

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Ilketshall St Andrew and St John Land Management Company Ltd. held in the Village Hall on 20th February 2023 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 35 members of the public

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

1.1 The Chairman welcomed the public to the meeting and outlined the evening's format.

2. Minutes of AGM 14th February 2022

2.1 The minutes of the AGM of 14th February 2022 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

3. Chairman's Report

3.1 Due to the Covid pandemic, the Annual General Meetings of the Land Management Company in 2021 and 2022 were held by 'Zoom'. I, and the rest of the Board, particularly welcome the return to holding the AGM in the Village Hall and therefore to be able to report on the work of the Board over the past year, and to receive feedback and suggestions on the draft Management Plan, from a greater number of people.

3.2 In overall terms, the Board was able to achieve the vast majority of the objectives outlined in the Management Plan for March 2022 – February 2023.

3.3 A significant activity on the Commons each year is the hay cut. Due to the very hot weather during the summer of 2022, this took place slightly later than is normal, and also resulted in a smaller yield (particularly in relation to the yield in 2021). The quality of the hay was, nevertheless, generally good.

3.4 10% of the Commons is allocated to the "overwintering areas", meaning that these areas are *not* cut at the same time as the rest of the Commons (that is, late June/early July), but instead is left over the winter and then cut at some point after the end of the following February. Due to the high levels of rainfall in March 2022, the overwintering areas could not be cut until later than the Board would have wished.

3.5 Some of the routine work on the Commons was disrupted by the hot weather, since the fire risk made it unsafe, for example, to undertake a certain amount of work when it would otherwise have been appropriate to do so. The very hot weather also meant that the water levels in the ponds on the Commons fell to noticeably low levels, and while this is not necessarily detrimental to wildlife, the survey of the ponds that is scheduled to be undertaken in June this year will provide a view as to what the impact has been. Other routine work has included the clearance of ditches and bunds of willows and other saplings, and the maintenance of the ditches and bunds themselves, in line with the Management Plan. Vehicular gateways, and pedestrian access points, have been repaired as required, and fallen trees have been removed as necessary. The Board acknowledges, and thanks, the contribution from volunteers in order to complete much of this work.

3.6 The costs of these activities, and all the other activities undertaken by the Land Management Company, have been monitored carefully and the total expenditures during the year ended up being broadly in line with the income for the year. The income to the Land Management Company was less than it has been previously, due to reductions in the income from the government's Basic Payment Scheme, and this progressive reduction will continue until the Scheme runs out completely in 2027.

3.7 Funding remains a concern for the Board, since it is difficult to see how expenditures can be reduced to any significant extent from what they are, given the need to maintain the grassland, hedges, ponds and trees, but the income from the BPS will continue to fall. The Company was invited to continue its participation in the EIS/ILS scheme for a further 5 years (from January 2023), and decided to do so – and therefore the income from that source will continue until January 2028, although the payments will be

1 Signed Y. B. Fisher

Date 19/02/2024

frozen and therefore will decline in real terms due to the effects of inflation. The government is still experimenting with the post-Brexit funding arrangements for agriculture, and much uncertainty remains. At the current time, there will not be *any* income coming to the Commons after 2028, since at that point both the Basic Payment Scheme, and the ELS/HLS, will have run out completely. The Board will continue to take advice regarding funding opportunities to replace these schemes, and potentially switch to, or join, such schemes prior to 2028. Fortunately, the Commons are in a sound financial position at the current time, but the Board is very aware of the need to take a long-term view in order to preserve the Commons for future generations.

3.8 The Board has made available its intentions for the next year in the draft Management Plan for March 2023-February 2024. Some comments and suggestions relating to that draft have been received, and along with contributions from the later part of this meeting, will be reflected in amendments to the draft. The Board intends to publish the final version of the Management Plan for next year before the end of the month.

3.9 The Board recently obtained approval from the Parish Councils, and the Commoners' Association, to increase the maximum number of Directors from 6 to 8. The central purpose behind this change is to try to ensure that there is a minimum of disruption to the work of the Board as a consequence of people retiring, and also to ensure that there are new people joining the Board. I therefore have pleasure in welcoming two new members to the Board – Lea Ingham and Jack Poulden.

3.10 Overall, the Board believes that it has had another successful year. Subject to any amendments to the Management Plan, it intends to continue with its activities next year in much the same way as last year, and hopes that the various stakeholders in the Commons will support it in doing so.

4. Financial Report

4.1 The financial report was for the year ending 30th September 2022.

4.2 The Company started the year beginning 1st October 2021 with £6691.22 in the current a/c and £61703.32 on deposit giving total funds of £68394.54. During the year, the Company's income, mostly from the Basic Payment System and Stewardship schemes, totalled £16032.64 whilst expenditure totalled £8794.79. Expenditure included cutting walks, haymaking, spraying thistles, flailing ditches, hedges and pond frontages and maintaining accesses to the commons. At the end of the financial year there was £13283.38 in the current a/c and £62349.01 on deposit giving total funds of £75632.39. However, that is not so rosy as it sounds since half the Basic Payment System for 2022 which we normally receive at the end of December was paid in advance and there are outstanding bills in the pipeline and income for the current financial year will be reduced.

4.3 The Board formally received and approved the accounts.

4.4 With the accounts approved, they will now be loaded onto the LMC's website so that they are available for public perusal.

This concluded the formal business of the AGM.

5. Open Discussion of Draft Management Plan (DMP)

5.1 RA introduced the DMP which he said was much the same as last year.

5.2 There was a query about rotating the overwintering areas. The reason for having permanent areas was explained.

5.3 There was some discussion about funding from other DEFRA schemes and the need for surveys to provide evidence for such schemes.

5.4 RA stated that the LMC will now consider all comments received about the DMP and the finalised plan will be published by the end of February.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 20.20 p.m.

J Bedwell
Secretary
24th February 2022

2

Signed

Y. B. [Signature]

Date

19/02/2024