

# MANEA PIT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

## MINUTES OF MEETING

10 AUGUST 2016 – 7.15 pm.

**Present:** Councillor Hirson; Chairman; Councillors Emery and Fielding plus Mrs R Carrington, Mr C Carson, Mr A Cooper, Mrs L Eves, Mr I Fost, Mr M Hindry, Mrs J Ramsay, Mr J Short, Miss M Williams and Mrs S Woodard.

**Apologies:** Councillors Cole and Mrs Desborough plus Mr A Clutton, Mr C Scott, Mr G Simpson and Mrs L Stevens.

The minutes of the meeting of 6 July 2016 were confirmed and signed.

### **PMC24/16 Chairman's announcement**

The Chairman informed the committee of incidents, since last weekend, of Carp being found dead at Manea Pit. The first dead fish was found last Saturday and others had been found on other days since then; the total number of Carp found dead to date is ten. He mentioned that the matter had been reported to the Environment Agency, which had undertaken tests of the water - which was deemed not be the cause of the deaths - and had taken one diseased (but still alive) Carp for examination; the results of the examination, which it is hoped will identify the cause of the situation, are anticipated within the next ten days.

Because of the situation described by the Chairman, Manea Pit is currently closed in terms of fishing activity (on the advice of the Environment Agency) and would remain so until the results of the tests being undertaken by the Environment Agency are known.

The Chairman responded to questions asked by members of the committee.

The committee decided that the situation be noted.

### **PMC25/16 Decisions made by Manea Parish Council**

The Clerk reported that the decisions made by Manea Parish Council since 6 July 2016 meeting of the Manea Pit Management Committee in relation to matters affecting the operation and management of Manea Pit were (at the meeting on 18 July 2016 (minute M40 /16 refers)) that, in response to a suggestion made by one member of the Manea Pit Management Committee that there is a need for measures to be in place to "protect" those members of the committee who would be engaging with children and young people

- (1) the Clerk to the Council would undertake discussions with the council's insurers regarding the possibility/feasibility (and any cost) of including within the council's policy of insurance legal protection/support for the council's volunteers in the event that a member of the public were to make an allegation or take legal action against such a person;
- (2) the offer of Councillor Fielding to investigate the requirement of the members of the Parish Council and the volunteers to be covered by a Safeguarding Policy be accepted;

(3) the Parish Council would not require its members or volunteers to undergo DBS checks.

The committee decided that the situation be noted.

### **PMC26/16 Field adjoining Manea Pit – use as community orchard/woodland**

Further to minute PMC16/16, the Chairman invited Mr Hindry to present to the committee the notes that he had produced - which had been circulated to committee members by the Clerk in advance of this meeting - of meetings of the "Orchard/woodland Group" which had taken place since the last meeting of this committee.

Mr Hindry commented that the group had agreed its objective as "To produce a maintenance regime and operational management plan for the community orchard/woodland". He outlined the annual programme of maintenance works which had been agreed by the group, which would be undertaken by volunteers on the first and third Sunday of each month.

Following a discussion on the current 'layout' and inventory of plants, use of the area and with recognition of what work is involved in maintaining the area, the group proposes a number of changes, including:

- designating an area at each end of the site as wildlife areas, leaving the rest as either orchard or grassed areas.
- re-locating the Hazel Copse to the far end of the site, beyond the owl box, to 'free-up' the area between the two areas of fruit trees
- addressing the overplanting of trees in some areas
- increasing the amount of wild flowers in the proposed wildlife areas; the young members of Manea could be involved in the planting.

The group would also like to see

- the provision of a pathway (using an appropriate material) between the roadway and each of the two picnic benches
- the provision of a Hide (this would provide a dry place where photographers and bird watchers could further their respective hobby)
- provision of more 'simple' benching to allow walkers, runners, and anyone coming to the pit to sit and enjoy the view over the water
- investigation into the 'building' of an insect area which would be aimed primarily at school children. Additionally, the sighting of hedgehog nest boxes, bat boxes, bird boxes etc. should be undertaken.

Mr Hindry informed the committee that the group is of the opinion that more needs to be done to inform the public of activities etc in relation to the pit area and community woodland/orchard.

The committee decided that the information reported be noted and that

- (1) the proposals presented by Mr Hindry be approved in principle (further discussion would be required in relation to the siting of additional benches and structures and costs for any works and structures would need to be obtained);

(2) the committee would consider, at its next meeting, developing an approach to communicating with the community.

### **PMC27/16 Wildlife at Manea Pit**

The Chairman invited all members of the committee to inform the committee of wildlife that they had witnessed within the pit and the woodland/orchard area.

Mr C Carson informed the committee that the owl box is now being used by Barn Owls and that the box currently contains a number of Barn Owl eggs. Other members reported having seen Kingfishers, a Woodpecker and a Roe Deer.

The committee decided that the situation be noted and that this matter would become a standing item on the agenda for future meetings of the Manea Pit Management Committee.

### **PMC28/16 Management Plan - improvement/development works and projects**

Further to minute PMC17/16, the committee considered the current situation regarding the maintenance of Manea Pit and its surroundings.

The Chairman invited the committee to consider the development of an a specific action plan for future maintenance works. He mentioned his awareness that some of the works which had been undertaken recently by work parties had received negative comment from some members of the local community and that the term "vandalism" had been used by some as a description of the works undertaken.

In response to the comments of the Chairman, Councillor Emery explained the works which had been undertaken recently and made the point that the maintenance of the Manea Pit is generally up-to-date. Mr Hindry mentioned the need to remove some overgrown vegetation (such as bind weed and ivy) at certain locations and Mr Hindry asked Mr Carson if he would look at the areas mentioned and advise. Mr C Carson proposed that works be undertaken (in November or December 2016) to reduce the height of the pole to which the owl box is affixed.

Councillor Emery expressed his appreciation of the repair work undertaken, free-of-charge to Manea Parish Council, by Mr S Payne to the access road to Manea Pit. The other members of the committee endorsed the comments of Councillor Emery.

The committee decided that the situation in general be noted and that only the improvement and development works agreed by this committee be undertaken.

### **PMC29/16 Manea Pit – Revision of the management plan**

Further to minute PMC18/16, the Chairman expressed his thanks to the three members of the committee who had submitted comments in relation to the content of the final draft version of the new Manea Pit Management Plan.

The Chairman proposed that further consideration of the plan be deferred until the outcome of the investigation by the Environment Agency in relation to the deaths of Carp is known (minute PMC24/16 refers).

Some members of the committee expressed the opinion that the plan should be recommended to Manea Parish Council for adoption without delay; Councillor Emery reminded the committee that the document had been approved for consultation purposes by Manea Parish Council early in 2015 and that the consultation exercise had concluded at the end of March 2015 with no comments being received from the public or any of the relevant agencies (which had included the Wildlife Trust).

With regard to the content of the plan, various views were expressed in relation to the value or otherwise in seeking to regain County Wildlife Status for Manea Pit.

The committee decided that it would agree, at its next meeting, a final version of the Manea Pit Management Plan, for recommendation to Manea Parish Council (for adoption).

### **PMC30/16 Manea Pit – Health and Safety**

The committee considered whether there are currently any health and safety issues relating to Manea Pit.

Further to minute PMC19/16, the Clerk reminded members that he had forwarded, on behalf of Mr A Clutton, the documentation used by the Manea Street Pride group in terms of addressing safeguarding issues.

Councillor Emery mentioned that work still needs to be undertaken to provide a handrail to one of the crossing points at the pit.

Mrs L Eves mentioned a recent incident of an adult male taking photographs of children at Manea Pit; the incident had been reported to the Police and the "photographer" had consequently received a visit from a Police Officer, who had given him words of advice in relation to his behaviour. Mrs Eves expressed the opinion that all persons who are undertaking activity, whether on a voluntary or paid basis, at Manea Pit should be vigilant and be prepared to challenge any incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Councillor Emery undertook to speak with the council's grounds maintenance contractor in this regard.

Mr M Hindry mentioned the need for repair work to the crossing point adjacent to the picnic area.

The committee decided that the situation be noted and that any works required to address health and safety issues be undertaken without delay.

### **PMC31/16 Finance review**

Further to minute PMC20/16, the Clerk informed the committee that income received (as at the beginning of this meeting; i.e. not including the sums mentioned at minute PMC32/16) in relation to Manea Pit for the financial year 2016/17 to date is £4,972.50 (made up of £4,450.00 from Carp Syndicate membership fees and £522.50 from the sale of fishing tickets) and the associated expenditure is £391.58 (made up of the cost of the visit by "otter fencing" contactor and the purchase of materials for maintenance works).

The Chairman commented that the information reported by the Clerk demonstrates that the income received by Manea Parish Council in relation to Carp fishing at Manea Pit makes a significant contribution towards the council's annual operating costs; if that income were "lost", the council would need to consider increasing the Parish Precept to "replace" that source of income.

The committee decided that the information reported by the Clerk and the comments of the Chairman be noted.

### **PMC32/16 Fishing and other pit users' issues**

Mr I Fost handed to the Clerk the sum of £164.00 in respect of the sale of fishing tickets. Mr A Cooper handed to the Clerk the sum of £320.00 in respect of Carp Syndicate membership fees.

No members of the committee had any matters to raise under this agenda item. The main concern currently is the issue mentioned at minute PMC24/16.

The committee decided that the situation be noted.

### **PMC33/16 Ouse Washes Landscape Partnership**

Further to minute PMC22/16, the Chairman mentioned the Manea Ouse Fest Day, which had taken place on 23 July 2016. He mentioned to the committee some of the activities which had taken place at Manea and expressed his disappointment at the low level of public attendance at the event; those who had not attended, missed a great day. The majority of the members of the committee feel that insufficient publicity had been given by the Ouse Washes Landscape Partnership project team to this event; they are of the opinion that most people in the village were unaware of the event.

Councillor Emery commented when Councillor Mrs Desborough, the Clerk and he had met, on 16 June 2015, with two officers of the Ouse Washes Landscape Partnership project team to finalise the arrangements for the Manea Ouse Fest Day, they had been informed that promotional material for the event would be produced by those officers, who would also be distributing leaflets around the village in advance of the event.

Some members of the committee expressed the opinion that many people who visit Manea are unaware of the location of Manea Pit and, therefore, consider that directional/tourism signage is required at appropriate locations on the approaches to the village and within the village.

It is not known, at this stage, whether there would be an Ouse Fest, organised by Cambridgeshire ACRE, in future years. The committee is of the opinion that if Ouse Fest does not continue, this committee and Manea Parish Council could work jointly to run an annual "Manea Pit Day".

The committee decided that the situation be noted and that District Councillor Buckton be requested to investigate the possibility of the provision of directional/tourism signage for Manea Pit.

### **PMC34/16 Next meeting**

The committee decided that the next meeting be held on 7 September 2016, commencing at 7.15 pm, at the British Legion Club, East Street, Manea.

**Meeting finished at 8.50 pm.**

Signature:.....(Committee Chairman)

Date.....