

**An extra-ordinary meeting of Priston Parish Council was held on Thursday 19 December 2002 in the Village Hall, Priston commencing at 8.30pm.**

**Attendance:**

Mr Hughes (Chair), Mrs Bowyer, Mr Hopwood, Mr Jones, Miss C Nokes, Ms Seymour and Parish Clerk. Village residents: Mr Barclay, Mr and Mrs Cross, Mr Harris, Mrs Hughes, Miss M Nokes and Mr Wilkinson.

**Apologies** received from Mr Perriton.

**Purpose of Meeting and Opening Remarks:**

Mr Hughes opened proceedings by advising that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the possible acquisition of the former colliery by the Parish Council. He continued by giving a brief history of how the parish boundaries were changed approximately 30 years ago which resulted in Priston retaining the colliery. The site has been recognised as being of great conservation interest and, following a recent site meeting with a landscape architect from the District Council, discussions are taking place regarding the possibility of it being designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest.

Mr Hughes continued by reporting that he had been in contact with the landowner, Mr Richard Lovegrove, who advised that he had received an offer of £12,000 but would accept £11,000. Enquiries had been made from the Heritage Lottery Fund who may be prepared to give a grant of 90% of the value. In this respect an independent valuation would have to be carried out.

The Chairman reminded the meeting of a residual balance in the Millennium Committee's accounts following publication of the Millennium Book and continued by advising that negotiations have taken place between himself and the officers of the Millennium Committee. It had been agreed that the committee would, if required, donate 10% towards the cost of the purchase of Priston Colliery.

Mr Hughes concluded his opening remarks by advising that Camerton Parish Council have undertaken a similar project and would be prepared to give support and advice.

**Open Discussion:**

It was generally felt by the meeting that the quoted price of £12,000 was in excess of the value of the piece of land in question. It was felt to be imperative that an independent valuation be carried out to obtain a realistic estimate of its value. Concern was also expressed by several councillors and residents on the safety aspect and the need to have adequate public liability insurance. Mr Hughes reassured the meeting that one shaft had been filled in and the other capped with concrete. The shafts and underground tunnels are the responsibility of the British Coal Board.

The problem of vandalism was raised but Mr Hughes advised that Mr Arnold had volunteered to monitor this possibility. It was unanimously agreed that the tenant farmer be requested to remove the heap of tyres which are at present stored on the site.

**Concluding Remarks:**

At the conclusion of the discussions and points raised it was generally agreed that it was important to obtain as much information as possible and to proceed with caution. Agreed that Mr Hughes should again contact Mr Lovegrove to make him aware that the Parish Council - subject to an independent valuation - would be prepared to make an offer, subject to contract.

Mr Hughes declared the meeting closed at 9.30pm by thanking Parish Councillors and residents for their attendance and interest.