

CLEE ST MARGARET PARISH COUNCIL

Open Meeting to Discuss a Proposed Environmental Scheme for Clee Liberty

Monday 11 November at 7.30pm, Village Hall

Dear Parishioner / Commoner,

You may be aware that the major graziers, supported by the Parish Council and Commoners Association, and Natural England, have been investigating the viability of entering into a Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship Scheme which would run from 1/1/2020 to 31/12/2029. The Council believes that a scheme would benefit all users of the common provided it does not damage the livelihoods of the graziers, change the nature of the common, or put at risk the viability of the common continuing to be grazed.

This proposed scheme would involve reducing by half the number of sheep which currently graze on Clee Liberty in the summer, and removing almost all of them in the winter. There would also be an undertaking to have no Supplementary Feeding of hay on the common. In return, the major graziers would be paid an incentive fee to compensate them for their losses, and there would be grants to carry out extensive control of the bracken (which would otherwise have been paid for by the Parish Council and Commoners Association). The management of the Common and its maintenance would continue to be carried out by the Parish Council and Commoners Association. The grants from RPA will allow rather more bracken to be controlled than at present.

If a Scheme is offered, the legal agreement would be between RPA and the two major graziers. RPA require the agreement of the owner (the Parish Council) but they are not prepared to sign multi-party agreements with large numbers of commoners and do not require that all commoners agree.

In signing up to the scheme the major graziers have to guarantee that the livestock numbers will be below specific levels to be determined by RPA. They therefore need assurance that other commoners will not start putting livestock on the common. To provide this, the Parish Council proposes to stand as a guarantor by asking commoners to enter into legally binding agreements that for the duration of the scheme (10 years unless terminated early) they will not put livestock on the common nor lease out their rights to others.

Most commoners are supportive of an environmental scheme and some commoners with a small number of rights have indicated that they would be prepared to enter into such agreements without compensation; however it is possible that others, particularly commoners who have registered flocks and are in a position to readily put sheep on the common, may feel that they need something in return for signing up.

The Parish Council has proposed to make payments, from the funds which it would otherwise have spent on bracken control, to compensate commoners for their agreement not to put sheep on the common and not to lease out their rights during the period of the scheme. The proposed amounts are a flat rate of £25 per annum for each commoner with up to 50 rights, £75 per annum for those with 51 - 100 rights, £150 per annum for those with 101 – 200 rights, and £250 for those with more than 201 rights.

If a sufficient number of commoners sign up to this, the Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship scheme will go ahead. If not, then we will all continue as we are.

The purpose of the meeting is to consult the parish and commoners about this proposal.

Clee St Margaret Parish Council 29/10/19

**Clerk: Mrs. Joan Palmer, The Old Post Office, Clee St Margaret, Craven Arms, SY7 9DT.
Tel/Fax: 01584 823421. E-mail: joan.palmer4@btinternet.com**