

Boldre Parish Council

Annual Assembly 17th March 2014

Minutes of the Parish Council annual assembly meeting held on Monday 17th
March 2014 at 7.00pm Boldre War Memorial Hall.

Council members:	Mrs. A Bolton	Mr. R Channell
Chairman Mr. I Wild	Mrs. A Grainger	Mr. B Goodall
Vice Chairman Mr. C Wise	Dry J Horsfall	Mr. J Puttick
Clerk & RFO Mrs. J Coe	Mr. P Tanner	* Mr. A Wooldridge
County Cllr K Thornber	*= Absent members	

Members of the public in attendance 21

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – Cllr Wooldridge**
2. **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 18TH MARCH, 2013. Resolved that the minutes were agreed as a true record.**

3. **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The purpose of this assembly is to give parishioners an overview of the parish council's work during the last year. To tell you about everything that the council has done would take too long but I aim to cover the major issues. If you think I have left out what you believe to be important, then this can be raised during question time at the end of this evening.

For anyone who doesn't know, the civil parish of Boldre covers an area of approximately 10 square miles and includes Sandy Down, Brattramsley, Boldre, Pilley, Portmore, Norley Wood, South Baddesley, part of East End, and Walhampton and just under 2000 registered electors.

Finance

The parish council precept on each property remained unchanged from the previous year. In fact it has not been changed for several years. The precept for the year amounted to £19,868.00 it covered the maintenance of the grounds, buildings, seats and noticeboards under the council's control, grants for the churchyards of St Mary' and St Johns, but not the churches themselves, as

well as grants to local organizations which give a service to people of the parish. It also pays for the services of the Parish Clerk and two groundsmen. The council also received payments from the hire of the football pitches and pavilion as well as fees for the use of the recreation ground for occasional use as a temporary car park.

These receipts came to a total of £1550, which also included a VAT refund.

Amenities

The Amenities working party is a group of council members in conjunction with the clerk, and in turn the groundsman, which spend some of the council's money and overseas the maintenance of the pavilion, the play areas, seats around the parish, areas of land such as Perkins Piece and Portmore Common, grass cutting on the recreation ground, as well as the implementation of new projects such as the proposed car park at the recreation ground. Plans for that have been drawn and redrawn by members of the Amenities working party and three sites have been considered. But as yet nothing has been finalised.

Highways

Over the last few months' road surfaces have had a real battering. Most forest roads are tarmac on gravel and it takes very little to produce potholes and, with the weather being as it was over the last few months, potholes have appeared in great abundance. Hampshire County Council's Highways has been overwhelmed. Added to this, flooding has obviously been an issue. While the volume of water has been difficult to deal with in many cases, some remedial work has been carried out. Some of our roads are due to be resurfaced under Hampshire County council's "Operation Resilience" and this will be done as soon as possible.

The Parish Council does have an issue with some roads that have been resurfaced. In some cases the road surface has encroached onto the verge, thereby reducing the area for animals to graze and also producing different widths of carriageway on the same road within a few yards. We have been assured that this will be rectified, but we are still waiting.

Roads mean traffic which in turn means the possibility of speeding. The speed watch group organized a meeting at William Gilpin School in the summer of 2013. At that meeting I indicated that the Parish Council would contribute £500.00 towards the cost of the scheme. This was done and although the scheme is not yet up and running here, I understand that it will become operative as soon as enough people have been trained to operate the equipment and record the information needed.

Floods

In many cases the volume of water recently has overwhelmed drainage systems. In this area we are well provided with drains and ditches. But these do need to be cleaned and cleared periodically. The responsibility for maintaining ditches usually lies with the occupier of the land or hereditament adjacent to any ditch. Drains may be the responsibility of the Highway authority, but that depends where the drain is. I have, many times, urged parishioners to maintain their watercourses and not fill them in. This will, to some extent alleviate flooding, both on the highway and in homes thereby helping to reduce the cost of the council tax payers. A house in Hundred Lane, Portmore was flooded recently partly due to a ditch not being able to flow easily because of partial infilling along its length. As I said last year the Parish is conducting a survey of all drains and ditches within the parish and will produce maps showing where they all are. In doing this it is hoped to cut down some of the problems that have been experienced on parts of the parish.

During the year two councilors met with Simon Barker of Longdown Estate to sort out the ditches and related problems at Shallows Lane. Mr. Barker said that he would arrange to have this done, but that it may take a little time. This will need to be done in conjunction with Hampshire Highways, which has a drain under the lane.

Planning

During the past year the parish council has received something in the region of 80 planning applications. They ranged from tree works to the demolition and replacement of dwellings. In most cases applications are quite straightforward and cause few or no problems at all, but

occasionally we have found ourselves at odds with the planning Authority (The New Forest National Park Authority). To try to eliminate such problems, we have produced, with the help of the New Forest National Park Authority a Parish Design Statement, which sets out some of the criteria when considering planning applications. To quote some of what I said last year “the idea is to retain character and rural nature of the parish while allowing suitable changes and development”. This was finally accepted last summer and is now to be used by Boldre Parish Council and the National Park when looking at planning applications. We hope this will achieve its purpose.

During the year several people have come to council meetings to make presentations about matters, which have been of concern to them. Most of the presentations have been about planning, but others have been about access to the Solent Shore and work carried out by the Forestry Commission.

In fact anyone can come to a parish council meeting and make a presentation of up to three minutes about anything within the parish, which they feel the council should consider, providing prior notice has been given.

Council

Most people know that the parish council meets monthly. It is at these meetings that decisions affecting the parish are made. If a subject is not on the agenda then no decision can be made about it. All items under discussion appear on the monthly agenda, copies of which are pinned to the noticeboards throughout the parish. All meetings are public, but very few parishioners come to hear councilor’s deliberations and decisions.

However councillors work is not confined to the monthly meetings. Councillor’s attend other meetings, for planning, amenities and finance as well meetings with other groups concerned with the governance of the area. All without payment, after all Boldre Parish councilors, although elected, are unpaid.

Finally I would like to offer a few words of thanks to:

Signed & Dated

Page 4 of 9

Mrs. Jane Coe the parish clerk. She keeps records of all our monthly meetings, looks after the day-to-day finances of the council, carries out the parish council's requests as well as attending meetings at other venues on behalf of the parish council and manages staff.

Then thanks to Cllr Thornber, Vice Chairman of Hampshire County Council. He attends many of our meetings and keeps us informed about actions, which will affect the parish as well as assisting with problems within the parish.

Next, Cllr Colin Wise, Bolder Parish Council Vice Chairman and also the New Forest District Council member. Besides being our financial guru he also keeps us updated with what's happening at District.

Then, thanks to the rest of the very hard working members of Boldre Parish Council. Angela Grainger, Dr James Horsfal, James Puttick, Paul Tanner, Alison Bolton, Richard Channell, Brian Goodall and Alan Wooldridge

Thanks are also due to our groundsman, Adrian Drodge and David Jenkins.

Now, I would like you to welcome our speaker for the evening Mr Jonathan Gerelli, Head Agister of the New Forest.

4. SPEAKER: - JONATHAN GERELLI – HEAD AGISTER

Jonathan said that Agisters and Verderers are Statuary bodies made up of local people who manage stock of ponies, cattle and sheep.

Development within the New Forest is protected by the Verderers court under the New Forest Verderers act. The court meetings are held monthly on the 3rd Wednesday at 10am at Lyndhurst.

Announcements are made here and there is a slot for any other business where members of the public can ask questions on animals, livestock signage ext.

There are five agisters at present made up of Andrew Napthine who covers Lyndhurst to Cadnam and North Commons, Peter Rix ho covers Stoney Cross, Pipers Wait and across to the west commons and south to the A31.

I cover Dur Hill, Holmsley South of the disused Railway continuing through at the bottom of Brownhills then up to the triangle formed by the Burley, Brockenhurst, Sway (Marlpit Oak) roads, along that road outside Setthorns and then following the road back into Sway. Robert Maton has the south of the Forest. His area boundary is the part of the Forest north of Jonathan's patch - i.e. Longslade and Wilverley then all to the South of the A35 right upto Lyndhurst. He then has the Forest south of the B3056 Lyndhurst to Beaulieu Road and then staying south of Beaulieu River so he has Bucklers Hard and the foreshore. His area then follows the perambulation of the Forest all the way round the edge of Beaulieu Heath right back to Brockenhurst so past Roundhill Campsite etc and Mike Lovell who covers the Forest to the north of the B3056 to Beaulieu and then following the northside of Beaulieu River. His area extends across to the eastern boundary - Blackfield, Fawley, Marchwood etc all the way up to Ashurst and then north of the A35 up to Cadnam (east of the A337).

We check stock and are on call 24 hours a day and a rota. The animals are owned by commoners and deer are owned by the Forestry Commission.

It is a busy time at present as we are collecting fees for the "Annual right to pasture". There are 5000 ponies, 3500 cattle, 160 donkeys and 300 to 400 pigs. Unfortunately there were 115 animal deaths last year due to acorns.

All the animals have to be marked and fees are charged for this which contributes to the cost of the Verderers and Agisters, the clerk and court ext, the shortfall is then made up by the government, however due to funding cuts this have been reduced by 25% which in turn has an impact.

The condition of the stock is regularly checked and spring is "harvest time", ponies are checked by the agisters and if they are not in good condition they have to be removed from the forest. This is a particularly difficult time as the animals have come out of winter and are hungry and more active but the food supply is still limited so they take chances and roam, so if fences are not secure and gates kept shut, particularly on estates the animals will leave secure areas and can often end up in a dangers place such as the A34 which h happened recently.

Animal road deaths have been increasing within the last year, and we put this down to weather conditions as well as speeding and

lack of awareness. There were 160 collisions last year half of these involved locals and the other half involved visitors to the New Forest. We are pro active in trying to stop this and use reflective collars on the ponies and are looking at a design to use on cows; the collars are lost over the year as they have a release design if the collar gets caught on a branch ext to stop them harming the pony, so this is an ongoing task. The Police have 'speed education days' where they pull over speeding vehicles and after a discussion are sent onto an agister who shows them photos of collisions with animals. The Police have also recently invested in speed equipment that is able to record speeding in the dark as most accidents happen between dusk and dawn. Accidents have financial consequences not only for the damage to the vehicular but also disposing of the animal.

Stallions are being released into the forest now; there are ten in total carefully selected for their blood line, gene pull to produce the best off spring.

There is also the problem of people feeding the animals, particularly at campsites; we are trying to educate people not to do this.

Our days are never the same and you never know what you will encounters from a donkey with a tin can stuck on its foot to a cow that's swallowed a plastic bag.

Chairman Wild Thanked Jonathan Gereilli for an interesting talk

5. RESIDENTS' VIEWS AND QUESTIONS. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

Cllr Thornber for Jonathan – There are a limited number of Stallions but so you also select the area in which they are released?

Jonathan – The area is selected as there is a list for each stallion that records where they have run to avoid inter breeding in the future. They are kept in communal grazing until Mid May to June and people need to be aware of this.

Cllr Grainger for Jonathan – How many years ca n stallion runs?

Jonathan – three to four years in the same area, then they are moved on to avoid inter breeding. They can run up to eighteen years then we change the stock.

Member of the public to Jonathan – What percentage of animals are killed without wearing a collar?

Jonathan – It's hard to say, 25% are killed during daylight and it's difficult to know if the numbers would differ with a collar. It costs £7.00 per collar and we fit as many as we can, most commoners are keen to have the collars fitted send we would like to see all animals fitted with collars.

Member of the public to Jonathan – Do you train donkeys to get the hedging in the villages?

Jonathan – Donkeys hang round village lanes and the browse, they also know when the rubbish is put out for the dustman.

Member of the public to Jonathan- Do cattle eat holly?

Jonathan – Yes, the Forestry Commission do controlled burning but should also do more holly pollarding, Ponies know when holly pollarding takes place and descend on the area

Member of the public to Jonathan- How much do commoner's pay for animals on the forest?

Jonathan - £24.00 animals, £4.00 pig pan age, £10.00 per sheep.

Cllr Grainger to Jonathan - Do problems occur from rubble left from fire brake burning, e.g. sore feet?

Jonathan – no but I had a horse once that had a problem.

Cllr Goodhall to Jonathan – We have concerns with the loss of back up grazing, particularly with planning allowing change of use, do all commoners have back up grazing?

Jonathan – There is no stipulation as to how many animals commoners can have turned out into the forest but you must have back up land to return them to. There are no bye laws so say that you have to have back up land but if an agister says you have to remove an animal from the forest and you have no land you cannot keep the animal.

Cllr Thornber mentioned the foot and mouth outbreak in 2005 “although no forest animals had foot and mouth they still had to be removed from the forest and we ran out of land.”

Cllr Grainger to Jonathan – Small parts of land are being taken into gardens or land is being purchased and nothing is done with it that was grazing or agricultural land does this concern you?

Jonathan – Land that was once used to grow and harvest hay is no longer being used for that purpose this is a concern.

Cllr Tanner to Jonathan – The marking fee charged to commoners is £24.00 but don't they get paid to turn out animals?

Jonathan – Verderers have a high level stewardship scheme and commoners sign up for this and have high quality animals and are obligated to follow regulations.

Cllr Bolton to Jonathan – Live stock numbers are high at the moment should the high level stewardship scheme be limited to 10?

Jonathan – No as some areas would not have any animals and commoners are penalised if they do not meet the criteria.

Cllr Channell to Jonathan – Are commoners prosecuted if the animals are not properly being looked after?

Jonathan – Yes but fortunately there are not many – the last one was four years ago for not paying marking fees.

A resident from 100 Lane Thanked Cllr Thornber for his actions in flood prevention as last year several properties were affected by flooding in Portmore and this year it was one cottage.

Meeting ended at 8.10pm