

## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Ilketshall St Andrew and St John Land Management Company Ltd. held in the Village Hall on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Present: Tim Basey-Fisher (TB-F) (Chairman)  
John Bedwell (JB) (Secretary)  
Rod Apps (RA)  
Gerald Godfrey (GG)  
Lea Ingham (LI)  
Jack Poulden (JP)  
Chris Roberts (CR)

There were 30 members of the public

### 1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

1.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Roo Lee (RL).

### 2. Minutes of AGM 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023

2.1 The minutes of the AGM of 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023 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. Over the year, the Board has faced two major challenges. Both of these challenges will doubtless be significant in future years also.

3.2 Like any agricultural operation, the LMC is facing issues associated with climate change and extreme weather. Over the year, the very high levels of rainfall have made it difficult – and sometimes impossible – to undertake work on the Commons as was planned.

As an example: records for rainfall during 2022 show we had 474mm throughout the year, whilst in 2023 we experienced 733mm. That's an increase of some 55%.

The wet weather up to the end of February 2023 meant that the Commons were very wet, and it was not possible to get machinery onto the Commons in order to cut the overwintered areas before significant growth of the grass started again and the start of the birds nesting season.

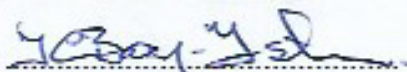
Naturally, the hope at that time – and is now – that we will be able to cut the overwintered areas soon after the end of February this year, in order to avoid leaving the areas uncut for too long. However, at the current time, it looks very likely that the ground will again be too wet.

Other activities on the Commons have generally been completed, such as cutting of the permissive pathways round the commons and the clearing of overhanging vegetation although often with difficulty and at unusual times, due to the weather.

We have also completed a survey of all the ponds to check that our Management Plan is improving the water quality and the wildlife within the ponds. This survey is also posted on the Ilketshall Commons website along with details of the other work completed over the past year.

3.3 The past year has seen a further decline in the income coming to the Commons from DEFRA. This decline will continue, and at the current time all income will cease in January 2028. Over the past year, the expenditure by the LMC was greater than its income by approximately £2,000. As a consequence of the careful accumulation of reserves in previous years, the LMC is in a strong position to be able to absorb some excess expenditure, but clearly it cannot do so indefinitely. The Board is therefore looking at ways of reducing its expenditure, and also continually monitoring developments in funding opportunities to replace the schemes that the Commons are currently members of, when these schemes expire in 2028.

3.4 People may have noticed a flock of sheep on Great Common recently. This is a trial project, to see if the sheep can graze the overwintered areas and therefore – perhaps – avoid the need for cutting of these areas which will be difficult or impossible in the wet conditions. In addition to being a way of getting over the problem of putting machinery onto the Commons, those sheep also do not carry the costs associated with grass-cutting machinery, and therefore represent a potential cost reduction. The



17/02/2025

Board will investigate the possibility of using sheep – and other animals, possibly – on a more widespread basis as means of lowering costs.

- 3.5 Despite those challenges, I believe that the LMC has had a very successful year, and has achieved the majority of the objectives set out in the 2023-24 Management Plan. The Board has had the benefit of two additional Directors over the past year – Lea Ingham and Jack Poulden – and their expertise and viewpoints have been a welcome addition. Nevertheless, all the Board members are volunteers and therefore it has not always been possible to complete objectives in the target period, given the time constraints that Board members operate under.
- 3.6 The Board has made available its intentions for the next year in the Draft Management Plan for March 2024-February 2025, 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.
- 3.7 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. Financial Report

- 4.1 The financial report was for the year ending 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023.
- 4.2 The Company started the year beginning 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022 with £13283.38 in the current a/c and £62349.01 on deposit giving total funds of £75632.39. During the year, the Company's income, mostly from the Basic Payment System and Stewardship schemes, totalled £11595.05 whilst expenditure totalled £14010.05. Expenditure included cutting walks, haymaking, spraying thistles, flailing ditches, hedges and pond frontages and maintaining accesses to the commons. We put more money on deposit so at the end of the financial year there was £2925.03 in the current a/c and £70667.12 on deposit giving a total £73217.39 a decrease in funds over the year of £2550.27. Tim has mentioned the uncertainties of future funding in his report so I don't need to dwell on that now.
- 4.3 The Board had approved these accounts at the Board meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024. 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.

#### 5. Open Discussion of Draft Management Plan (DMP)

- 5.1 For information, T B-F gave a brief history of the setting up of the LMC. A proposal to allow all residents to appoint parishioner directors to the LMC was deemed impracticable, it was the function of the Parish Council as its members represented all residents.
- 5.2 There were complaints that possible volunteers not being made aware of work parties. It was explained that usually work parties were scheduled at short notice and only those volunteers with the relevant skills could be used.
- 5.3 There was a discussion of 'lawnisation' and the need for sympathetic cutting of those bits of common fronting some properties.
- 5.4 There was discussion about future funding and the uncertainty surrounding Sustainable Farming Incentives (SFIs).
- 5.5 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.

This concluded the formal part of the evening.

The AGM had been preceded by a talk given by Dr. Emily Winter on the work of the River Waveney Trust and was followed by a short talk by Anne Law and Polly McCarthy on keeping bees on Mill Common, which in turn was followed by a raffle.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 21.20 p.m.

J Bedwell  
Secretary  
29<sup>th</sup> February 2024

*JCB*

17/02/2025