

Minutes of a meeting of  
The Blaxhall Commons & Open Spaces Charitable Trust

3.00pm, Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2016  
The Committee Room, Blaxhall Village Hall

Present: J. Hume, M. Oakley, E. Rossor, S. Smedley, N. Suckling

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NOTE: Some sections of these minutes may have been redacted in order to remove commercially sensitive information and to protect the privacy of third parties.

**1. To elect a chairman for the meeting**

Mark Oakley agreed to chair the meeting.

**2. To elect a secretary for the meeting**

Steve Smedley agreed to take minutes.

**3. Apologies for absence**

All Trustees being present, none were received.

**4. Format of the meeting**

It was agreed that meetings of the Trustees should adopt a formalised agenda as per a previous email from NS (and which this meeting would follow). It was agreed that, in future, agendas of both closed and open meetings would be posted on the Charity's website with an invitation for the public to comment. In each case minutes would be posted on the website as soon as possible after the meeting. In other respects the protocols set out in the Charity's Trust Deed were deemed to be adequate and appropriate.

**5. Minutes of last meeting**

Minutes of the last meeting of the Trustees (16<sup>th</sup> January) had been previously circulated and were approved as an accurate reflection of the proceedings of the meeting.

**6. Matters arising**

Actions arising from the previous meeting were reviewed and were acknowledged as having all been completed satisfactorily.

## **7. Finance**

- 7.1. NS informed the meeting that the account with the Co-operative Bank had now been successfully created, that the online banking system was operating correctly and that money had been successfully paid into the account through the Saxmundham Post Office. The Charity's account currently held £2000, comprising £1500 awarded from Cllr Herring's Enabling Communities budget and the remainder being from private donations.
- 7.2. At the request of NS it was agreed that the Treasurer should hold a cash float of £30 to cover sundry expenses.
- 7.3. NS confirmed two outstanding payments: £5 to S. Pictor for printing costs from 5<sup>th</sup> March public meeting; cost of hire of premises for 5<sup>th</sup> March meeting and for current meeting. Payment for these items was approved.

**ACTION: NS**

- 7.4. It was agreed that a standard letter of thanks should be prepared and sent to private donors thanking them for their contributions as they are received.

**ACTION: NS**

- 7.5. It was agreed that the Charity should now seek to register with HMRC for Gift Aid.

**ACTION: SS**

## **8. Correspondence received**

JH reported that favourable feedback had been received from several members of the public who had attended the public meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> March.

## **9. Other business**

### **9.1. Review of public meeting, 5<sup>th</sup> March**

JH reported some statistics from the public meeting. More than 55 people had attended, of which 26 had provided their email addresses. 14 people had opened the email newsletter sent out after the meeting, and 9 of those had clicked through to the website. Overall, since its launch the website had received 613 page views in 130 sessions from 73 unique individuals.

The responses gathered from the public had been collated, summarised and posted on the website. The general view expressed by many people is an enthusiasm for some sort of community custodianship of common land and other open spaces in the village, and that the land should be managed sympathetically in a way that

does not result in unacceptable changes to the local landscape. A small number of responses expressed the view that the land should be left as it is with no management undertaken at all.

It was agreed among the Trustees that some low level of management of the land was necessary in order for the Trust to fulfil its charitable objects and that this needed to be communicated to the wider public. ER offered to investigate guidance provided by The Foundation for Common Land and the Open Spaces Society on engaging with the public.

**ACTION: ER**

SS agreed to ask the Clerk to the Parish Council again whether it would be possible for the Charity to use the Parish Council's log-in details for accessing the Open Spaces Society website.

**ACTION: SS**

It was agreed that a further public meeting would be held in the autumn at which the Charity would consult with the public on its recommendations for actions arising from the March meeting. The date of the meeting is to be decided later in the year.

## **9.2. Land management**

SS agreed to resume discussions with Suffolk Wildlife Trust and to obtain quotes for:

Phase 1: an environmental/ecological assessment of the areas of common land in the village;

Phase 2: the production of management plans for each individual area, costed separately, taking into consideration the concerns of local people about 'over management'.

**ACTION: SS**

The Trustees reaffirmed that any actions taken by the Charity with regard to land management would always be informed by best practice and expert/professional opinion. However, the Trustees agreed that they would exercise discretion in following any future management plan prepared for them, and that in carrying out any management work they would always have regard for local circumstances and the expressed wishes of local people.

JH agreed to approach Tunstall Parish Council for information about what actions they take to manage the areas of Tunstall Common and Tunstall Forest that are under their ownership.

**ACTION: JH**

### **9.3. Charity membership scheme**

NS reported that a number of local people had expressed interest in a membership scheme as a way for members of the public to support the activities of the Charity.

It was agreed that a letter should be sent to them thanking them for their interest and letting them know that the Trustees are considering a possible membership structure. The letter should also ask if, in the meantime, they would be interested in getting involved in activities such as fund raising.

**ACTION: JH**

It was agreed that MO should investigate the possibility of transferring the Charity to a membership-based model.

**ACTION: MO**

### **9.4. Report on community litter picks**

Four volunteers took part in the litter pick on 2nd April, and five took part on 9th April, giving a total of 18 hours of volunteer time. Six bags of rubbish were collected, along with three bike frames, a car battery and a tyre.

It was agreed that JH would prepare an article about the success of the litter picks for the Parish Council newsletter and for Ebb & Flow.

**ACTION: JH**

It was agreed that further litter picks should be arranged for the autumn, provisional dates being 8th & 15th October. SS agreed to make arrangements with Suffolk Coastal Norse.

**ACTION: SS**

NS to investigate prices of litter pickers with a view to the Charity purchasing some for its own use.

**ACTION: NS**

### **9.5. Fund raising**

SS updated the Trustees on an award of £1000 from Cllr Reid's Locality Budget towards the cost of obtaining an environmental assessment. This money will be held by Suffolk County Council and is available to the Charity until March 2017.

SS also reported that an application had been made to the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Community & Conservation Fund for a further £1000 towards the cost of an environmental assessment. The result of this application will be known on or around 13th April.

The Trustees agreed on the following actions arising from discussions with Community Action Suffolk:

- a) Submit the agreed application form to Grant Finder;
- b) Make contact with the Suffolk Foundation;
- c) Contact Helen Johnson, funding officer at Suffolk Coastal district Council;
- d) Investigate opportunities for funds from Touching the Tide;
- e) Register with Village SOS;
- f) Investigate the possibility of having a stand at Folk East, or of being one of the charities that they would collect for.

**ACTION: JH**

The Trustees discussed the possibility of the Charity having a stall at this year's Blaxhall Village Fete, with no decision made. MO agreed to approach Graham Bowles with a view to the Charity receiving a share of the proceeds from this year's Village Fete.

**ACTION: MO**

It was agreed that Trustees should keep a log of their time spent on Charity activities as this could be used in cases where grant applications require matched funding.

**ACTION: All**

#### **9.6. Valuation of land at Mill Common**

It was agreed that ER should continue to investigate the cost of obtaining a formal valuation of common land at Mill Common, including the allotments.

**ACTION: ER**

[REDACTED]

**ACTION: MO**

[REDACTED] it was agreed that JH would provide the Trustees with copies of a map showing a breakdown of the acreages of all of the common land at Mill Common.

**ACTION: JH**

#### **9.7. Update on Register of Assets of Community Value**

SS confirmed that the Parish Council had resubmitted an application to Suffolk Coastal District Council to have the common land outside The Sheilings placed on the Register. A decision is expected by the next Parish Council meeting on 4th May.

### **9.8. The Pit, Playing Field**

After declaring a personal interest, NS asked that the Parish Council be approached again with an offer from the Charity to take on the management of The Pit at the Playing Fields. Activities would comprise maintaining a couple of pathways through the pit and clearing sycamore seedlings. JH and SS agreed to raise this again at the next Parish Council meeting

**ACTION: JH/SS**

### **9.9. Publicity**

It was agreed that another email newsletter update would be issued in the next two to three weeks.

**ACTION: JH**

### **9.10. An extended talk by Rodney West**

Feedback from the public meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> March revealed huge support for a much more comprehensive presentation by Rodney West on the history of the commons. It was agreed that it might be appropriate to hold such an event in the autumn. SS agreed to liaise with Rodney West to identify possible dates.

**ACTION: SS**

### **9.11. Training**

ER offered to contact the Open Spaces Society with a view to the possibility of organising a group training event later in the year.

**ACTION: ER**

## **10. Dates of next meetings**

The next meeting of the Trustees will be held in the Committee Room of the Village Hall at 3.00pm, 14<sup>th</sup> May. MO passed on his apologies for being unable to attend. SS agreed to confirm booking of the venue.

**ACTION: SS**

The following meeting of the Trustees will be held at 3.30pm, 18<sup>th</sup> June at Holly Cottage, Mill Common. NS passed on his apologies for being unable to attend.

There being no further business the meeting was closed.