

THE BEACON HILL SOCIETY

Minutes of Meeting held Wednesday 18th July 2018

Somerset Earth Sciences Centre Moon's Hill Quarry Stoke St Michael

1. Chairman :- Richard Raynsford opened the meeting at 19.00hrs and welcomed those present.

Present : Richard Raynsford (Chairman); Peter Banks (Treasurer/Membership); Lesley Stewart (Secretary); Mary Newman (Events co-ordinator); Matt Brookbank (Publicity/Website); Bo Walsh (Mendip District Council Tree Officer); Fran Britten; Kevin Gibbs; Paula Jordan; Jeff Bevan.

Apologies : Paul Allen (Woodland Trust); Mark Adler; Christine Mayle; Marion Black; Jennie O'Kane; Lucy Chard; Alan Stone; Graham Price; Janet Raynsford; Audrey Truan; Margaret Hares

2. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as amended:

(a) Lesley Stewart was not included among those present.

(b) Treasurer's Report : should read ... 'Outgoings totalled £162.11, including a £15 shortfall from the Dennis Hill bequest of £250, and Income totalled £224.00.

3. Matters arising from the minutes and not on the Agenda :

Peter raised the question of the three committee member positions which remain vacant after the AGM. It had been agreed at the AGM that it was not necessary to fill these positions and it has been agreed that matters will be left as they are for the time being.

4. Officers Reports :

Chairman: Richard welcomed Jeff Bevan as a new member. He is a photographer and a volunteer Woodland Trust warden at Lyncombe. Richard extended his welcome to all other members and stated his intention to stand down as Chairman of the Society at the next AGM (April 2019 – date to be advised).

Secretary: Lesley gave details of the difficulty in contacting Paul Allen of the Woodland Trust and produced emails from him and Alan Stone. It was agreed that these would be discussed under the relevant points in the agenda.

Treasurer/Membership: Peter informed the members that of the 37 members registered at the AGM, only 16 had renewed their membership. He welcomed Jeff as a new member.

The Society account, from the Bank statement of 21/06/2018 showed a credit balance of £891.93. There is a further £20 to be added plus any subs. received at the meeting. He confirmed that a cheque for £250.00 from Rod Hill for the Dennis Hill bequest had been received but would not yet appear on the bank statement. There is a petty cash amount of £4.30.

The Society has received an invoice from St Aldhelm's School at Doultling for the cost of their recent visit to the Woods, under the Dennis Hill bequest. A cheque for £250.00 was given to Mary Newman to hand to the School before the end of the Summer Term.

Peter suggested that the Society consider moving the Bank account to Lloyds Bank in Shepton Mallet as this is the most local and convenient Bank still open in the area. It is hoped that a more convenient way of renewing membership subscriptions can also be set-up. This was agreed unanimously.

At the suggestion of Kevin Gibbs, Peter will arrange for four signatories to the account – himself, Lesley Stewart, Mary Newman and Matt Brookbank, with any 2 of the 4 being able to sign cheques as required.

Events: Mary told the meeting about the recent visit by St Aldhelm's Key Stage 2 (years 3-6) pupils to the Wood which is funded by the Dennis Hill bequest. She was pleased to report that Rod Hill and his wife had joined the visit where the children had taken part in three activities including building a house, and playing Hide and Seek. It was a very successful day.

Mary apologised that she had been unable to complete the survey of the bluebell woods but all members agreed that there would be time, and bluebells, next year. She was also happy to report that Audrey Truan has offered her assistance for dealing with any future events.

Publicity/Web site manager: see report included under item 5 (4)

5. Beacon Society

1. There were no proposed projects or events to be discussed at present but it was to be hoped that anyone wishing to discuss any future event/project would come to future meetings or contact the Society through the web site.
2. Alan Stone had sent an email asking if the Society was interested in a display in the Heritage Tent at the Show. It was decided that the Society would be present at the Show and volunteers were requested to help "man" the stand. PB is taking the boards to the Show on 19th August. LS is to be at the stand from 10.00am to 12.00pm and a rota will be arranged thereafter, until 4.00pm. The boards are ready for display but there is to be a contact address added. Fran asked whether the boards should also contain a contact address for Wells Museum as some items from the barrows at the Woods are on display at the Museum.
3. LS confirmed that there had been no contact from the local Parish Councils with regard to the Wood.
4. Matt gave a brief explanation of how the web site has been updated and improved. He confirmed that it still hosted by Scott Baldwin but the new site is now live. The archaeology information has been updated by Matt and the location of the Wood is now accessible through Google Maps. There was a brief discussion about a membership application form being included on the site, together with the possibility that subs. could be paid via Paypal. Matt is to investigate this further when the new Bank accounts have been set up with Lloyds Bank. It was agreed that the Twitter access on the website was not necessary and Facebook was sufficient. Bo commented that there were two feeds onto Facebook with regard to the Society – Matt will sort this out.

Kevin Gibbs asked about contact details for the Society to be included on the board at the entrance to the Wood. Committee members felt that this could be undertaken without recourse to the Woodland Trust as it had been spoken about previously (October meeting 2017) and Paul Allen had not raised any objections.

6. Woodland Trust

1. Peter confirmed that Chris Smith, who had provided the original ecological survey of the Woods, had again visited the Woods and had agreed that he would be happy to provide an updated report for the Society and the Woodland Trust, subject to paying his fees for the production of the same.

There has been a lack of communication with the Trust, and LS confirmed that she had difficulty in contacting Paul Allen. Paul Allen sent an email confirming he would not be attending the meeting and informing the Society that the expected clearances in the Wood will not now take place until September 2019 due to the large amount of licences and arrangements for felling and removing the wood that are required. As Tree Officer for Mendip District Council, Bo Walsh offered to speak with Paul Allen to see if he (Paul) will meet with Society members at the Woods in the near future.

2. Following on from the details of the email from Paul Allen concerning the proposed clearances under the Management Plan, Peter expressed concern that the views of the Society were not being taken into consideration.

3. Sapling clearance in the Wood was discussed. A working party is to be arranged to look at marking those saplings which may need to be cleared whilst they are still in leaf and more easily identified. It was suggested that oak saplings should be transplanted elsewhere in the Woods. Previous comments by Jennie O’Kane were raised concerning removal of brambles and saplings which could lead to vandalism of the exposed barrows. Bo suggested that this proposal may need advice from Historic England as well as the Woodland Trust. It was suggested that the clearance should take place in the Autumn, subject to any necessary permissions being granted.

The ever present problem of litter was raised again, although Mary was able to confirm that there was no apparent litter within the Woods when she visited with the local school children. The roadside continues to be the worst affected area. This will be discussed again at the next meeting as Autumn/Winter is an easier time to clear any litter.

Peter spoke briefly about the visit to the Woods with Chris Smith and Adel Avery. Adel has looked at potential sites for bat boxes to be fixed on the edge of the Woods. The Society has some funds available to purchase suitable boxes but it was agreed that this matter would be discussed when Paul Allen has been contacted.

Any Other Business

Paula Jordan asked about any progress with a calendar featuring the Woods throughout the year. Jeff Bevan and Matt Brookbank confirmed that there were photographs available for some of the months but not yet sufficient for a calendar. Peter raised the question of the costs of printing such a calendar and whether it would be cost effective.

Peter also informed the meeting that there are very few booklets left. It was suggested that those that were still available should be taken to the Show and then an updated booklet could be produced later in the year. Matt and Peter will liaise on this.

Next Meeting: Wednesday October 17th 7pm Somerset Earth Sciences Centre, Moon's Hill Quarry, Stoke St Michael

Meeting closed at 20.08pm