to Greenfingers who had said that the reason for seeking a three-year deal was to enable them to commit to

purchasing new equipment. It was proposed by MP and seconded by AP to accept the Greenfingers quote and proceed to complete the contract. NB this will mean that the Committee no longer need to purchase a grass cutter or acquire a storage facility.

Generally

MP pointed out that we were getting tight on timescales and asked if Committee members were happy to deal with the choice of contractors by email rather than having to convene an extraordinary meeting. This was agreed provided everyone used the "reply all" facility. NB The fact that the public will not be aware of this aspect of the debate is of no consequence as they would be excluded from any debate on actual figures because of the confidential nature of the matter.

Working Parties

We have two working parties planned 11th October and 2nd November. It was agreed that, as we were still unsure of the amount of work to be done by the contractors that on the 11th October we will confine ourselves to general tidying (clearing brambles, overhead growth etc.). The 2nd November working party will carry our works to the boardwalk in Highland Fen (raising the final section and adding a new one) although this is dependent upon Andrew Faherty being available. It was also agreed to plan a further working party on either the 29th or 30th November (depending upon attendance levels).

Action AF will speak to Andrew to see if he is available on 2nd November and AP will circulate details on the 29th 30th November to gauge the level of support.

11 Formation of a Management Trust

MP opened the discussion by mentioning that this issue had been discussed informally some years earlier but it had been decided at that time not to take it any further. MP explained that there were two issues; firstly, although up to now BPC had fully supported BFC, we could not be certain that a future BPC would do so to the same extent or at all; secondly any organisations who provided funding were not generally prepared to provide funds to support local authorities. Looking to the future MP felt that it was wise put in hand now measures that would protect the Fen in the future.

In response to a question from FR as to what a Management Trust was AP explained that it was a trust formally set up to manage an asset or group of assets. The vehicle would be a Trust Deed which would govern the relationship between the two parties and would need to spell out what the future roles and responsibilities of each party were and, as such, would need to be drawn up by a lawyer which would be an expensive exercise. AP said that, bearing in mind that Boughton Fen was owned by Boughton Parish Council who were the sole body who could determine who managed the Fen, if BFC wished to go down this route it was essential that BPC be involved as, if they were not prepared to grant such a deed the status quo would remain whatever BFC felt. After some debate it was decided to see whether the Committee wished to refer the matter to BPC and, on a show of hands, there was initially a tie with the Chairman casting his vote in favour of the proposal. However the

debate continued and one member changed his mind with the result that there was not a majority in favour of referral and the debate was concluded.

Post meeting note: Since the meeting a number of committee members have suggested that the matter be further discussed and it is suggested therefore that it be raised at a future meeting.

12 **Management Plan**

Already covered under Matters arising (Item 6)

13 **Equestrian damage to Wildlife Walk**

AP mentioned that the Wildlife Walk through Highland Fen and alongside the Stringsides Drain

was becoming increasingly difficult to cut with the mower because of the damage being caused by horses when the ground is wet. It is also becoming potentially dangerous to walk on.

There was a general discussion around whether BFC could take any action because the land is Common Land. However according to the Govt. website there is no right per se to ride on Common Land albeit that such rights might have been obtained specifically. The existence of such rights should be contained in the title documents and MP and FR agreed to look through their records to see what documents were available. It was also thought NALC might be able to give advice as to what action we could take and that an article in Group4News might alert the riders to the damage they are causing and persuade them to stop. Action MP and FR to source documents.

14 **Any other business**

The only matter raised under this heading was a question as to when the HLS agreement ran out. MP confirmed it was 2018.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 21.30

Signed as a true record of the meeting held on 3rd October

Signed..... Date

ACTION LIST STATUS BY BFC MEMBER (EXCLUDING PAST COMPLETED ITEMS)

ALL

199	All	Put forward ideas for website content	12.02.14	31.05.14	Ongoing
204	All	Report on action points prior to the following committee meeting	03.07.14	Immediate	Ongoing
205	All	Identify contractors to compete for our winter work	03.07.14	Urgent	Complete
212	All	Approach potential “volunteers” for “Minute Secretary”	03.07.14	31.08.14	Complete

MARK POGMORE

184		Revise cheque signatories	20.08.13	asap	Complete
194	(+AH)	Monitor Bank Works	12.02.14	Ongoing	Ongoing
195		Maintain dialogue with E.A. re future work	12.02.14	30.06.14	Ongoing

203		Liaise with NE re substituting fencing and grazing with cutting and mowing	12.02.14	30.04.14	Ongoing
206		Invite E.A. for discussions re possible bank works	03.07.14	Urgent	Complete
207		Invite BfB for discussions re reed cutting + disposal	03.07.14	Urgent	Ongoing
208		Invite contractor(s) to quote for winter wo	03.07.14	Asap after action 205	Ongoing
214	(+ AH)	Contact NE to arrange talk to Fen Committee re "doing the right thing"	03.09.14	Asap after bank works sorted	New
217	With FR	Search out documents regarding Boughton Fen and it's registration as Common Land	03.10.14	Asap	New

FRANK REID

211		Investigate storage options re action point 210	03.07.14	30.09.14	Complete
217	With MP	Search out documents regarding Boughton Fen and it's registration as Common Land	03.10.14	Asap	New

ANGELA FAHERTY

177	(+ DC)	Source Oak for plaque	25.01.13	asap	Ongoing
182	A+A	Drill water relief holes in interpretation boards	25.02.13	asap	Ongoing
213		BFC to donate £30 to church to cover Last years meetings.	03.07.14	31.07.14	Complete
215		Speak to Andrew re w/p on 2nd November and boardwalk works	03.10.2014	Asap	New

DAVID COOPER

177	(+ AF)	Source Oak for plaque	25.01.13	asap	Ongoing
210	(+PS)	Investigate options and prices for equipment and make recommendation	03.07.14	30.09.14	Complete

PAUL SMITH

210	(+DC)	Investigate options and prices for equipment and make recommendation	03.07.14	30.09.14	Complete
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ALLAN HALE

194	(+MP)	Monitor Bank Works	12.02.14	Ongoing	Ongoing
209		Update main part of management plan (excluding appendices). Refer to KF re reason for blank pages and inclusion of appendices.	03.07.14	30.10.14	Complete
214	(+MP)	Contact NE to arrange talk to Fen Committee re “doing the right thing”	03.10.14	Asap	New

ALAN PICKERING

216		Send round note regarding possible working party on either 29 th or 30 th November and then set up working party liaising to determine works to be done	03.10.14	Asap	New
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