

Committee already own a suitable helmet. All agreed that he should go ahead and purchase these.

DC, AF + MP (1) The water level is to be left as it is for the time being

MP (9) Deferred until later in this meeting

MP (10) No tree permits were required

?? **New Stewardship Application**

Mark Pogmore explained that he had been encouraged by Natural England to apply for the new scheme, although the outcome is still very uncertain. He has read through the very lengthy guidance notes, and has received information from Diane Monsey (who is now on maternity leave). He has received a pack, which is the initial part of the application, which will be pointed up by NE. If it gets through this stage, NE will do the bulk of the second stage for us, and if this is successful, the money would come through from January 2019. If not, we can apply again next year.

Diane visited at very short notice with two colleagues. The main reason for the visit was to hand over our site, and another site nearby to these two officers, and she took the opportunity to ask Mark if he could find time to join them as they walked round.

Early this week, an NE inspector also arrived to inspect the site in respect of the existing Stewardship agreement. He only gave a few hours notice of his visit, but seemed happy with what he saw, and recorded his visit with photographs.

75. Financial report including banking arrangements

Angela Faherty had forwarded an up to date balance sheet which is appended (Appendix 2)

76. Budget – 2017/2018

No budget has been prepared as present, as Mark needs to know what work will be planned. It is likely that reed cutting will be more extensive next year as weather has prevented any cutting at all this year.

?? **Health and Safety**

Generally, this has been covered in matters arising. However, a boardwalk inspection has been undertaken by Andrew Faherty, in Middle Fen, and the boardwalk was found to be in satisfactory condition. It was agreed that the boardwalk should be inspected annually as weather permits. Dave Cooper suggested that the boardwalk and bridge in Higher Fen should be inspected during the summer as it should be dry, and will not require any disturbance to the habitat. Mark Pogmore stated that when the boardwalk in Middle Fen is looked at again, strimming of the reed must be kept to the minimum required to inspect the structure. The committee is not permitted to mow reed to this extent as reed cutting has to be done on a rotational basis.

77. Future funding and management of the fen

As we previously discussed, the chances of getting Countryside Stewardship under the new regime are very much reduced, and the certainty of keeping this type of funding is no longer guaranteed (see item 69 of December minutes)

As minuted at the last meeting, I have begun some initial research into how and why other organisations have been formed. It has been very clear for some time that most local government organisations are precluded from applying to other charities, lottery, Wren etc, whereas stand-alone groups have many more opportunities to obtain funding. This applies to all sorts of bodies – village halls, playgrounds, playing fields, and so-on

We must be able to continue to have a supply of funds if the Fen is not to revert to its previous poor condition, and without Stewardship, this is going to mean a lot of grant applications.

I have made initial enquiries with two Norfolk organisations so far, and intend to continue with this as time permits

Friends of Boyland Common – their Chairman was very helpful and explained that the Parish Council had been responsible for looking after the common, but it had fallen into a very poor state, with constant problems from travellers. They had no money for remedial work, and little interest in doing it themselves. She was a Parish Councillor herself, and found that the only way they could apply for grants was to detach the management of the common from the Parish Council completely, and thus the ‘Friends Group’ was found. They were then eligible for lottery funding, which they were successful in obtaining, which enabled them to make the site ‘traveller proof’ and make it a pleasant place for people to enjoy.

In her words “It was absolutely necessary to do this to apply for Lottery funding”

Southrepps Common Trust – is a charitable trust (*there are different levels for this*)

Their chairman explained that the main reason for forming the trust was that as long as they remained under the auspices of the Parish Council, they were ineligible for any relevant forms of funding. They needed to be as independent as possible from the Parish Council. Whilst there are certain obligations under Charity laws, their independence from the PC has allowed them to use opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable to them.

Also, by chance this week, an inspector turned up out of the blue from Natural England to inspect the work that we have done to date under Stewardship, and he was fairly despondent about the upcoming stewardship arrangements for small sites like ours. He did, however, comment on the benefit of separating the Fen Management from the Parish Council if we wished to pursue other funding .

78. Autumn/Winter work and working parties

Autumn/Winter work

Mark felt that a reasonable plan must be developed now, so that opportunities are not missed next winter as the conditions deteriorate. Thought was given to getting a chipper in October to clear the debris left this winter. Priority should be given to cleaning up from this year, and most importantly, scrub clearance in potentially wet areas, as soon as possible in the Autumn. Scrub clearance in drier areas can be done by volunteers later in the winter.

Contractor scrub clearance will continue with Karl Charters as funds allow.

Reed cutting will have to compensate for the lack of a cut this year, due to the exceptional water levels, coupled with the snow and ice.

A permit from Natural England has already been revised to install the new outfall in October – hopefully it will be dry enough, as this has also fallen victim to the appalling conditions.

Chapmans have cut the overgrown roadside at the bottom of the Oxborough Road on Highland Fen. This needs to be assessed and work carried out similarly in the future when required.

?? Summer Work

Dave Cooper suggested topping the walk with the old village cutter early in the spring. Generally it was hoped that the walk could be maintained with volunteers as last year, being supplemented with contractor cuts. It would be desirable to give the walk a good tidy, trimming back overhanging brambles and so on during August.

Steven Eyles is to do the summer grass cut as before.

Open Forum

Paul Smith had made enquiries about obtaining water gauges for the outfalls (as suggested by Diane Monsey). He had done this at his work place which is shared with the local EA office, and they suggested contacting James Dyke. Paul and Mark had other ideas as to how gauge boards could be constructed, including attaching them directly to the outfalls.

Paul also mentioned the change to NCC charges at the recycling centres, and thought it would cause more problems with fly tipping on the fen.

Date of next meeting

Next meeting date is:

15th June 2018

.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.15pm.

Appendix 1

**ACTION LIST STATUS BY BOUGHTON FEN COMMITTEE
MEMBER (EXCLUDING PAST COMPLETED ITEMS)**

ALL

Number	Group	Action	Date rec'd	Complete by	Status
1	All	To try to ensure that safety during working parties is maximised as discussed and report back for further review	08.12.17	Next meeting	Ongoing

No current actions.

DAVID COOPER (DC) & ANDREW FAHERTY (ACF)

1	DC & ACF	Review Health and Safety documents – complete review and create Accident Report sheet	25.09.17	Next meeting	Ongoing
2	DC	Obtain price for work trousers	15.09.17	Next meeting	Complete

DAVID COOPER (DC), ANDREW FAHERTY (ACF) AND MARK POGMORE (MP)

Number	Group	Action	Date rec'd	Complete by	Status
1	DC, ACF, MP	Check if the outfall water level needs to be adjusted	15.09.17	Next meeting	Complete

ANGELA FAHERTY (Ang F)

No current actions

MARK POGMORE (MP)

Number	Group	Action	Date rec'd	Complete by	Status
1	MP	Contact management groups of similar projects to make enquiries regarding pros & cons of forming an organisation of this type	08.12.17	Next meeting	Ongoing
2	MP	Sort out budget for work with Carl Charters and make necessary arrangements to engage him and apply for tree permit	08.12.17	Next meeting	Complete
3	MP	Continue with application for Countryside Stewardship			New

TOM ROBERTS (TR)

No current actions

PAUL SMITH (PS)

Number	Group	Action	Date rec'd	Complete by	Status
1	PS	Maintain first aid kit & safety box – obtain eye wash	19.05.17	Next meeting	Complete