**Monkton Farleigh Parish Council**

**Minutes - Wednesday 10th April 2024**

Those attending:

Parish Council - Ele Warrington (Chair), Pauline Adams, Elliot McBryde, Rachael McDonald, Suzanne Stansfield, Jane Ghali (Clerk)

Laura Wallace (PCSO), Liz Watts and Dan Sharp

1. **Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest** - none
2. **Minutes of Meeting 28th February 2024** – agreed and signed
3. **Matters Arising** – all on agenda
4. **New Parish Councillor** – Dan Sharp was nominated by Racheal Mcdonald and seconded by Elliot McBryde. All agreed and Dan was welcomed onto the Parish Council.
5. **Report from Police Community Support Officer (PCSO)** – there has been some interest in the mines in Westwood, so the police are being vigilant around other mine areas. There have been a few break-ins to sheds and garages in B on A looking for bikes and a horse box has been stolen from Box.

Parish Council have an interest in Community Speed Watch once the new speed limits are in place. Laura will find out details of how this works and send information to the Clerk. **Action Laura Wallace**

1. **Report from Johnny Kidney –** not attending
2. **Speed limit** – update from Liz Watts – the consultation period is now complete and we await the next steps. The next LHFIG meeting is on 22 April. LW is keen to get some ‘Pedestrians on Road’ signs at Pinckney Green and a virtual pavement to keep people safe when walking to the main road to catch the bus. There may be some 50/50 funding for these signs as £400 each, and the possibility of some contingency funds. Hope they can be incorporated onto current road signs. Can look at costs once assessment is done. LW to find out if assessment is free. It was thought that these signs should also be considered for the road from the village up to Farleigh Rise. **Action LW**
3. **Farleigh Rise play area transfer of land** – RM doesn’t have much time so EM will work on this with SS. **Action EM and SS**
4. **Finances and Budget 24/25** – JG presented finance for February and March. To the end of March 2024 there is £4,441.71 in the account. JG will now send the accounts to Helen Dewick for auditing in readiness for the AGM on 8th May. JG will also claim any VAT back for this financial year. **Action JG**
5. **Stiles and access to local footpaths update** – EW has emailed Tilhill (the contractors working on the woodland near Inwoods) and Johnny Kidney regarding the destruction of the footpaths through the woods. It’s also being reported on MyWilts by PA and TF.

A resident in Pinckney Green who also complained to Tilhill and Brian May’s Save Me Trust received the following replies:

The SSSI woodland at Inwood was in unfavourable condition initially due to the lack of active management and very little tree regeneration or open canopy.  In order to start to address this, we drew up a woodland management plan to start regeneration felling.  This was all approved by the Forestry Commission and Natural England.

Unfortunately the lime rich soils here are dominated by ash and the onset and continued impact of ash die-back has necessitated far more felling interventions than originally planned.  The woodland owner has a legal duty of care to make the footpaths and boundaries safe for members of the public and others working in the woods.  In order to keep as many healthy ash as possible, we have to regularly inspect and then fell those most likely to collapse.  Indeed several had fallen over the footpath in the winter gales in late 2023.  Winter is the safest time for tree felling avoid damage and disturbance to bird nesting habitat.  Alas this winter has seen unprecedented levels of rainfall which has left some areas with mild rutting.

We try and utilise as much of the felled ash, so the removal of timber also needs to be done in the winter months. These machinery movements are kept to a minimum but do have some impact which we will address as soon as the soil dries out.  To do so any earlier simply makes more mess.

All areas where we have felled trees, we will be replanting with trees in biodegradable shelters in the autumn this year to help regenerate the wood with small leaved lime, cherry, oak, field maple and hornbeam.

You are correct in that the more open canopy from tree removal means more bramble begins to grow.  However bramble is good for bees, dormice and regenerating trees (keeping the deer off them).  This is all part of the woodland cycle of open canopy moving back into closed canopy over the next 20 years.  Ash die-back has just accelerated the frequency and rate of canopy disturbance.

The following reply was also received from Anne Brummer, CEO, Dr Brian May's Save Me Trust:

What you see happening today is the result of several years of inspection, research, survey, planning, approvals, operational planning and management.  Nothing here is done in haste or without serious consideration.

The woodlands at Inwood had been inactive for so long that their neglect was acknowledged by Natural England in that their SSSI status was officially classified as being in an unfavourable and declining condition.  The lack of thinning or felling was creating too much shade that was in danger of killing off the ground flora.  The lack of openings was preventing regeneration of any new younger woodland tree cover.

The over-dominance of ash and the imminent stand collapse due to ash die back also adds to the need to intervene and begin the redress of the neglect.  We share your concern over the need to find naturally resistant strains but this does not stop us from making a start on improving tree species diversity and structural diversity of canopy levels by felling ash groups.  There will be many more ash left standing – and dying – than are felled.

You have seen the very start of what is a ten year plan.  Following felling, we will replant with many groups of wild cherry, small leaved lime, oak and other native species.  The smaller branches left on site will rot down and provide some recycling of nutrients and humus.  Please keep with us and watch the natural recovery and wildlife habitat improvements that will occur as part of this important work to enhance the woodlands, improve the biodiversity, protect the long term woodland cover and enhance the protected wildlife population.

All our operations have been closely reviewed and approved by both Forestry Commission and Natural England.  Furthermore the property is committed into, and independently audited, to ensure it meets the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS) which is the highest level of assurance to sustainable forestry practice.

As with most private woodlands we ask that you respect the privacy and remain on the public footpath and watch the results of this level of intervention over the coming years.

Footpath by Church Farm House still awaiting scans on the land by the steps before it can be mended.

Concern expressed about the stile into the back of the church. EW to contact landowner. **Action EW**

DS raised concern about cars parking on A363 by footpath leading towards the woods. Suggested reporting it on MyWilts app in first instant. **Action DS**

1. **Work for the Parish Steward** – JG to add the following to worksheet. **Action JG**
* Potholes, particularly in lower lane by the conker trees, but anywhere else as required
* The JG reported that there were 7 drains covered in mud in Rushmead Lane and 14 storm drains that were still completely blocked. JG to report storm drains to Western Highways **Action JG**
* The Clerk had asked Wiltshire Council if the ditches could be cleared in New Road (up the hill to the Rise) and Link Lane and they said they will send someone out to assess the ditches. JG to chase up. **Action JG**
* Mud to be cleared along gutter on road to Pinckney Green before weeds start to grow. Needs to be reported on My Wilts. **Action JG**
* EM reported blocked drains near Blackberries campsite – Clerk to meet EM and add to the list. **Action JG and EM**
1. **Parish update**

*Defibrillator Pinckney Green* – PA met the electrician from Burbidge who said it was possible to get electricity from the street light for between £300-£500. JG had seen that Batheaston Village Hall had got a free defibrillator from British Heart Foundation, JG to contact. **Action JG**

*Defibrillator training –* **Action EW**

*Report from Tree Warden* – ZT not present

*Football goals Broadstones* – AT not present – add to next agenda

*Phone box* – JG to find quotes for internal painting and replacement glass in phone box and bring to next meeting. **Action JG**

*First responders* – query as to if there were any in the village?

1. **Correspondence received**
* Agreed to give Playdale to go ahead to mend the zip wire at Farleigh Rise and to concrete in the wooden climbing frame as necessary at a cost of £840.78 (of which VAT is £140.13). EW to contact Blackberries campsite to see if they would like to sponsor **Action EW**
* .gov.uk domain – Clerk to find out more and bring to next meeting. **Action JG**
* Big Lunch 1-2 June – decided not to progress this
1. **Parish Matters**
* *Village Fete* is not taking place this year as there was no one to organise it.
* 2025 marks 100 years since the *Village Hall* was built by the villagers. It is hope that there will be some celebration of this – maybe a village picnic.
* JG asked about *man hole covers outside Church Farm* overflowing, one regularly with sewage after heavy downpours. JG to contact Wessex Water. **Action JG**
1. **Date of Next Meeting** – Wednesday 8th May AGM, 7pm in the Village Hall