

BWAG Monthly Reports to Bredhurst Parish Council

February 2008

Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO)/ Byway Gates

The ETRO / installation of byway gates were introduced on 3 December 2007. These measures have proved effective in keeping non-authorized 4x4 vehicles and fly-tippers out of the Hurst, but we are still experiencing problems with off-road bikes and quads drivers that are lifting their vehicles over the horse barrier gate. It is virtually impossible to stop bike access where horses are allowed and BWAG has been assured by KCC that the style of gate supplied is the best currently available on the market. In addition, the ETRO now makes it an offence to use any vehicles without a valid permit on the byway. Members of legitimate off-road clubs who have applied for a permit are issued with the code to the combination lock and therefore enter the byway legally. However, any vehicle observed being lifted over the gate should be reported to the Police on **01622 690055**. The Police are being very supportive and have attended a number of incidences. We must therefore encourage the public/residents to report all incidences if we are to stop this problem.

Royal Engineers (Path Restoration / Fencing of Byway)

The Royal Engineers return to the Hurst on 18 February for one month. They will complete the re-surfacing of bridlepath KH56 and start work on adjacent paths. If time permits, they will work back along the byway towards Church, repairing the worst sections.

Fencing of the byway to restrict vehicle access to Bredhurst Hurst will be completed by 30 March.

Public Rights of Way will install 3 metal kissing gates (entrance to Day Valley / KH9 - entrance to Monkdown Wood / junction of KH52 with KH94) and 2 Horse Barrier gates (junction of KH56/KH94 and the woodcutters track / KH94) W/C 18 March.

Thanks also to Barry Callen & Jim Chalmers for repairing the stile at Day Valley.

Coppicing and Scrub Clearance

Scrub clearance debris will be removed by 8 February. The coppicing authorised by our initial Felling Licence (issued by the Forestry Commission) is nearly complete. Contractors will leave the site by 26 February 2008. Before they leave they will re-grade the track which they are using for access to the current coppice area and to reduce the height of the stack of timber, currently stored next to Arran Bank Stud Farm, by 50%.

Kent Wildlife Trust will lead a volunteer work party to erect fencing around the scrub clearance area W/C 18th February. Once in place, KWT Wiltshire Horn sheep will graze the area. This is needed to restore the overgrown and neglected area back to chalk grassland - a valued habitat for plant and wildlife. All volunteers to contact Vanessa Jones on 07813 785940 for more details.

- *BPC approved expenditure of up to £1000 for fencing materials.*

Charity Status

In October 07 Paul Fisher, Head of Corporate Law & Legal Services, MBC, advised BWAG to aim for charity status by April 08. He felt we had 'outgrown' our capacity as an Advisory Committee to BPC and by becoming a charity this would allow BWAG to develop further.

A draft constitution was unanimously agreed by the BWAG Committee on 5 Feb. It was agreed to put this document before BWAG Members at an AGM in mid-March (date tbc). This is the first step towards BWAG becoming a stand alone conservation charity. The constitution was drafted with help from Andrew Brown, Vice-President of BTCV. He provided advice on the content and legal requirements of our constitution.

- *The following steps were recommended to BPC:*
 - Set a date for a BWAG AGM in mid-March
 - Circulate copies of the constitution to members, inviting them to attend AGM
 - If constitution is agreed and adopted, submit application to the Charity Commission, requested that BWAG is granted charity status.

Signage & Interpretation

Rob Attwood is preparing the artwork for the BWAG interpretation signs. Agreed that ideally, boards should be purchased for both Day Valley and Strawberry Banks. In addition, a 'Welcome to Bredhurst Woods' for Scragged Oak entrance; a BWAG notice board at Hurstwood Road entrance; way-marking throughout the area and possibly, wooden name plates i.e. Strawberry Banks' etc. to be attached to all the relevant kissing gates.

Initial estimate of £1500 obtained for one interpretation board. Agreed, that although we have £500 towards signage from the Bredhurst WI that we will need to raise £5k - £6k to fully complete the project. BWAG to submit an application to Awards for All for funding.

Finance

Income and Expenditure.

Since BWAG was formed in 2005 we have raised in excess of £60,000. Current balance stands at £15,719.57 to which £1k from KCC Small Capital Grants and £1k from the Sustainable Development Fund will shortly be added, giving a total of £17,719.57. This funding has been secured by successful funding bids; membership fees; donations and fund raising events. Of the £17,719.57 we have committed expenditure of £9,100 - path restoration; £1,000 - scrub clearance; £2k - equipment still to be purchased and £500 from the WI towards interpretation. This leaves a working balance of £5119.57

Forthcoming Expenditure

Some grants previously awarded to BWAG are under spent. The grant awarded for the purchase of equipment has a balance of £1935.46 (Awarded £3890 and spent £1954.54). Agreed that we should proceed with the purchase of:

- A3 Printer (Epson R2400) at approx. £440 with remaining £60 of £500 allocated within the bid for this purchase to be spent on printer

- cartridges.
- GPS receivers - specific model still to be decided. Allocated £700 within bid. Committee recommended purchasing 3 units to a maximum value of £200 per unit.
- Magenta Bat Detectors. Allocated within bid £200. Committee recommended purchasing 2 units.

Also have £282 allocated for the purchase of torches/lighting.

- *Recommend above purchases to be authorised by BPC.*
- *Rob Attwood to investigate types of torches available and give recommendation at the next BWAG Committee Meeting*

7. Forthcoming Events / Meetings

BWAG Talks:

- 12 February, West Malling Rotary Club (VJ & Pam Newman)
- 13 February, Bredhurst WI (VJ & Pam Newman)
- 20 February, Bredhurst Garden Club (VJ, Ann Callen & Rob Attwood)

Events planned:

- 4 March. Adult Education Natural History Group visit to Bredhurst Hurst. Class will be plotting / measuring all veteran trees. BWAG members welcome to help. Meeting 10am in Hurstwood Road.
- 30 March. High Sheriff of Kent, Nigel Wheeler to visit Bredhurst Hurst. Will be meeting volunteers and officially opening newly renovated bridlepath. Details to be agreed with Bwag Committee.
- 20 April. Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group (KRAG) to conduct retile survey in Bredhurst Hurst and surrounding area. Meeting at 9.30 in Hurstwood Road.

Full details of all events can be found at www.bwag.org.uk or contact Vanessa Jones on 07813 785940 postmaster@vanessajones.plus.com