

# The Blaxhall Commons & Open Spaces Charitable Trust

Newsletter - October 2016

## Open Meeting: 19 November 2016 at 2pm in Blaxhall Village Hall

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Open Public Meeting for the Blaxhall Commons and Open Spaces Charitable Trust will take place on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> November in Blaxhall Village Hall, starting at 2pm. The meeting will close at 3:30pm.

The meeting will provide a progress update, feedback on the 'Your Views Matter' section from the first open meeting, and information about next steps. It will conclude with a presentation from Rodney West about 'Blaxhall's farming past 1550-1950'.

This meeting follows on from our successful inaugural meeting held on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March when over 50 people attended. We hope to see a similar number of people at this second meeting.

## Litter Picks and Working Parties – 2017 Dates

The residents of Blaxhall held four successful litter-picking sessions in 2016, two in April and two in October. In total 20 bags of rubbish were collected including a basketball, three bicycle frames, a car battery and a car tyre!



*Coco helps with her second litter pick. She's not put off by a light drizzle.*

Not only have these sessions helped to keep our village clean and tidy, they have also earned some money for the Trust, with the Norse Group paying us £20 for the work we did in April. In addition the Trust was entered into a prize draw run by the 'Love East Suffolk' litter-pick scheme and won a further £200 – so to date in 2016 our efforts have brought the Trust £220.

The litter picks seem to be well received by everyone involved, and by the villagers in general, so we are planning four further sessions for 2017. The dates are:-

- 1. Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> April – On the Big Common**  
Meet at 10am at the Youth Hostel
- 2. Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> April – In and around Mill Common**  
Meet at 10am at the Youth Hostel
- 3. Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October – Between the Village Hall and Church**  
Meet at 10am at the Village Hall
- 4. Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> October – Between the Village Hall and Scramble Pit**  
Meet at 10am the Village Hall

In addition, we will be looking for people to get involved in new working parties organised by the Trust, and to volunteer to help existing working parties such as those organised by Suffolk Wildlife Trust on the Big Common.

## Membership

At our inaugural Open Public Meeting in March we asked if people might be interested in becoming more involved in the activities of the Trust. Around 10 people expressed an interest and were invited to an informal meeting in Eve Rosser's garden on a lovely sunny afternoon in early August.

A nominal membership subscription of £3 was proposed. It was also suggested that members help the Trustees with activities such as: - Working Parties, Village Plan, Litter Picks, Newsletters, Environmental Assessments, and Funding & Grant Applications.

An informal follow-up meeting of potential members is planned for 19<sup>th</sup> November at 1:30pm, just before the Open Public Meeting. Everyone is welcome to come along to talk about membership and how they might help with the work of the Trust.

For those who are interested, brief notes of the August meeting can be found on the Trust's website ([www.blaxhallcommonstrust.org.uk](http://www.blaxhallcommonstrust.org.uk)).

## Environmental Assessments

The Trust is seeking to engage with Suffolk Wildlife Trust to help us undertake environmental assessments of the commons and open spaces in and around Blaxhall.

The 'Your View Matters' section from our inaugural Open Public Meeting has given the Trustees great insight into what you value most about our commons and open spaces, what you would like to see done to preserve them, and most importantly what you do not want to see happening to them. Rest assured that the Trustees have very much heard the feedback that any changes should be 'light touch' and that there should be engagement and consultations before any work is undertaken.

The Trustees have issued a list of our requirements to Suffolk Wildlife Trust and we are awaiting their proposal about how they might help with this work.

## Assets of Community Value and Right to Bid

Residents may remember that the Parish Council was successful in having both Mill Common and Stone Common listed as Assets of Community Value under the Localism Act 2011. This legislation is intended to ensure that important community 'assets' – such as land, buildings etc – are sufficiently

protected to allow local people to have the opportunity of acquiring them. In practice the listing means that the owners of these Commons may not sell or otherwise dispose of them without first notifying Suffolk Coastal District Council of their intent.

The District Council will then notify the local community and at that point residents have six months (the moratorium period) in which to decide if it wishes to make a bid for the asset(s) and prepare a detailed submission. The landowner must consider any such bid but is not obliged to accept it.

Earlier this year the Trust became aware that two areas of Mill Common might be available to purchase. The Trustees decided to obtain a professional valuation prior to approaching the landowner and embarking on a fundraising drive. Two Trustees had a meeting with the landowner to register our interest in buying the land, and an offer was made within the six-month moratorium period. Unfortunately the landowner declined our offer, but made clear that the land was currently not for sale.

The Trust will continue to investigate any opportunities to acquire common land for the benefit of the community and will keep you informed should such opportunities arise, as significant fundraising will be needed – probably within a limited timeframe.

## Management Proposals

The Trustees are seeking to agree Management Proposals with the owners of Mill Common and Stone Common to allow the Trust to set up and run working parties on their land. These working parties will be looking to take forward recommendations identified in Suffolk Wildlife Trust's environmental assessments.

In August 2016 the Trust made an approach to the majority owner of Mill Common, which has so far been declined; we will however continue our dialogue with this owner, and with other landowners, to try and progress our management proposals.

We will also periodically approach all relevant landowners to share the results of the environmental assessments, and seek to persuade them that the Trust's working parties would be beneficial to them, their lands and the Blaxhall community in general.

The work of the Trust is very much a marathon and not a sprint. It will take time, patience, tact and persuasion to achieve some of our goals, and we hope you will continue to give us your support over the coming years.

## Trustee Contact Details

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