

## BRAMSHAW ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

The Annual Assembly of Bramshaw Parish was held at Bramshaw Village Hall on 9th May 2013.

### **Bramshaw Parish Council Attendees**

Denis Shaughnessey (DS) Chairman  
Sue Bennison (SB) Vice Chair  
Nayana Cintra (NC)  
Nigel Challis (NCh)  
Ian Davies (ID)  
Jenny Watts (JW)

Jane Mullan (JM) Clerk

4 members of the public.

Guest Speakers – Mike Seddon – Forestry Commission  
Edward Heron – Cllr HCC  
Dylan Everett, National Trust  
Lee Hallum – Lead ranger, National Trust.

### 1. **Chairman's welcome**

The meeting was opened by the chairman of the parish council, Denis Shaughnessey welcoming everyone and in particular our guest speakers.

### 2. **Apologies for Absence.**

Kay Harrison (Parish Council) and Diane Andrews (NFDC Cllr)..

### 3. **Question and Answer session**

#### 1. **Does the Forestry Commission have a pre-programmed plan or do they react to situations that arise.**

Mike Seddon advised that they do work on both methods – but the majority of their work is generally on a planned basis.

He then went on to outline how in the 1970's ditches were dug all over the Forest against parking and this was done on a planned basis, but now they only go to areas now where vehicles actually cross the ditches – this is a reflection of the declining resource over 30-40 year (25% downsizing since 1996). But work is still prioritized – he is in charge of 27000 hectares which cost about £2.5 m a year to maintain –so the FC in the New Forest are working to a budget of about £100 per hectare per year,

The Forestry Commission needs to try and protect the New Forest Landscape – timescale is the biggest issue facing them.

**2. Can the Parish Council assist?**

Self help! - Being absolute clear about what the actual issue is and then going to the right person – Lisa Macher is the main contact for the North of the Forest and she should be able to direct queries to the right person.

**3. Can the PC pay to have ditching done?**

Gary North is the main contact for this work and a contract would need to be in place – however the FC is trying re-create car-free areas along road verges and are currently about two thirds of the way through the project a 30 mile project.

The project forms part of the work to protect the forest under the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme (HLS) - made up of partners including the Verderers, New Forest National Park Authority and the Forestry Commission. The work is being carried out under a contract, with a total cost of £38,000 which forms part of the HLS capital projects.

The 'car-free' ditching prevents access and parking on the forest's verges, which helps to protect grazing land from potential erosion and livestock from walking between parked vehicles and becoming a hazard. It also prevents road and access points from becoming obstructed.

We have also taken horse riders and cyclists into account and made sure that obvious crossing points are deliberately left in place. We've installed 'dragon's teeth' (short wooden posts) and reflectors at either side of road crossing points to improve safety.

The ditches will look a little bare and stark against the forest to begin with, but before long, with the influences of the seasons and weather they will shallow out and natural vegetation will grow over again to cover the bare soil so that they are more in keeping with the landscape.

**4. Clearing wood/rides in Bramshaw Woods**

The FC policy requires them to only clear a minimal amount of the dead wood so as not to disturb the habitat – in the past everything was removed, but this was upsetting the ecosystem of the woodland base.

In answer to the query raised about could a a man and a chain saw could go and clear the odd tree blocking a ride, Mike Seddon gave a resounding No! Health and Safety obviously plays a very important part of any work with chainsaws, but the use of bowsaws may be acceptable.

**5. Could the PC run a currently closed carpark in Fritham.**

It is unlikely because the car park in question has been closed for a number of reasons with a number of organizations involved in the decision to keep it closed –

Police – public safety and property safety.

Verderers – damage to surrounding area and loss of grazing.

Natural England – damage to SSSI.

## 6. **Fritham Parking**

Edward Heron advised that Hampshire County Council would be reluctant to install double yellow lines and associated signage as this would be a step towards urbanization.. It would also be of low priority to traffic wardens.

He did remind the meeting of the recent Forestry Commission campaign – Parkwise –this campaign is run in partnership with The with Hampshire Fire & Rescue, Hampshire Constabulary Country Watch and the Hampshire Ambulance Service. Forestry Commission Rangers and other staff regularly patrol the forest's roads and car parks, putting notices on poorly parked vehicles and recording their details.

It is technically against the by-laws to park on verges etc but the £2-3000 cost of issuing proceedings and going to the magistrates court limits the usefulness of this course of action.

## 7. **Overall condition of the Bramshaw Commons**

Dylan Everett of the National Trust started his presentation by telling the meeting that Bramshaw Commons are the main base of commoning in the New Forest and are a very important part of the New Forest matrix – as an indication of this importance the Forest in general has a 0.18 head of cattle per hectare, whereas Bramshaw has 1 head per hectare and Ibsley Common has only 0.005 head per hectare so a lot less animals! This obviously leads to a varying degree of grazing occurring throughout the Forest - The heavy grazing that occurs on Bramshaw Commons has allowed rare lichens to grow on Plaitford common, but the National Trust is aware that certain practices being carried out at present may not be correct for the area. However overall the NT does support commoning. In many cases the NT don't want to interfere because Natural England are adamant that trampling is good for the ground and rare plants.

The NT is aware that a number of farmers and householders are using the areas of the common are a dumping /storage ground, but they are approaching key householder/offenders requesting that this action is stopped.

As far as ditching of the commons is concerned, the current ditching system is not designed as drainage of the areas, but to prevent the majority of the public from parking on the commons. Obviously 4 x 4 and travellers seem able to bridge these ditches. A legal precedent on ditching was set in 1987.

With regards to the travellers who visited last year, the NT feel it is good that they are visible as it enabled a Section 61 to be invoked within 8 days – if the area had been ditched and the travellers had not parked there, they may have gone further onto the commons and been 'hidden' and resulting in less of a reaction from parishioners.

They are aware of the condition of the ground along Blackhill Road, and Dylan is to meet with the commoner in question – he is not doing anything wrong as he is not in the verderers grazing scheme. Also trying to get Natural England involved.

8. **Parish Priorities for 2013-14**

1. Traffic calming

Trial two experimental sections of traffic calming – possible locations:

- i) Close Bentley garage
- ii) Between Burnford Bridge and the shop.

2. Appearance of the village including the Rosary Garage –

9. **Finances**

Bramshaw's precept is £15.83 per property, average in New Forest £65.18.

The parish council has £10400 in the bank.

Meeting closed 9.05 pm.

Signed:

Date: