

**Minutes of annual general meeting 18 June 2017**

**Present**

Jonathan Alsop, Derek Cutt, Derek Emes, Rachel Irving, John Parker, Matt Parker, Dean Pawlyn, Pam Pickett, Neil Rickman, Ade Wallington.

**Apologies**

Sheila Berry, Stuart Caborn, Clarkson family, Cathy Daisy, Kevin Daisy, Ewan Davies, Alessio Falino, Lindsay Hall, Allison Jagoe, Philip Jagoe, Ed Kaczor, Jim O'Donoghue, Laurence Parker, Judy Pritchard, Judith Qualtrough, Nicole Rorie, Nigel Williamson.

**Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous AGM on 17 July 2016 were approved as a true record of that meeting.

**Actions from the previous AGM minutes**

DC to inform Paul Hendry at WBC that Derek Emes is our nominated Commissioner for 2015-16. **Completed.**

NR to investigate whether AWE still have a mechanism for grants to local community groups.. **Deferred.** Neil reported that he had not pursued this due to our low level of expenditure in the past year. See below under Treasurer's report.

**Election of officers for year 2017-18**

The current officers all indicated their willingness to stand again. There being no alternative nominations, all were unanimously re-elected. Officers for the coming year therefore remain...

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| Chairman:      | John Parker    |
| Secretary:     | Derek Cutt     |
| Treasurer:     | Neil Rickman   |
| Tools Officer: | Jim O'Donoghue |

Derek Emes also offered to continue to serve as our appointee on the Greenham and Crookham Commons Commission. There being no alternative nomination, he was unanimously re-elected. Derek Emes therefore remains our appointed Commissioner.

**Action:** DC to inform Paul Hendry of WBC that DE remains our nominated Commissioner.

## **Chairman's report on activities since the previous AGM**

John had e-mailed his report beforehand. It is reproduced below:

During the last year we have undertaken the usual tasks of scrub clearance, removing non-native species, footpath clearance and a variety of repair and maintenance activities, all of which are recorded on our website : [http://www.gccv.org.uk/gccv\\_task\\_record.html](http://www.gccv.org.uk/gccv_task_record.html).

Our maintenance tasks have included fence line clearance, gate installation and repair, installation of dragon's teeth, and clearance of the fire plane pond.

Our Christmas event in December was again a success with the construction of the usual "wooden" BBQ (making good use of the felled birch at Sandleford Heath!).

Excluding the February task, when our numbers were bolstered by 19 Scouts and Leaders, our numbers have averaged just over 14 for each task (1 up on last year), varying from 9 up to 21. Over the year we have again contributed over 950 man hours of effort to help maintain the Commons, which is the equivalent of approximately half an additional Ranger.

I would like to thank the following for their support during the year:

- The Committee : - Derek Cutt as Secretary, Neil Rickman as Treasurer and Jim O'Donoghue as Tools Officer.
- Ade and the BBOWT Ranger team for their support by providing us with a range of tasks, the materials required to carry them out and transport out to the work sites.
- Derek Cutt for leading the Group when there is no Ranger available and keeping our web site up to date.
- Pam Pickett for being our "chief photographer".
- All the members who have turned up to provide the "elbow grease".
- Derek Emes as our elected representative on the Greenham and Crookham Commons Commission.

We have also had young people work with us to undertake the service element of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme which often has the benefit of them bringing along parents to help as well.

Here's looking forward to another year in which we can help to improve the Commons for the benefit of all their users.

John Parker  
Chairman  
18<sup>th</sup> June 2017

## **Treasurer's report**

Neil presented the latest financial position, having previously circulated the detailed accounts, expenditure records, and his observations on our financial position to the Chairman and the Secretary.

In summary, after another year with zero income our funds are beginning to run low. Web hosting expenses (which occur every two years) later in 2017 will bring our balance down to a level where it becomes necessary to seek funding. There seems little or no likelihood of ever receiving the funds we were promised from the now wound-up residents' association.

We have previously had a gift from AWE, which might be repeatable.

**Action: NR to investigate whether AWE still have a mechanism for grants to local community groups.**  
(re-instatement of action deferred from the 2016 AGM)

The Treasurer's report and the accounts were accepted, with thanks to Neil.

## **Report from the Greenham & Crookham Commons Commission**

Derek Emes presented his report, the text of which is reproduced below:

Rather than give item by item details I am giving a discourse and how the many debates arose and principles were attempted to be clarified.

Grazing-conservation disputes:-

The biggest and most regular disputes arose from commoners' rights of grazing impacts on natural conservation. The Greenham and Crookham Commons Act 2002 is the fundamental basis on how conservation and grazing has to be managed. **Part 4** Conservation of common is the particular section that applies to this. This is further sub-divided as follows: **21** Functions of commission **22** Grazing agreements. **23** Regulations as to management rights **25** Appointment of reeves **26** Register to be maintained by Commission. **27** Appeals against refusal to register etc.

With such detail covered outsiders would wonder why so much dispute arises; the following factors however are where dispute occurs.

a) Sub section 23 has not been completed. Bye-laws not yet published. Regulations still long awaited approval by DEFRA after 5<sup>th</sup> version submitted. Initially it was some time before they were originally submitted.

b) 23 (b) and (c) to maintain health of grazing animals and ensuring the common is not overgrazed. This is a bone of contention as it is clear that there is overgrazing, but initially it arose when tb. was identified and cattle could not be removed except to registered lay back land. Some graziers did not have this facility and would not rent such. Over wintering not normally accepted was allowed, but since some graziers have continued to do so

under its subsection is a long list of powers that the Commission can exercise under set regulations

c) sub-section 21 (1) and (2) Improvement and maintenance of the common and promotion and proper standards of livestock husbandry. –includes assessment of number of animals which properly can be grazed. There are some graziers who ignore this. Cattle have been exchanged for horse numbers in registered rights. Neighbours registered rights taken under lease, weaned calves not included in numbers.

d) Sub-section 22 Basically graziers have to get permission for any slight variation to their rights and the commission may only give such permission subject to as listed. Grazing numbers and owners are being checked but some graziers' animals' ear tags are missing. This is to be tightened up. The problem here is that only 2 graziers are Commission members and getting others under control is difficult.

Another topic that has been disputatious is the extent of gorse particularly in the denser areas. There is general agreement that there is too much but method of control and extent of cutting back is not as graziers want. There is now agreement on a plan of determining areas and extent of cutting over a 5 year cycle, with observation bi-annually to check development. The remaining dispute is on gorse burning and ash disposal. Graziers want the ash spread to improve grass growth but to maintain and improve natural heathland this is not be allowed.

As the extent of future use, activity, protection and development is crucial an agreed “shared vision” is being evolved. A series of meetings have been held under the auspices of a specialist to identify how separate Commissioners and some graziers, foresee the Common’s future. This has identified a large number of factors relative to such an agreed vision. These factors have been identified and set out first in a form of timetable giving month, trigger to activity, and constraints. Most problems lie in the winter period. All factors have been identified under the headings of full agreement/conditional agreement/resolvable agreement/implacable opposition. Further separate meetings are to be held to enable the second and third heading to be resolved. It is hoped that these future meetings can resolve agreement for the way ahead.

Other matters:-

The War and Peace event due in September was not discussed in as no programme or details were available. When they are available they will be emailed to Commissioners as the event is too close to the next meeting,

Way marking is complete and care has been taken in how various areas are joined up. Particular care was taken in Living Landscape location. Questions were raised as can vulnerable areas be temporary fenced and can people be confined to certain paths. It was agreed this clearly possible as definitely temporary

Work on Pyle Hill car park has been successfully completed

I was thanked on our behalf for the work we carry out.

**If members want anything raised at any future Commission meeting, please let Derek Emes know.**

Derek also reported that Chris Austin, the Vice-Chairman of the Commission, had asked whether the GCCV would be willing to treat one or more existing seats on the common, and to install a seat in memory of a deceased person. The meeting was in favour of both, although it was pointed out that the existing seats are generally made of oak which does not usually require treatment. It was also noted that we would expect materials to be provided not at our cost, and that any financial contribution would be most welcome.

### **First aid training**

Ade reported that BBOWT can arrange first aid training based on the one-day “emergency first aid” course but including an element of outdoor and remote-location first aid. The course will be available to GCCV members. Dates are not yet finalised but Ade would like to know how many volunteers would be interested in principle. There was some interest from those in the room but it was noted that some regular members were not present. Therefore...

**Action: DC to e-mail the whole current e-mail list about availability of first aid training.**

Matt reported that he has the qualification “First aid at work”.

**Action: MP to send AW a copy of the certificate so that he can be recorded as a first-aider on tasks.**

DC also has first aid at work and expects to attend the three-yearly requalification course within the next few months.

### **Herbicide application training**

AW reported that Simon Barnett is organising one-day “minimal calibration” courses in herbicide application. This will allow otherwise unqualified volunteers to undertake stump treatment by brush. The course would be delivered by an external training provider, but possibly at Estovers.

Action: DC to e-mail members about availability of herbicide training.

### **Tools, maintenance and storage**

AW asked whether we need any more or different tools, and whether the storage unit is working well. There was general agreement that we have most of what we need. The only exception is replacement blades for pruning saws, which cannot be sharpened and so are inevitably needed as old ones wear out. Tools Officer JO'D had mentioned that some of the current blades are blunt.

DC explained that the reason the GCCV owns our own pruning saws is that West Berkshire Council used to supply only bow saws to volunteers, so we found it necessary to buy our own Silky brand saws. There was general agreement that for other tools, we have no objection to sharing the “pool” tools with BBOWT staff, the Conservation Trainees, and other volunteer groups (e.g. the WBLL Wednesday group and the West Berks Thursday group). AW pointed out that with the Conservation Trainees on the team, tools such as shears, loppers, slashers etc. can be expected to be sharp and generally well maintained.

However, Silky blades are expensive, need to be treated with care, and wear out in proportion to frequency of use. Therefore we are happy to continue providing our own, funds permitting.

Action: JP to prepare an application to the Greenham Common trust for funding for a supply of new saws and blades, as well as funding for a number of volunteers to attend the first aid course and the herbicide training mentioned above.

Action: All members to let John know if they identify any other expense items which could be included in the application to the Greenham Common Trust.

### **Other business**

Twentieth anniversary in December 2017

Action: AW to let BBOWT HR Department know that we are approaching the group's twentieth anniversary. They may be able to mark it in some way.

### **Volunteer numbers**

DC reported a recent clean-up of the e-mail list, in which everyone who wants to remain on the list was invited to positively opt in. This led to the removal (June 2017) of 14 e-mail addresses, with 19 remaining. Some families and couples are contacted via a single e-mail address, so the number of recently attending and recently opted-in individuals is currently 25. We also retain e-mail contact with the Baughurst Scouts, who substantially augmented our numbers on two occasions last year. There was general agreement that turnouts are good, and no particular recruitment activity is necessary at the moment.