

Westleton Common Advisory Group

Minutes of meeting held on Monday 13th March 2023 at 7-30 pm in the foyer of Westleton Village Hall

Present Nick Shearme (NS), David Rous (DR), Julian Alexander (JA), John Bebbington (JBe), Amanda Freeman (AF), Joyce Burtenshaw (JBu).

1 – *Apologies.* Barry Banks (BB), Chris Freeman (CF).

2 - *Minutes of meeting held on Monday 5th September 2022.*

Agreed to be correct.

3 - *Matters arising not on this agenda.*

3a – *Unsafe bench.*

The unsafe bench has been removed and a new one installed. It was agreed that a plaque should be attached to this bench to commemorate Roy Jones who chaired this group from 2015 to 2020. JA will investigate options for a design and wording with an engraving shop in Saxmundham.

3b – *Displaying maps in hall.*

JA reminded the group that he had the laminated maps and will deal with them.

4 – *Roy Jones – an appreciation.*

The group agreed that a note commemorating Roy's service as a member and chairman of this group should be put on the Westleton website and sent for inclusion in the Yoxmere Fisherman. **See below.**

5 – *Membership of the group.*

With the loss of Roy Jones, the group is down to 8 members, 5 of whom are members of the parish council. The group seems to work well at present, so we see no need for additional members. We will review the situation in the autumn of 2023.

6 – *Safety audit.*

In previous years some of the advisory group members toured the common and produced a report noting problems requiring attention. This seemed to work well but we are not sure if this approach is acceptable to Westleton PC or to its insurers. NS will raise this at the next parish council meeting.

We need to put the warning signs for the beehives back in place (*NS confirmed he did this on Tuesday 14th March*). There was some discussion about trees under electrical power lines. This does not seem to be a problem yet but is something we should watch.

7 – *Alternative sources of funding.*

In July 2022 the Rural Payments Agency advised that; *"I can confirm that currently your HLS agreement ends on 30th September 2023. At present we are not yet processing any extensions for 2023-24 & the most recent extensions we have been completing are 2021-22. Currently we have no news regarding this period."* So, at this stage we do not know if more funding will be available or how much. We will wait till we hear from the RPA and will consider alternative sources of funding later.

8 – *Fire breaks.*

Fire breaks have been cut or improved in compartments 1 and 2 round "Four Winds", near the beehives and over the middle of the section. This should be sufficient for this year.

(After the meeting DR said he had looked at the firebreak round "Four Winds" and feels that nothing more needs to be done. There are some residual brambles but they are under 1 metre high so form good shrub habitat.)

9 – Management update.

DR confirmed we are on target with the current management plan. The 2023 – 2033 plan starts in April this year. NS reported that all cut material had been cleared and burnt.

We need to decide if the sand martin cliffs in compartment 13 should be cleared of gorse this year or next and if we should clear part of compartment 11 to restore the woodland glade and wet area. It would seem more sensible to deal with compartment 11 first as the resultant wet area should support any sand martins that colonise the cliffs. We need to draft an explanatory note for local publication on notice boards and the website and confirm that there is Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Natural England support. *JBe to draft local note and letters to SWT and NE.*

We should aim to do the work in compartment 11 in October. NS will mark the trees that should be felled probably in June.

Gorse cutting will begin again in September concentrating on the central area of the south common – compartments 13, 14, 15.

DR expects that one working party per month will be sufficient for the next cycle beginning in September 2023.

10 – Reporting to Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service.

DR does report his observations to Suffolk BIS and we want to encourage others to do so. Reports can be sent to Suffolk BIS via their website and via an app available for iPad or iPhone. People are encouraged to send a photograph with their report.

More information is available on the Suffolk BIS website -

<https://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/record> .

A note will be put on the website and notice boards.

11- AOB

DR asked for help with doing a stock take and tidying up the container. He needs 2 or 3 people. JB to suggest dates to CAG members.

DR also reported that the common is losing scrub. We will ask Graham Hart of SWT to visit us and advise us on what we could do.

12 – Date of next meeting.

September 2023.

Roy Jones 1935 to 2023

In 2005 Arlette Smith, then Chair of Westleton Parish Council asked Roy Jones, a fellow councillor, if he would lead the Common Advisory Group. Roy had always taken a keen interest in the Common, so he was happy to accede to Arlette's request. Roy chaired the group from 2015 until 2020 and continued as member till his death in 2023.

The common was very important to Roy and he understood how valuable it was to Westleton and its people. He saw it as a resource for leisure, exercise and stimulation and appreciated its importance in maintaining local and national biodiversity. Westleton is and must remain an attractive place for visitors and Roy understood how the common makes Westleton a place worth visiting. During his time as our chairman Roy always made sure we kept all these factors at the heart of our discussions.

In our Annual Report for 2022 we wrote;

Roy provided the group with strong leadership and kept the rest of us focussed on the issues that mattered when we showed signs of getting side-tracked onto less important topics. He would always make sure that proper procedures were followed and that we abided by the various obligations under the funding agreements and, of course, our statutory duties. He had a clear vision of what was important to the success of the common project.

Roy will be missed by everyone who has an interest in the common.

Nick Shearme and Westleton Common Advisory Group