

**Hemyock Parish Council**  
**Commons Management Group Meeting**  
**held at Longmead at 7.30pm on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

Subject	Action
<p><b>1. <u>Present</u></b>  Mr S Clist (Chair), Mr J Edwards, Mr L Povah, Mr I McCulloch, Mrs D Evans (Parish Clerk) and 3 members of the public (Mr Allen, Mr Moon and Mr Venn)  <b><u>Apologies</u></b> Mr S Major,</p>	
<p><b>2. <u>Declarations of Interest/Dispensations</u></b>  None declared.</p>	
<p><b>3. <u>Minutes of Last Meeting</u></b>  <b>PROPOSAL:</b> The Commons Management Group minutes of the 18<sup>th</sup> September are approved.  <b>PROPOSED:</b> Mr Edwards  <b>SECONDED:</b> Mr McCulloch  <b>DECISION:</b> passed (all in favour). Mr Povah abstained as he was not in attendance at the last meeting</p>	
<p><b>4. <u>Matters arising</u></b>  Nothing to report</p>	
<p><b>5. <u>Hemyock Common</u></b>  Mr Povah commented that he had visited Hemyock Common a month ago and thought it looked clean, tidy and pretty, a lovely place for a quiet picnic.</p>	
<p><b>6. <u>Shuttleton Common</u></b>  Clerk to establish whether Andrew Tucker would be willing to top Shuttleton next year with his mulching topper.</p>	Clerk
<p><b>7. <u>AONB Liaison</u></b>  The group has agreed with the parish council to act as a liaison body with the AONB. The Clerk has approached Linda Bennett and asked her to make contact with Mr Clist to discuss future possible projects such as community orchards and allotments.</p>	
<p><b>8. <u>Items raised by Chairman</u></b>  The Chair has asked the Clerk to pursue the idea of a separate page on the village website for the Commons Management Group where pictures and information on each common could be given.</p> <p>The group had previously agreed to recommend to full council that the formal agreement between the gun club and the parish council be sent to legal advisers for comment/approval. In view of the on-going noise abatement situation at the common this was put on hold. As the noise issue has now been resolved the matter may be passed back to full council for consideration.</p>	Clerk
<p><b>9. <u>Items raised by Councillors/Clerk</u></b>  The Clerk read the following report from Ed Hopkinson, Devon Wildlife Trust:-</p> <p><i>We are pleased with the progress that has been made on the Hemyock Commons over the past year and believe that the work of the Commons Management Group is invaluable in ensuring that the wildlife value of these valuable sites are secured. News from the Hemyock Commons that Devon Wildlife Trust manage is:</i></p> <p><b><u>Ashculm Turbary</u></b>  <i>This site has not been grazed this year so as to rest the site after the repeated grazing that has reduced the dominance of the purple moor grass which threatened to smother some of the other botanical interest. Future light grazing will be undertaken in 2015, however, it is not envisaged that the grazing will be required on this site for a long period as the restoration grazing has been completed and we now need to only undertake maintenance grazing.</i>  <i>Bracken management has been undertaken predominantly in the southern part of the reserve (near the property known as Shoebrooks).</i></p>	

A site meeting with Western Power Distribution has been undertaken looking at issues relating to woody growth under the powerlines at the southern end of the reserve. The proposed works are a repeat of work previously undertaken and a working method was agreed that would reduce the impact on the nature conservation interest. Consent to undertake a small amount of coppice and tree trimming was agreed subject to all other consents. The Devon Biodiversity Records Centre undertook a botanical survey of the site this year providing a useful report of the species and habitats currently found there. The report recognised the value of the management that had been undertaken on the site and produced some useful records of plants such as White-beak sedge, Bog asphodel, Early marsh orchid and both round and oblong leaved sundew.

Control of invasive and site non-native Skunk Cabbage has been undertaken at the northern end, below the property known as The Flints.

Health and Safety Risk Assessments have been undertaken and identified works have been actioned.

#### Lickham Common

The site has been grazed again this year as part of the restoration grazing management and the dominance of the purple moor grass has been much reduced.

Some follow up work to regenerate scrub has been undertaken.

Bracken management has been undertaken.

Health and Safety Risk Assessments have been undertaken and identified works have been actioned.

A site meeting with myself and representatives from the Commons Management Group was held at Shuttleton and Hemyock Commons in July to look at the achievements and next steps on these sites.

#### Hemyock

There was much heather regenerating following the management that has been undertaken on this site and suggestions were made so as to create 'islands' of heather where cutting was relaxed so as to allow the heather to grow on and to prevent the management pushing the habitat towards a more grass dominated habitat.

Areas of bracken to be managed were identified and long term it was suggested that the Group might consider some removal of scrub (birch)

#### Shuttleton

The impact of the burn undertaken during the winter of 2013-14 was assessed and the burn had removed a lot of accumulated purple moor grass which was very encouraging and there was evidence of plants such as Bog asphodel already making the most of the increased light.

The provision of fire breaks was discussed so that subsequent burns may be controlled more easily and it was suggested that these were cut along the powerlines and across the site. The firebreaks themselves would create areas of much reduced vegetation cover and would allow some of the lower growing plants to grow.

Areas for bracken management were identified.

It would be useful to take another complete set of Fixed Point Photography photographs which gives a repeatable and visual record of the site. These photographs are more useful after leaf fall and would allow direct comparison with the original set. I propose to take a set of these photographs before Christmas and will let the group know how they compare.

Further birch clearance on the site would be beneficial.

We discussed potentially lending the Devon Wildlife Trust bracken roller / bruiser for some of the bracken management for comparison. Unfortunately the equipment was being used a lot by a colleague in the north of the county and was not returned to my workshop base until after the bracken management period. This is unfortunate but I am confident that if the Commons Management Group wanted to borrow the equipment next year then this could be arranged. I apologise for the unexpected demands placed on the equipment making it unavailable this year.

Mr Edwards raised the matter of relying on contractors to do the topping at Shuttleton. This year, due to workloads, Andrew Tucker was unable to complete this. The group may need to pursue other contractors to complete the work.

Mr Povah commented that with scrub clearance one has to remember it is a delicate balancing act and not to take out too much at one time.

### **10. Public Participation**

Mr Moon agreed with Mr Povah's comments and suggested that it is vital to leave some smaller birch for the green caterpillars to feed from.

<b>11. <u>Summary of Recommendations</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommend agreement is sent to legal advisers for comment/approval</li> <li>• Webpage for CMG is pursued</li> <li>• Clerk will confirm if contractor is able to complete the topping task next year, otherwise alternatives will be sought.</li> </ul>	
<b>12. <u>Next Meeting</u></b> will be at 7.30pm on Thursday 22 <sup>nd</sup> January 2015 at Longmead.	

Meeting closed at 8.05pm

*Signed*.....*Date*.....