

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

3.00pm, Saturday 14th May 2016
The Committee Room, Blaxhall Village Hall

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

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

Nigel Suckling agreed to chair the meeting.

2. To elect a secretary for the meeting

Steve Smedley agreed to take minutes.

3. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Mark Oakley.

4. Minutes of last meeting

Minutes of the last meeting of the Trustees (9th April) had been previously circulated and were approved as an accurate reflection of the proceedings of the meeting.

5. Matters arising

To be incorporated into item 6.

6. Update on actions from last meeting

Item 7.3 NS reported that the invoice for hire of Village Hall had not yet been received, so had not yet been paid.

ACTION: NS

Item 7.4 NS reported that the letter of thanks to be sent out to private donors was being redrafted.

ACTION: NS

Item 7.5 SS reported that the online part of the application to register the Charity with HMRC had been completed. Documentary evidence of the Charity's activities would be sent to HMRC within the next few days in order to meet the deadline of 1st June.

ACTION: SS

Item 9.1 ER reported that The Foundation for Common Land provides guidance on community engagement for charities. The Open Spaces Society provides training on common land at the rate of £350 for up to 10 people. Sessions can be provided Monday to Thursday, 11am to 3pm. It was agreed that training needs would be discussed in more detail at the next Trustees' meeting, but that such training sessions should be considered only after consulting with the public at the next public meeting in the autumn (date yet to be decided). Attendees are likely to be asked to make a small contribution to costs.

SS reported that the Parish Clerk had been contacted for details of the Parish Council's login details to the Open Spaces Society website, but that no reply had been forthcoming. SS agreed to pursue this matter again with the Clerk.

ACTION: SS

Item 9.2 SS reported that SWT had not been contacted for quotes for ecological assessments and management plans because of concerns over availability of funds. Nevertheless it was agreed that this action should proceed.

ACTION: SS

JH reported that Kevin Ross is the main contact for information about Tunstall Common and that he would seek to approach Mr Ross in the near future.

ACTION: JH

Item 9.3 JH reported that members of the public who had expressed an interest in a membership scheme had been contacted either by email or by phone letting them know of the Charity's plans to pursue this idea in the future.

MO had informed the other Trustees prior to the meeting that no progress had yet been made on investigating the transfer of the Charity to a membership-based model.

ACTION: MO

Item 9.4 SS reported that Suffolk Norse had not yet been contacted with regard to supporting further community litter picks in the autumn. This action would be progressed in time for the next meeting.

ACTION: SS

NS reported on prices for litter pickers and it was agreed that the Charity would consider purchasing a number of them in the autumn.

Item 9.5 SS reported that Cllr Andrew Reid and Suffolk County Council had agreed that the Locality Budget grant of £1000 could be diverted to covering the cost of the land valuation at Mill Common. SS also confirmed that a grant for £800 had been received from Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Community & Conservation Fund, to be accessed upon presentation of an acceptable invoice.

MO to approach Graham Bowles with a view to the Charity receiving a share of the proceeds from this year's Village Fete.

ACTION: MO

Trustees were reminded of the need to record time spent on Charity activities as this could be applied as matched funding in grant applications.

ACTION: All

Item 9.7 It was agreed that the Charity would write to the owner of the plot of Registered Common opposite The Sheilings acknowledging that the land had now been accepted onto the Register of Community Assets and expressing an interest in (a) a possible purchase in the future or (b) negotiation with respect to management.

ACTION: SS

Item 9.8 Due to time constraints at the last Parish Council meeting the possible management of The Pit by the Charity had not come up for discussion. To be raised again at the next Parish Council meeting on 6th July.

ACTION: JH/SS

Item 9.10 It was agreed that a decision on the format and content of the next public meeting, to include an extended presentation by Rodney West, would be deferred to the next Trustees' meeting.

7. Finance

7.1. NS had nothing further to report on the Charity's finances.

7.2. JH reported on recent activities with respect to fund raising initiatives, with the general observation that funding opportunities for capital projects are limited:

7.2.1. The output from an initial Grant Finder search had been circulated to Trustees. Only three possible sources of funding had been identified. The search criteria may

need refining in order to better tailor the output to match the Charity's requirements.

- 7.2.2. Suffolk Foundation do not provide money for capital projects (e.g. land purchase) but would consider supporting individual projects based upon their merits.
- 7.2.3. Helen Johnson, Funding Officer at Suffolk Coastal District Council, has been contacted.
- 7.2.4. No response has yet been received from Touching the Tide.
- 7.2.5. Village SOS: nothing to report.
- 7.2.6. There are no opportunities for a stall or other fund raising at the main Folk East event but there is the possibility of fund raising at The Ship as a satellite venue.

The Trustees agreed that the Charity needs to start building the message that purchasing land will be more difficult to achieve than previously thought. Purchasing land should remain the primary goal, but a secondary goal of managing land for community benefit should be given attention. In order to achieve this secondary goal, the Charity should consider leasing land to allow management to be carried out. It was recognised that ownership of land by another party did not prevent the Charity from undertaking management of land as long as it was with the permission of the landowner.

JH suggested adopting four key project descriptions:

- Maintaining the environment
- Using the environment
- Educational benefit
- Community well-being

These could be used as the basis for drafting up to six projects, with the best two being taken forward.

- 7.3. It was agreed that NS would investigate Charity Commission guidelines on receiving and reporting anonymous donations, specifically whether or not it would be acceptable for only a sub-set of Trustees to be aware of a donor's identity.

ACTION: NS

8. Valuation of land at Mill Common

ER reported that ER and SS had had a site meeting with a representative of Savills and that a valuation report had been commissioned, detailing valuations of (a) land owned by Mr Pugh potentially available for purchase under the Right to Bid scheme; (b) the plot of land opposite The Sheilings; (c) other common land at Mill Common. That report had not yet been received but would be circulated to Trustees as soon as possible.

ACTION: ER

9. Correspondence received

No additional correspondence had been received that was not covered by other agenda items. JH reported on statistics relating to the reach of email newsletters from the Charity. The detailed, targeted information generated by the email newsletter system raised questions about the Charity's obligations under the Data Protection Act. NS agreed to make some investigations.

ACTION: NS

10. Other business

None.

11. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Trustees will be held at 3.30pm, 18th 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.