

## Minutes of PCO Meeting held at The Woodman on Wednesday 6th September 2023 at 7.30pm

The committee met at 6.30pm, prior to the general meeting.

**1 Welcome and Introductions** – Pete welcomed Sue Middleton, the first female Forest Verderer as our guest. Sue is very interested in our project and has a wealth of knowledge in her capacity as a Verderer and from her previous work in Foresters Forest.

**2 Apologies** – Jane and Bob, Lisa, Emma, Julia, Magda, James, Alan and Ann H.

**3 Present** – Nikki Rudge, Mark George, Ann Linden, Pete Sherrard Smith, Martine Bewhay, Sue Middleton, Elaine Highfield, Dave Craze, Mike Andrew, Miranda Thomason ( FE ) , Chris Bryer.

**4 Amendment to minutes of the last meeting** – some members had requested by e mail an amendment to the wording of paragraph 10 'Possible Allotments/ Vegetable Growing Area' on the minutes of our last meeting on 14-06-23. The committee met and discussed this at length, but concluded that whilst there was a current commitment to retain the orchard and wildflower meadow for that sole purpose only, they could not sanction a total ban forever on considering allotments in the designated potential garden area identified in the licence agreement (to follow). It was therefore decided that the minutes of 14-06-23 did not require any amendment and all those present at the 7.30 pm meeting concurred with this.

**5 Progress of Management Plan** – A big thank you to Emma and Julia who have been very hard at work in the preparation of this, but unfortunately had to send their apologies, Emma has a draft document in progress. They have met with Wendy from The Dean Meadows Group, for meadow management advice and a Verderer regarding grazing, they have also attempted to meet with someone from Buchanan Meadow at Coleford. The Verderer in question felt that as the land is now fully fenced and stock proof it is no longer a piece of common ground and the Commoners Association are unlikely to look favourably on this for their use. The Commoners Association has not been approached as yet. Wendy advised mown paths as these are least disruptive to the ecosystem and grazing to start this year from Sept to March, ponies would be the preferred stock. Emma and Julia have strongly recommended that we have one person with the correct level of knowledge who must have the final say on the orchard management.

Ann H has also advised that the land will now be included in the imminently due to be updated Forestry Design Plan for Nagshead and Russell's Enclosure and that this will comply with UK Forestry Standards and Habitat Regulations, particularly because of the maternity roost of horse shoe bats nearby. This plan will not include an orchard management plan. Should there be any beehives in future then they would need to be fenced off from stock. Ann works for Treescapes and they are also in the process of putting together a bid to Wye Valley AONB for an 'orchards through the seasons' programme to include planting, formative pruning etc - if successful then to hopefully start in the New Year - locations will likely be in the Wye Valley, but open to all and free. Ann will keep us updated on this.

The ensuing discussion concluded that following Emma and Julia's advice regarding the final say, it would be beneficial to seek some funding in the form of a grant ? Lottery ? to contract an expert specialist to independently produce a succinct Orchard Management Plan – **Mark**. Meanwhile if Emma and Julia would be happy to continue with their current contacts the group would be extremely grateful. In the interim Pete has obtained a wheel plan, detailing in pictorial format what should happen at each month of the year and we will work to that.

## **6 Grazing / Outcome of Committee Meeting with Pan Tod Group/ Creation of Defined Meadow Pathways –**

Allaston Farm used to come and cut and bale hay in York Fields. Dave C gave an outline of the annual management cycle of a wildflower meadow and it is clear that we need to do something sooner rather than later.

Miranda has been in touch with Terry, who manages the stock for Glos Wildlife Trust. They have 8 Exmoor ponies and 18 Highland Cattle available and Miranda is optimistic that they might agree to grazing. A water supply and drinking trough would need to be provided for the animals and we would need to try to ensure that there is sufficient suitable quality vegetation for grazing. The front oval field containing the orchid also needs to have the entrance gate reinstated, this is on wheels and is at present lying on the ground nearby, to make the field stockproof.

Some of the committee recently met with Pan Tod group who were very helpful and also advised that some defined mown paths would be advantageous. They explained that our site is so large that we would need an industrial size mower or a friendly farmer to mow it and that any hay produced must be collected up. They also suggested that we could try to persuade some local hedge laying course groups to practice in our fields, Martine is following this up. One of their group, Trevor, is a local Green party councillor and he is trying to compile a list of all similar projects within The Forest of Dean with the idea that they could have a united voice – **Miranda and Martine**

**7 Mowed marking of path to Nagshead Entrance Gate** – Mike asked if he could strim a double width pathway from halfway up the drive up to the Nagshead entrance gate, to prevent the present situation of the public coming right up to York Lodge entrance gate in search of Nagshead. All present agreed to this and we are very fortunate to have recently been given a wooden sign which can be modified and painted and located just off the driveway to also clearly indicate the position of the Nagshead gate. Mike has some metposts and a sledge hammer to secure the sign, Glyn will modify it and we can ask Lisa if she could paint the lettering . **Mike, Glyn and Lisa**

**8 Forestry England Response to Bee Hive Query and Licence/ Insurance** – Owing to FE byelaws we are not allowed to have beehives. However, Miranda has escalated this much higher in FE to query if exception could be made for FE wildflower and orchard sites, as there are now several of these in the Forest of Dean. Our licence is very close to completion and will be issued in the name of and using the address of WDPC. The contact persons will be ‘the persons holding the office of Chairman and Treasurer of PCO’ (unnamed, as they will undoubtedly change in the years to come). A draft copy of the licence and a site map will be issued to PCO for approval before the final sign off. It would be wise for us to ask to see a copy of the Berry Hill licence for comparison , as they have been established for many years now.

At present we are covered by FE insurance for our working parties, providing there is an FE rep present. Once the licence is granted we will be covered by WDPC public liability insurance - **Miranda and Pete**

**9 Possible further grant applications / potential orchard tree donation applications** – Mark advised that there may a short window of opportunity for a Lottery grant of £3,000-00, which could cover the cost of an expert to create the final management plan- see paragraph 5. He will explore this and also any local current community grants that may be suitable for us – **Mark**

**10 Pruning course/ Autumn Wildflower Planting Date / Blaisdon Plum Saplings/Bracken Bashing Reptile covers/ Working Parties/ Working Party What’s App Group** – Dave C has very kindly agreed

to teach us how to prune, **Ann L.** He advised that we do not need to prune our trees this year as they are 'in check,' ie. they have not grown. Dave thinks this is due to the fact that they are sitting in grass which comes right up to their trunks. We need to open the tree guards, remove all the grass turfs within the tree guards and then mulch the remaining bare soil. Test this out on a single tree first – **Pete, Mike, Chris, Dave C and Ann L.**

Elaine has some plum saplings that we can plant.

Sue Swan has some more wildflower plants for us to put in and Dave C advised using a mattock to scrape the grass from the soil, before we plant these flowers. Dave C will teach us how to do this - **Dave C**

We have been approached by a Beaver pack who would like to come and do some bracken bashing at the meadows. Apparently they can earn badges for doing this and are very keen – **Elaine**

Sue M has a lot of knowledge regarding reptile covers, which have been used extensively at other similar projects. These are pieces of corrugated tin, approx. 2m x 1 m, laid on the ground and situated at different locations in the fields, which families and schoolchildren can paint and adopt. The locations of the covers can be recorded using the 'What 3 words' app. They provide habitat for a range of reptiles and children love to discover what is underneath when they lift them up. The members present thought that this would be an excellent way to engage children and families with PCO – **Elaine and Sue M**

Ann L and Martine have very kindly agreed to plan and coordinate our working parties in future and Martine will e mail all members to ask if they would like to be part of a 'Whats app working party group.' They will also please record our numbers of volunteer hours, as this is important when applying for grants etc. Elaine has been recording this information to date – **Ann L and Martine**

**Our next working party date will be Sunday 24 th September at 2 pm, when we will be planting plum saplings and wildflowers, learning how to prune and use a mattock and weeding around the tree trunks. Hope to see you there?**

**11 Treasurer's report** – Mike reported no recent expenditure and we have £382-88 in our account. The retiring collection taken at The Forest of Dean Orchestra July concert, held at St Paul's Church, accounts for £100-60 of this. Our grateful thanks go to the orchestra for supporting us and also to Elaine, who gave the audience a short explanation of our project at the end of the concert. This no doubt helped to swell the collection.

**12 PCO stall at Parkend Carnival and Future Fundraising plans/Autumn Booksale and Café** – Elaine, Martine, Jane, Nikki and Ann set up and manned our Carnival stall and it raised £78.78 which has not yet been paid into our account. Of this £51.44 came from Elaine's plum sales and Sue Swan's jam, thank you both. The wax wrap foodcovers made by some members also sold well.

**It was decided to hold our next fundraising booksale and café on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> November – further details to follow.**

**13 Approach to Parkend Carnival Committee for a donation** – Chris has been on the carnival committee in the past and advised that as they are a charity, they will give donations to support

local projects – approaching them for a specific amount of money, clearly stating the intended purpose is best. Mark’s daughter may be able to ask them on our behalf? - **Mark**

**14 ‘Third Time Lucky’ get together date** – after two failed attempted picnic dates, cancelled because of rain, it was decided to see if we could arrange a **ceilidh in ? December ? tbc** for members and the wider village community , possibly at Parkend Club, as they sell alcohol and we then wouldn’t need to bother with a licence etc – **Mike**

**15 AOB** – Sue M is the secretary of Our Forest (replacing The Forester’s Forest) which has a great interest in Community Projects and would like to invite members to their Autumn meeting, **provisional date Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October – tbc.** – **Sue M**

**16 Date of next meeting - Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> October 7.30 pm @? Parkend Club? tbc** – **Mike**

**17** The meeting closed at 9.05pm