**LHAG Site Meeting 7pm Tuesday 10th July 2018**

**Summary of Points Discussed**

**Present:**

Edward Andrews – SC Site Manager (EA)

Paul Carter (PC) and Mike Whittle (MW)–Longden PC

Jan Whittle – Bayston Hill PC (JW)

Ted Clarke (TC) SC Bayston Hill

Roger Evans (RE) SC Longden

David Morgan and Chris Pearson (LHRA)

**Correspondence Received**

EA read out two letters he had received recently and asked if the group would consider them as otherwise they would have to wait until our November meeting.

The first related to a request for a memorial bench received from a relative of a deceased regular user of the site. There had been an earlier exchange on this in which the policy on memorials had been explained thus: If the deceased’s family wish to pay for a new bench they can do so but it would need to be of a design and at a location approved by the council. Furthermore no dedication plaque will be permitted. The latest letter received by EA asks LHAG to reconsider this matter as the request was in a Will. There followed a brief discussion on the reasons for the policy (precdant etc.) leading to a unanimous decision not to change our opinion on this matter.

The second letter related to a request from a local resident to purchase a small part of the land (C7) at the SW boundary of the site now leased to the venison farm. There was a discussion during which DM and TC supported by others present said they felt the council should not be selling off capital assets as the site was now well funded via parish precepts. The land in question had presumably been brought into public ownership to protect it and to act as a buffer between the hill and the adjoining arable land. Furthermore we might one day have our own plans for using it. Any sale would entail a loss of control over what happened to it thereafter. Whatever good intentions the purchaser might have now they might not be there for ever. A unanimous decision was reached rejecting this request.

In both cases EA will write to the other parties accordingly.

**Botanical Survey of Acid Grassland**

EA briefly outlined the reasons why this survey (originally budgeted for in 2019) had been brought forward and the interim results supplied by the ecologist John Handley. Patches of land dominated by Sheep’s Fescue grass and Sorrel with many other species including harebells are rare in our part of Shropshire but were surveyed by another ecologist in 2004. The latest survey shows that these are much diminished in 2018 due to encroaching scrub, small trees, bracken and bramble. This process must be reversed if the remaining patches on the thin soil near the crest of the hill are to be protected and perhaps with luck some patches lost on the S. margin of the E. field can be resurrected. Practical steps will be discussed and plans to tackle the issue using contractors and volunteers will be brought forward. The group were content with this proposal.

**Discussions With Natural England re. Countryside Stewardship Grant Aid**

EA said he had met with the Natural England ecologist on site recently to discuss aspects of SC’s application for grant aid to assist with fencing and provision of a water supply so as to allow a significant extension of grazing by Dexter cattle at the W. end of the site and on the summit plateau grassland area. One point to note is that it is very difficult to be precise about the amount of grassland on site as some is partly infested with course vegetation and bracken. Also Natural England exclude current areas of bracken that may eventually be won back to become grassland again. Nevertheless they are very enthusiastic about our plans to graze the site in ways that maximise biodiversity. Their initial suggestion was that the new regime should include the whole of the site W. of a line drawn through the View Point. That is to say the fence along the W. edge of the car park should be extended down across the slope to the bottom of the site and the whole area W. of that opened up to grazing. In principle this approach was agreed by LHAG although several felt that there would be a need for further discussions as there would be a number of practical issues to address . Paul Butter (SC contractor) has not been in touch so EA is pursuing another contractor to do the trenching and pipe work for a permanent water supply.

**Bracken Control Measures**

It was noted that areas sprayed by contractor with Azulox in 2017 had largely been successfully controlled. Areas rolled by horse last summer were growing again much as before. Discussions would be needed about lessons learned and implications for the future. Barbara Haddrill was on site with her horses at the time of the visit and had done a thorough job covering much the same areas as last year. Steve Cornish would be on site on Monday 16/7 to cut the top grassland and to spray at least one area of bracken on S. margin of W. field. It was noted that the bracken is turning brown on the higher slopes presumably due to the thin soil and drought conditions. It may already be too late to spray successfully in 2018 in these areas.

**Gate into W. Field at Coppice Gate**

DM pointed out that both it and the support post are life expired and need replacement with something appropriate for this sensitive location. EA will research options.

**DBM 14/7/2018**