

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Ilketchall St Andrew and St John Land Management Company Ltd. held in the Village Hall on 17th February 2025

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

There were 17 members of the public

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

1.1 The Chairman welcomed all.

2. Minutes of AGM 19th February 2024

2.1 The minutes of the AGM of 19th February 2024 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

3. Chairman's Report

3.1 On behalf of the Board, I am very pleased to be able to report on the activities of the Land Management Company over the past 12 months.

I recognise that people will have gained a quantity of information about the Commons from the Commons Newsletters, and from the Commons website, during the year – in addition to the draft Management Plan – and so what I am going to report is just a summary of the more significant issues and developments over the past year.

3.2 Overwintering Areas and Grass

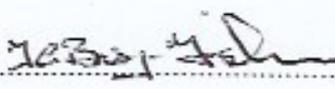
When I reported to the AGM at this time last year, I noted the likelihood that some of the plans for the management of the Commons would be disrupted by weather conditions. This proved to be the case, and the persistent wet weather meant that the intention to cut the overwintered areas shortly after the end of February 2024 had to be abandoned due to the ground being too wet. The overwintered areas were cut in July, and in turn new overwintered areas were identified to replace them.

A number of smaller areas of the Commons, including parts of Tooks Common and Little Common, have been used as overwintered areas in the past, and it has also been difficult to cut these areas at the appropriate time. Some of these areas had started to become overgrown, and so the decision was taken to not use these areas for overwintering purposes in future. This will allow greater flexibility around when the grass is cut, and help to prevent them becoming overgrown. The details of the areas involved is in the draft Management Plan.

Although the summer in 2024 was generally cool and wet, the cutting of the hay on the Commons was not unduly affected, with the majority being cut in early July. The quality, and the yield, were broadly in line with previous years. The Board is immensely grateful to Matthew and Mark Godfrey, along with Mike and Linda Frost, for completing this work at what is a busy time of year in the farm calendar.

3.3 Sheep

This time last year, many people will recall that there was a flock of sheep on Great Common, as part of an experiment to see if sheep could be useful in clearing the overwintered areas and in reducing costs associated with cutting the grass. Feedback from people in the villages was almost universally positive, with people enjoying seeing the sheep. However, the sheep were not particularly good at clearing the overwintered areas. Investigations into longer-term possibilities for placing sheep on the Commons were investigated during 2024, and concluded that it would not be worthwhile. Restrictions on the amount of Common land that could be fenced off for grazing meaning that only a small element could be used on a long-term basis, which would not be worthwhile for sheep owners. This, along with the cost and time required to secure the necessary permit, led to the Board deciding to discontinue the project.

I Signed 

Date 16/02/26

3.4 Finance.

In overall terms, the financial position of the Land Management Company is much the same as when I reported last year. The expenditure of the company was broadly in line with income over the past financial year, and therefore the total assets are similar to last year. However . . . the position is still that the funding for the LMC is scheduled to end entirely in 2027. The replacement schemes that the company can apply for are still in a state of flux to some extent, but the Board is actively monitoring developments and will be taking professional advice regarding the schemes that it would be appropriate to join prior to the end of the existing schemes in 2027. It remains the case, however, that the amount of funding available will be less than what has been received in the past, and therefore the company will have to be very careful about its expenditures in future years.

3.5 Encroachments

The Board of the LMC has expended a significant amount of time and effort during the past year on confirming boundaries of properties in relation to the Commons and in seeking to avoid any losses of Common land due to encroachment. In this regard, the board of the LMC has been pursuing its "zero tolerance" approach towards any encroachment, which has been highlighted in the Management Plans for previous years in addition to the draft Management Plan for this year. At its AGM last week, the Commoners' Association confirmed that it strongly supported efforts to deter encroachment and incursion. The Board fully intends to continue with this approach, and would welcome discussion of the issue later in the meeting.

3.6 Changes to the Board

Lea Ingham resigned from the Board of the LMC during the year.

The Commoners' Association at its meeting last week nominated Carol Bromley and June Hall to become Directors. At the current time, Carol Bromley is pursuing a claim for "adverse possession" of a piece of land on Great Common, and the Board has decided that this constitutes a significant conflict of interest. As a consequence, the Board has therefore decided that it cannot accept the nomination of Carol Bromley as a Director of the LMC, since this would, under the terms of the Companies Act (2006), run contrary to the statutory duties and responsibilities that all company directors are required to adhere to. Once the claim for "adverse possession" of the piece of land has been resolved, it is hoped that she would then be able to join the Board.

On behalf of the Board, I welcome June Hall to the Board, which will mean that there will be 7 Directors.

3.7 The Draft Management Plan

The Board has made available its intentions for the next year in the draft Management Plan for March 2025 - February 2026, which is available on the Commons website. 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.

3.8 In conclusion: subject to any amendments to the Management Plan and challenges that the weather may throw at us, the Board 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. To Receive the Statement of Accounts for year ended 30 September 2024

4.1 The Director's Report and Accounts for the year ended 30 September 2024 were considered, received and approved.

4.2 The relevant details will now be lodged with Companies House by our accountants Lovewell Blake, and a copy will be loaded onto the LMC's website for public perusal.

2

Signed *J. Bromley*

Date 16/02/26

5. Open Discussion of Draft Management Plan (DMP)

There were a number of topics addressed by the meeting.

5.1 Why was the grazing by sheep not continued?

It was explained that the earlier grazing had not followed the relevant procedures and had in effect been illegal. The paperwork necessary for permission to graze was burdensome and only 10% of the commons could be grazed. This small area of 7 acres could not be rotated around the commons so was not attractive to a grazier. Furthermore, the fencing had been subject to vandalism and theft.

5.2 What about drainage in the village?

The LMC was not responsible for drainage after any water left the commons. It was pointed out that the results of soil sampling carried out by the LMC this year had shown that the commons soil had a high organic content and therefore was able to store large amounts of water.

Work had been carried out to remove water on the road near The Mardle. A larger gully had been dug out and the sill at the West corner which controlled the level in The Mardle had been cleared.

The flooding in School Road was being addressed. A recent site visit had shown that if a pipe was inserted under the Glebe Farm track, this would drain the water into the ditch that led to the Glebe Farm Pond. It is planned to carry out this work once water levels had dropped sufficiently. The site visit had not been possible until the owners of Glebe Farm had left the village.

5.3 What was the LMC doing about encroachment of common land?

The LMC was in the process of establishing the boundaries of the commons and was taking a "zero tolerance" approach to any attempt to appropriate or prevent access to common land.

They had removed the yellow posts that had been preventing access to the Glebe Farm track.

As mentioned in the Chairman's report Carol Bromley is pursuing a claim for adverse possession of common land in front of her property and the LMC is contesting this claim.

Also, the LMC has identified that Glebe Farm has enclosed an area of common land. This was done many years ago so it would not oppose a claim for adverse possession and has encouraged the owners of Glebe Farm to make such a claim. So far, they have refused to do so. If there has been no progress by 21st March, then the LMC intends to claim back the area of land in question.

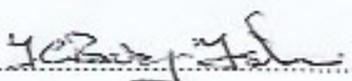
Further, the LMC has identified vehicles situated on common land that are not roadworthy but are being used for storage. The LMC is pursuing their removal as there is a likelihood that an adverse possession claim in respect of these vehicles after a number of years could result in common land being lost.

It was noticeable that there was no dissent at the meeting regarding the "zero tolerance" approach to encroachments.

Once the boundaries of the commons had been settled, there was a possibility that registering ownership of the commons could be considered.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 20.30 p.m.

J Bedwell
Secretary
22nd February 2025



16/02/2025