

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Ilketshall St Andrew and St John Land Management Company Ltd. held at the Village Hall, Ilketshall St Andrew on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at 7.30 p.m.**

Present: Tim Basey-Fisher (TB-F) (Chairman)  
John Bedwell (JB) (Secretary)  
Rod Apps (RA)  
Gerald Godfrey (GG)  
Roo Lee (RL)  
Chris Roberts (CR)

There were 19 members of the public

**1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

1.1 The Chairman welcomed the public to the meeting, introduced the six Directors and outlined the evening's format.

**2. Minutes of AGM 19<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

2.1 The minutes of the AGM of 19<sup>th</sup> November 2018 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

**3. Matters Arising**

3.1 There were no matters arising.

**4. Chairman's Report**

4.1 This Report relates to the period since November 2018, since we decided to shift the Annual General Meeting of the Land Management Company from November to February of each year. We shifted the AGM primarily so that it would provide an opportunity for discussion of the Annual Management Plan, and in turn it was considered appropriate to have the Annual Management Plan starting in March each year.

4.2 November 2018 marked a significant change for the LMC for two reasons;

First, it marked the stepping-down of Adrian Sampson as Chair of the LMC. Adrian had been Chair of the LMC since its start, and had steered the LMC, and the Commons, through difficult times and chalked up a number of notable achievements – including the ending of the encampments on the Commons, the movement towards a strong financial position, and the County Wildlife Site status for the Commons. The current set of Directors is very conscious of the need to build on that legacy.

Second, it marked the movement towards a more difficult, and uncertain, funding position. The Higher Level Stewardship scheme will come to an end in January 2022, and the Commons will therefore only have a further 2 years of funding from this source. In practice, the Higher Level Stewardship scheme has been progressively wound down, with the number of organisations receiving funding from that source sharply reduced in recent years; the Commons have been lucky in that there has been the invitation to continue to participate in the scheme. The other main source of funding – the Basic Payment Scheme – is scheduled to be phased out, and ending in 2028. At the present time, it is very unclear what the size, and the nature, of any replacement schemes will be. However, the consensus is that the funding will be significantly reduced, and will be targeted at specific environmental projects and perhaps other conditions. It has to be recognised that the requirements for participation in future funding schemes may make it inappropriate for the Commons to join.

4.3 As a consequence, the future management of the Commons is going to be challenging. There is a need to recognise that funding of the Commons in the future is likely to be significantly reduced and will come with more onerous requirements than hitherto. The Commons are in the fortunate position of having a strong financial position at the current time – but care needs to be taken to ensure that there are funds to protect and maintain the Commons into the future in the manner that we would wish. Against this background, the LMC Board has committed to producing a Management Plan, to run from March each year.

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Signed Tim Basey-Fisher

Date 15/02/2021

This Plan will be produced in draft form to be then amended in the light of comments and suggestions from Commoners and Parishioners in the two Parishes. The Management Plan will therefore be updated each year to reflect the changing expectations of the Commoners and Parishioners in particular, but also the changing constraints imposed by funding restrictions, and so on.

4.4 Under the terms of the Constitution of the Land Management Company, the 6 Directors are re-elected each year – 3 from a joint meeting of the Parish Councils for Ilketshall St. Andrew and Ilketshall St. John, and 3 from the Commoners' Association. A little disappointingly, only 3 people put their names forward to the Parish Councils, and only 3 to the Commoners' Association. Those 6 were therefore automatically re-elected.

4.5 Turning to the major activities that the LMC has been involved with since the last Annual General Meeting in November 2018:

Chris Roberts will outline the main elements of the work undertaken on the Commons in his Report under Item 6 of the Agenda, and John Bedwell will outline the central features of the financial developments of the LMC in his Report under Item 4 of the Agenda. I would just like, though, to mention two other items relating to activities over the past year or so;

a) The Field Trip in June 2019. This was to Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Black Bourn Nature Reserve, near Ixworth. This former farm is in the process of "re-wilding", and whilst this is not something that is appropriate for our Commons, those who attended did come away with an appreciation of the value of thistles, brambles, etc., for wildlife.

b) The "work parties" that have been responsible for undertaking a range of work on the Commons over many years. Due to the particularly wet weather over the past few months, the "work parties" have not been as active as in previous years (although there is an intention to clear up following the recent winds). Several people have commented that the "work parties" are an important community activity, and the clear intention is to continue with these.

4.6 Let me now outline two of the major elements of what the LMC intends to do in the future.

a) We intend to undertake widespread consultation about what the Commons should constitute in the future. We therefore propose to consult with the Parishioners, and with the Commoners, regarding how they would like to see the Commons develop and managed in the future. This consultation will, of course, have to recognise the intrinsic nature of the Commons as common land, the rights of the Commoners, the CROW Act, and so forth – but ultimately, we want the Commons to develop in the way that people want. Inevitably, we cannot please everybody, but hope to achieve a consensus on the broad direction. In turn, the outcome of this consultation will be reflected in the draft Management Plan this time next year.

b) We have been working on a website for the Commons, and will be launching this soon. Chris Roberts will be outlining the general content of the site in his Report. Having a website will enable us to provide information about the Commons more easily, and to update everyone on all aspects of the Commons management.

The details of these intentions, and all the other intentions, are outlined in the draft Management Plan. They are, therefore, subject to amendment as a result of your comments and suggestions.

4.7 In conclusion, I would just say that I regard the Commons as a remarkable asset for the villages. At the current time, the Commons are in a strong financial position, but given the uncertainty around future funding arrangements, that position should not be taken for granted. Nevertheless, by everyone working together, the Commons can continue to be an exceptional asset and can develop – within the constraints – how you would like them to develop.

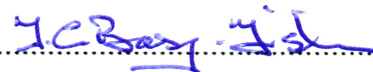
## 5. Financial Report

5.1 The Company started the year beginning 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 with £1,603 in the current a/c and £42,512 on deposit giving total funds of £44,115. During the year, the Company's income totalled £15,038 whilst expenditure totalled £8,001. Income from the Basic Payment System and Stewardship schemes was higher than normal because of retrospective payments from the Basic Payment System. Expenditure included cutting walks, haymaking, flailing ditches, hedges and pond frontages, a contribution towards the village defibrillator and replacement information boards. This resulted at the end of the financial year of £16,278 in the current a/c, unrepresented cheques £2,378 and £34,875 on deposit giving total funds of £48,774, an increase in funds over the year of £4,659.

5.2 The Board formally approved these accounts.

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Signed



Date

15/02/2021

## 6. Report on Works on the Commons

6.1 Due to the very wet winter not all planned works had been carried out except:

- a) fallen wood had been cleared from Great Common Lane
- b) trees opposite Pear Dyke had been cut back as they had been obstructing farm vehicles
- c) 3 bench seats had been installed and a further 2 were planned
- d) pond fronts had been kept open for all to enjoy
- e) Information Boards had been replaced
- f) the hay cut had been carried out between 1<sup>st</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> July with the late cut on 20<sup>th</sup> August
- g) paths had been cut 6 times during the growing season
- h) hedge cutting, (4½km in total), and flailing had been carried out in the autumn

6.2 The bird recording scheme had now been carried out for 9 years and the sightings were showing important trends. New recorders were always welcome

6.3 A Commons website will be launched in the spring and will contain information on, amongst other things, the management plan, history of the commons, maps of walks, a gallery, links to other relevant websites and items of news, and it was hoped that this website will provide an insight into all LMC activities.

## 7. Presentation to Doug Hackett

7.1 Doug Hackett resigned from the Board of the LMC at the end of July. T B-F presented Doug with a book token in recognition of his work for the LMC over 10 years and in particular his organising of the annual field trips and submission of the BPS and HLS applications each year.

**This concluded the formal business of the AGM.**

## 8. Raffle and Open Discussion

- 8.1 There were a number of prizes relating to bird feeding in the raffle.
- 8.2 There were a number of queries from the floor regarding future funding, commoner's rights and a request for future field trips to be held at weekends, but nothing requesting amendments to the Draft Management Plan.
- 8.3 The only topic that produced an animated discussion was the provision of dog poo bins. There were a number of differing views as to their need but the majority view was that they should not be provided on the grounds that they were unsightly and that dog owners should be prepared to pick-up and take it home.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 21.00 hours.

J Bedwell  
Secretary  
21<sup>st</sup> February 2020

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Signed

*JCB*

Date

15/02/2021