

# Brent Island Trust

## Newsletter, April 2020



### A Word from our Chairman

Apart from those who lived through the Second World War few of us will ever have experienced times quite as troubling as these. The Coronavirus pandemic will affect all of us in one way or another, and society as a whole, probably for many years to come. One consolation is that whatever happens, Brent Island will remain a place of quiet refuge, beauty and tranquility for those who need it. For the moment, if you have no signs of the virus and are continuing to go out and about, please feel free to visit The Island. But make sure you observe the rules over keeping your distance from others at all times – at least two metres - and stay at home if you have any of the published symptoms. We have asked the Dartmoor National Park Authority for advice, and the situation over public access may change in the coming days. We will advise members of any change and put up notices to inform the public.



As a result of the crisis we have sadly decided to cancel this year's Easter Egg Trail. I am sure this will disappoint many families, but it would have been impossible to organise without people coming into close contact. Better safe than sorry. We may also have to put our Annual General Meeting back to later in the year than usual. We had provisionally booked the Village Hall for Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> July, but it now seems more likely that it will take place in the Autumn. At the meeting we will be presenting members with a proposal to convert the Trust into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). This will enable the Trust to become the legal owner of The Island, and give greater protection for the Trustees - please see the item by our Treasurer, Felicity Ferry, later in this newsletter.

We have reluctantly called off our Spring working party, as once again this would have brought people into proximity with each other. Fortunately The Island is in good condition despite the rains of the past few months, but we will continue to monitor any urgent tasks which need tackling. We would ask dog owners to restrain their charges from digging holes in the Meadow, as these can present a danger to walkers.

We had planned to have a presence at the South Brent Climate Fair at the Village Hall in April but this also has had to be postponed, with a new suggested date of Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September, if conditions allow.

We will be doing all we can to care for The Island at this difficult time. Please take care of yourselves and may we wish all members good health and happiness and brighter times ahead, as we enjoy the arrival of the warmer weather of Spring.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Guy A. Pannell". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

### Membership Renewals

April is the month when membership subscriptions fall due. This newsletter will be accompanied by a letter explaining what action you need to take, if any. If you are a Life or Honorary Member, or pay by Standing Order, you need do nothing. If you pay by cash or cheque you will need to forward your remittance to our Membership Secretary, Graham Royle, whose details are on the letter. We much appreciate your continued support in caring for The Island.

## Change of Charitable Status

At the AGM (whenever that is) we will be asking the members to approve our taking steps to change the structure of the Trust into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). We will explain this further at the meeting and there is more information available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charity-types-how-to-choose-a-structure>.

The main benefit for us is that the CIO has a legal existence separate from the individual Trustees (who will continue to run it) and so it can own The Island itself rather than using the Official Custodian for Charities. Individual trustees will not have any personal liability for debts and liabilities of the CIO, so will have greater protection and peace of mind. Please contact us if you would like any more information before the AGM. The final decision to become a CIO will be subject to a vote of the membership at a special meeting when the details have been finalised.

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## Photo Monitoring Project

Back in 1999 a long-term project was started by our then Secretary Don Stansbury to take photographs at pre-defined locations and directions on The Island and to repeat that process every few years. After 1999 the next set of photographs was taken in 2000 followed by 2002 and 2009 and the aim was to take them at about the same time of year to simplify comparison. The results would illustrate changes in vegetation, tree cover, paths and other Island features over the decades. After a hiatus we restarted the project last year and the results from all five years are now on our website at [brentisland.org.uk](http://brentisland.org.uk). An example is in the three photos below which show the view along the path by the leat towards the sluice gate.



May 1999



June 2009

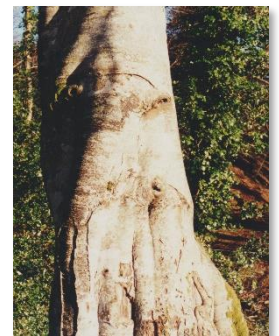


June 2019

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## Elephant Beech Update

Some visitors to The Island have been asking what will happen to the Elephant Beech Tree. We are pleased to report that we have had fruitful discussions with contractors who will be removing the fallen tree from the river and the far bank as soon as the weather allows – we need dry ground – and at very little cost to the Trust. We hope they can also move the tree trunk wedged on the weir. The photo shows the elephant's face emphasised by the sun's side-lighting.



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## American Skunk-cabbage

This plant has been growing in the leat for many years with annual cutting back by the scouts and others. While being rather attractive it is classed as invasive by the Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) as it can colonise and out-compete native plants along waterways. It spreads by seed and also via deep-rooted rhizomes which make it hard to eliminate – especially as chemical methods are inappropriate alongside the leat. Last year DNPA initiated a project to control it along with other invasive plants such as Himalayan Balsam and a team carried out some work around The Island. This year, of course, it sprung up again and so we've removed the new growth and flowerheads before they could set seed and be carried downstream. It's unlikely that we'll ever eliminate the plant from the leat, but we'll be satisfied if we can prevent its spread.



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## Contacts:

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