

SHERSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Sherston Footpaths Group held in Sherston Village Hall at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 20 January 2010.

Present:

Martin Rea
Jay Dunn
Steve Dunn
Maggie McKenna
Phylip Harries
Nigel Freeth
Helen Freeth
Andy Osborn
Stan Bunce
Pat Bunce
Chris Edgecombe

Stephen Leonard – by invitation

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Sue McKechnie, Richard Skeffington and Irene Johnson.

2. Approval of Minutes of 26 November.

Jay Dunn pointed out that in Item 5 the list of 10 pages of problems given to Steve Leonard referred to were the most hazardous on the walks proposed for the booklet – 31 pages were all the other problems on these same walks.

Apart from this amendment, the Minutes were approved

3. Working Party – Mr Stephen Leonard.

Martin Rea welcomed Stephen Leonard – the Rights of Way officer – and thanked him for joining the meeting.

Martin said that during our initial meetings with representatives from the Wiltshire Council we had had discussions about the condition of the RoW - since then matters had not really progressed at all. Stephen said that they had only 6 men on the ground and something like 6,000 kilometres of paths etc to maintain and therefore it seemed clear that parish volunteers and self-

help is the way forward. In his previous position - for example Corsley Nr Longleat - Stephen said there had been a project in 2000 and their group had installed 5 kissing gates with the aid of a grant and volunteers carried out the installation – apparently they now had some 25 kissing gates in the area. So he was in favour of trying to up-grade the quality of the RoW. Obviously this would benefit the budget that the North Wilts area has for this work.

Any projects carried out by a volunteer working group needs risk assessment and landowners' permission. Stephen needs to be informed of the detail and then the group would be covered by the Wiltshire Council insurance. NB This is for HAND TOOLS ONLY.

Stephen suggests that a few projects could be selected to try out the system and demonstrate to the Council the level of skills and standard of work to the Council. He suggests that a Co-ordinator should be appointed who can be a point of contact and to whom he can deliver materials and tools.

Seasonal clearing of paths etc. can be carried out by walkers at any time. Overgrown paths are landowners' responsibility. Anything coming up through paths is Highways. Landowners should make 25% contribution to repair of structures.

Stephen reported on works already carried out:

Easton Grey bridleway has been cleared; Fosse Way at Easton Grey has been cleared:
Footpath 13 – two stiles are being repaired.

Martin summarised by saying that accordingly we should proceed with (a) appointing a Co-ordinator and (b) have a trial run (clearance and a stile). Stephen will supply a set of tools to be retained and we should select a place where items can be deposited – posts, rails etc.

Nigel Freeth said that he would be prepared to be the Co-ordinator of the Working Group and the group thanked him for this offer which was agreed. (This was decided at the end of the meeting).

Maggie asked what the approximate price of price of kissing gates was – Stephen said Wooden was circa £120 and Metal circa £200 (not so pretty but low maintenance).

4. Walks Booklet

Phylip asked about the corrections for the Walks maps and descriptions. Maggie reported that she had not received any more reports from Volunteers – but the weather had been so bad that not many people had been able to do as much walking as we had hoped. Phylip said he needed a 'deadline' and suggested that this should be the first week in February. Although changes might be made reprinting would be inconvenient and cost extra money.

Martin said that he had talked to Richard Skeffington, who said he would talk with Roger Ashley about historical issues, and Joyce Gleed has said she and George Stephens will look for names.

Phylip has asked Cilla Liddington if she has any other historical pictures which might be included.

Phylip showed the group a schematic map of the various walks which will be included in the booklet in which each Walk had a different colour. Each Walk would also have a Number and Name

The matter of which were the definitive maps was raised. It was vital that the maps we were working on for the Booklet showing the paths and the RoW were the definitive maps held at Council records to avoid disputes. Stephen pointed out that in many cases different maps existed covering each parish but for the avoidance of doubt he suggested that Phylip should send him OUR maps and he would check them against the County maps and confirm that they were the same routes.

Martin reported that the event in March for Grove Wood would not now take place – but there would now be a Village Green Day on 22nd May – and that this might be an appropriate day for the new Booklet to be launched.

Finance

Martin Rea said that we should be able to receive £3,000 from the Parish for printing. Although he had made an application to the Cotswold Conservation Broad for grant monies, this may or may not be successful.

Problem Paths

Jay Dunn wanted the group to be aware that she was extremely concerned that the Booklet might be published whilst there were doubts about the safety of the paths. The group discussed this issue at length and it was agreed that we should be working as hard as possible during the time between now and publication date so that these issues were addressed and resolved. Martin felt that we may need to be pragmatic in some cases and asked if Jay could continue to identify specific jobs that needed attention.

5. Liaising with Landowners

Martin reported that a letter had been received from Peter Gibson in Willesley with queries about the correct location of the RoW. Martin suggested that he should liaise directly with Stephen Leonard.

The issue of cropping over the paths was raised. Stephen reported that paths should be reinstated within 14 days of planting and could be cut out or sprayed. He said that the Stewardship Scheme had made a difference as Landowners were more aware of their responsibilities.

Martin reported that letters had been sent to John Tremayne (Easton Grey), Tom Trimlett (Sopworth) and Sarah Wood (Luckington) informing them of the Booklet and relevant RoW.

Next set of letter will go to other effected Landowners.

6. Community Payback.

Martin reported that the work that had been carried out on rove Wood had been satisfactory and he asked Stephen if he had used Community Payback workers on the RoW etc. He said that they had used youth offenders – but although it had not been a bad job it had proved to be rather unsatisfactory as they could be ‘over enthusiastic’ and sometime material had been dumped etc. Martin felt that although we could use them for purely clearance jobs all in all it might prove to be too much aggravation.

7. Grove Wood

Clearance work had been carried out and coppicing was in progress.

8. Christmas Walk.

Many thanks to Sue for organising the Christmas Walk, which was well attended despite the freezing conditions. Everyone enjoyed the walk apart from Martin’s brother in law who had a nasty fall but Sue was ready with her trusty First Aid Kit. Thanks to the Rattlebone for organising refreshments.

The next walk will be on Valentine’s Day – February 14.

9. Village Green Day

This will take place on 22 May 2010. Maybe Booklet Launch Day?

10. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the last Minutes.

11. A.O.B.

Stretchline – Martin said that sadly parts of the access to paths by the Stretchline factory had been fenced off. This was due the thoughtless parking of people coming to use the slopes for tobogganing during the snow which forced the factory workers to man-handle deliveries into the works. Although this may well have been caused by people from outside the village, it had caused considerable bad feeling. Martin was trying to ‘build bridges’.

Martin passed on the thanks of the Group to Stephen Leonard for coming to our meeting and for his assistance in our endeavours.

Maggie raised the completely un-related matter of the village tree outside the Post Office which was not thriving and was surrounded by unattractive damaged fencing. She said it was a pity that this should be the case in such an otherwise handsome High Street.

12. Next Meeting

25th February 2010 at 7.30 in the Village Hall.

MM
05.02.10