

CLEE HILL PARTNERSHIP
MONDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2012
7.30pm CLEE HILL VILLAGE HALL

MINUTES

Present:

Henry Chance	Bitterley Parish Council Chairman (Clee Hill Partnership Chairman)
Chris Neal	Clee Hill Commoners Association Chairman
Phil Edwards	Clee Hill Commoners Association
George Cummings	Friends of Clee Hill Village Forum Chairman
Garth Ridgers	Friends of Clee Hill Village Forum
Peter Cuthbert	Hopton Wafers Parish Council
Richard Rallings	Natural England
Cllr Richard Huffer	Shropshire Council, Clee Division (part of meeting)
Phil Holden	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Manager
Clare Davies	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Farming Officer
Carl Pickup	Shropshire Wildlife Trust Reserves Manager
Sue Dawes	Titterstone Clee Heritage Trust (TCHT)

1. Welcome and apologies

The following apologies had been received:

Mark Wiggin	Landowner, Downton Hall
Chris Woodward	Landowner, Hopton Court
Glynn Barratt	Titterstone Clee Heritage Trust
Jenny Marriott	English Heritage
Clare Fildes	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Development Officer
Cath Landles	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Community Officer

2. Minutes of last meeting 6 March 2012 and matters arising, update on site meeting 24 July 2012

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as an accurate record.

Henry mentioned that the Jubilee beacon had gone ahead and was very successful. About 100 people came, though it had purposefully not been widely advertised. It was very well cleaned up the next day so that no trace was left. There had been a bit of congestion on Dhustone Lane on the evening.

The meeting with Glyn Shaw of Shropshire Council on roads and speeding was reported back on by Garth Ridgers and Peter Cuthbert. The meeting had not been as in depth as they had expected and nothing had been heard since. However Glyn had been quite optimistic about achieving a reduced speed limit, if the case was made for 50mph rather than 40mph. George Cummings mentioned that the Council had a new policy and that there was a meeting on 21 November at the Mascall Centre. There is some information at <http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/hwmaint.nsf/open/72B33479522CE3428025765D0036A9AD>.

The site meeting on 24 July had been attended by Henry, Phil, Richard, Glynn and George Cummings on a beautiful sunny evening. Though the turnout was a little disappointing, useful discussions had been held about the bracken control work on the common, heritage features of interest in the old quarry and visitor management issues.

3. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

Henry had been nominated as Chair and Phil as Vice Chair, so these appointments were made without need for any election.

4. AONB Farming Project

Clare Davies, Farming Officer gave a presentation about the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Farming project (copy circulated with minutes). The project aimed to support hill farmers in the Less Favoured Areas of the Shropshire Hills, and was funded by LEADER and Big Lottery's Reaching Communities fund. Clare's work was mostly in the delivery of one to one advice to farmers, responding to their particular concerns and often signposting to other more specialised sources of advice. She is keen to work with more farmers in the Clee Hill area, and anyone can contact her on 01588 674092 or at clare.davies@shropshire.gov.uk to arrange a conversation or visit. The project also organises events, which have included a seminar on CAP reform, and computer courses. Clare was working collectively with the Stapeley Hill Commoners in the hope of progressing towards a Higher Level Stewardship agreement. A trip to the Clwydian Range to look at bracken management was planned, and a local meeting with the Foundation for Common land www.foundationforcommonland.org.uk. These would both be open to the Clee Hill Commoners to join in with.

Alongside Clare's work, Vicky Wood as Farming Community Officer worked with schools and the wider public to raise awareness of and respect for hill farming. This included visits to local farms by schools and a variety of events. Vicky is establishing contact with schools in the Clee Hill area, and contacts of any farmers who may be interested in hosting school visits would be appreciated.

Richard Rallings asked about insurance for school farm visits. Phil was not certain of the arrangements and would check. (The answer is that adequate cover is provided between the normal public liability insurance a farmer will hold and the insurance that the school holds. This is the normal practice, as used by farms which are under the Educational Access options of Environmental Stewardship).

5. Potential Heritage Lottery Fund project grant bid – update on subgroup meeting of 22 October 2012

Henry welcomed the progress on this which had been made. Notes of the meeting of 22 October had been circulated, and Phil talked briefly through them. He emphasised that the suggestion that the AONB Partnership lead a bid had been made by other organisations present at the meeting. Carl said that SWT were happy for the AONB Partnership to do this, given the breadth of the AONB remit and the project work proposed. Phil Edwards asked about what work on the commons might be included. Phil said that there were no hidden agendas, and he thought the most likely scenario would be to use the work that was already being done or planned through agri-environment schemes as match funding and activity to the larger project, though there was an opportunity to include some new things if everyone agreed on them. There was support for the recommendations made by the sub group:

1. that a project steering group be formed, with clear Terms of Reference and role, and linking to the Clee Hill Partnership to ensure involvement of all necessary parties.
2. that the AONB Partnership lead, with further consultation and input from partners, a Development Phase bid to HLF for a Heritage Grant, with a target for submission of May 2013.

Richard Rallings asked whether the present meeting had enough people in attendance to make a firm decision on this. Henry felt that the meeting could reasonably be regarded

as quorate (there is no defined number or percentage of this). He suggested however that an email be sent drawing attention to the decision, and giving members not present at the meeting an opportunity to comment. Phil clarified that the AONB Partnership's offer to lead a bid was only made for a larger project for which there could be funded staffing, as they did not have the capacity to oversee delivery of a smaller project with existing staff. He also emphasised that all details of any proposed bid would be brought through the Clee Hill Partnership for approval, and any aspect not supported would not go ahead. The date of Mon 10 December at 9.30am for a further meeting for the project steering group was noted, and any members of the Partnership who wished to attend were welcome. Simple Terms of Reference for the Steering Group would be drawn up – **Action - Phil.**

6. Visitor/ education centre proposal for former Hopton Wafers School

Sue gave some background about the discussions between TCHT and the Trustees of the school building which had led up to the current consultation. She described the connection the building has with the hill and the community, having been built with money from quarrying on the hill and the restrictions on its use for educational purposes. The first public meeting of consultation had been held at Hopton, and the second was at Clee Hill the next day. There had been a lot of support, though some concerns had been raised about the limited space for vehicles. Peter said the Parish Council had agreed to hold another meeting to discuss this. George Cummings said that he and a number of other people felt that if there were to be a visitor centre it should be in Clee Hill village. Henry said he could envisage an 'information point' for visitors in the village which would be different and complementary to an education facility at the school. Phil said that from his involvement with tourism he was aware that there was no public funding available for the running of new information centres, and any proposed facility would need to come up with a viable business model having this in mind.

7. Updates from partners on current activity

a. Clee Hill Community Wildlife Group

There was a meeting on Wednesday 14 November, at which the Annual Report would be presented. A newsletter was distributed to Partnership members. Henry noted how vibrant the group was.

b. Litter group

A £250 grant from the Local Joint Committee was being used to buy equipment. About 20 volunteers were involved, the group meeting on the first Sunday in the month. 11 were also involved as Hill Wardens/ Rangers, who go in pairs in a car. Arrangements had been made for First Aid training and Glynn had agreed to do a talk on heritage. Hansons covered the insurance costs for the group.

c. Clee Hill Commoners Association

The AGM had been held. Someone has cut down one of the road signs on the common with a chainsaw and it is hoped to replace this. The owner of a property who was intending to put in a new access road across the common has dropped this proposal after discussions. Carl made the general comment that having the Partnership structure has helped people to realise that some activities are legally restricted and this has been positive. Phil Edwards said that no response had yet been received from the Radar Station about speed humps. Henry agreed to follow this up.

d. Titterstone Cleve Heritage Trust (other activity)

TCHT are very concerned about ash die-back in relation to the Novers, where ash is very significant in the woodland. The Hill Games event unfortunately had to be cancelled.

e. Other partners

Richard Rallings for Natural England outlined the aerial bracken spraying which was carried out on 100 acres of the common in August. The ban on Asulox means that the normal follow up spraying will not be possible so the effects may not be as full as normally possible. A further 40 acres was also done by quad bike, including widening tracks and aiming to encourage stock to move around the hill more. Richard was working with the Commoners to put together an Upland Entry Level Stewardship application but the process was long.

Carl said that volunteers for the Shropshire Wildlife Trust were working on Catherton once a month, particularly on scrub clearance. There had been some problems of illegal burning of gorse.

Phil circulated the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 2011-12 Annual Review.

8. Any other Business

Chris mentioned that there had been some instances of trespass with people picking mushrooms at night.

Phil Edwards said that the Rugby Club's pitch was being affected by badger digging and soiling from the adjacent land owned by TCHT. Sue said that a significant increase in badger activity had been noticed, and the Trust were happy to discuss with the Rugby Club how to address the problem.

9. Date of next meeting

The next meeting was set for Monday 11 February- venue to be confirmed.