



Rockland St Mary with Hellington Parish Council

Rockland Broad Management Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 7th October 2020

Present: Cllr Kate Bevington (KB) (Chair), Seb Shelton (SS) (Poors Trust), Nigel Dunthorne (ND) (RWA), Peter Armitage (PA) (SYWG)

Also in attendance: Vanessa Sewell (VS) (Clerk)

Apologies: Apologies for absence were received from Keith Wyatt (KW) (Poors Trust), Chris Morpew (CM) (Senior Ranger, Broads Authority), Will Fitch (WF) (Ted Ellis Warden) and Tim Strudwick (TS) (RSPB)

Minutes: The minutes of the meeting held on 4th March 2020, copies of which had previously been circulated to all members, were agreed and will be signed as a correct record by the Chair.

Matters Arising:

- 1) **Trials of rust virus** – VS reported that she had been advised by the Science Department at Kew Gardens to contact the Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI), who were running a project on Himalayan Balsam. Further, C A Ellison, who worked for CABI, had recently published a paper on trialling the rust virus. VS would forward the website links to Committee members.
- 2) **Boat hire guidance for novice users** – no response had been received from Vic Thompson (District Councillor). VS would continue to raise it with him. It was agreed that it would be useful for the Broads Authority to publish a page on its website containing safety advice for novice boat users.
- 3) **Bird Hide** – TS had noted in his report that the bird hide remained closed due to the poor condition of the hide front wall, which needed to be strengthened before it could be re-opened. It was agreed that PA would contact the RSPB to request that a notice is placed on the bird hide stating that it is unsafe to go inside.
- 4) **Damaged wooden quay heading on short dyke** – KB reported that the quay heading was still damaged. It was agreed that VS would ask Chris Morpew (Senior Ranger – Broads Authority) for a progress report.

Reports from Committee Members:

Broads Authority

No report was available; however Chris Morpew had made contact and confirmed that he, on behalf of the Broads Authority, was keen to be involved in the Committee meetings going forward.

Rockland Wildfowlers Association

ND reported that, although very sparse in the summer months, seven or eight mink had recently been caught. The BBC filming sessions on the Broad had gone well, and shooting had ceased over that period.

RSPB

TS had provided a short report by email, which had been submitted to Committee members prior to the meeting. He noted that it had been a difficult year, with furlough arrangements meaning that the complete warden team had only been back in place since early September. This meant that the team was now fully occupied with a backlog of essential work, which would be the case until the end of the winter. The RSPB marshes at Rockland Broad were being mowed by HLS due to the constraints on the RSPB team's time.

From April to July there had been a surge in people using the footpaths at Rockland and across the river at Buckenham. At Buckenham there had been a fair amount of vandalism and other undesirable behaviour. The bird hide at Rockland had been broken into at least twice. TS would look into repairing the hide front wall as soon as possible but work would inevitably be delayed due to the disruption of the team's work schedule over the past months.

TS reported that the RSPB had not carried out any formal breeding bird surveys in 2020, although anecdotally it was believed that bitterns had had a very good season, with at least four males in various places including Surlingham Broad and Cantley, where a female nested successfully for the first time. In May, Dave Lester had re-discovered one of the UK's rarest insects, the Fen Mason wasp, along the footpath (RDWA and RSPB sections) – the first recorded sighting in the Yare Valley since 1873. This wasp is associated with well-vegetated ditches, and it nests on dry banks.

South Yare Wildlife Group

PA reported that he had asked for the cutting of the strip between the Wildfowlers area and the marshes to be delayed from July to September, which had given butterflies more time to lay eggs. This had also resulted in sightings of glow-worms in that area and PA noted that keeping cattle off the strip during that period would help to increase biodiversity.

It was noted that a stork had recently resided on the roof of a property in Rockland St Mary, remaining in situ for three weeks. Sightings of storks around the marsh area had increased, and PA explained that this was due to a white stork project being carried out in Sussex whereby injured storks from Poland had been rescued and rehabilitated, regaining their ability to fly. Ospreys had not been particularly prolific in recent months, and Barn Owl numbers seemed to be depleted. Jackdaws were, however, on the increase.

PA added that there was no update from the Climate Emergency Action Group.

Ted Ellis Trust

No report had been received from WF.

Poors Trust

SS reported that a tree surgeon had removed a large willow tree which was resting on part of the boat shed. The tree surgeon had been commissioned to look at other trees, particularly on the grassed area adjacent to the car park. SS also reported that a wooden barrier would be installed on the private slipway on the Staithe which led to the boat shed, in order to prevent public access. This was for public liability insurance reasons.

Date of next meeting 3rd March 2021.

Signed by the Chair as a correct recordDate.....