

The Thoburn Land Trust.

Minutes of a meeting of the Thoburn Land Trust

held at 7.00pm on Monday 17 February 2025 in Rolvenden Village Hall

Present: Councillors: A. Hinge (Chair), H. Back, C. Balch, E Barham, S. Bryant,

In attendance: Louise Goldsmith, Parish Clerk.

1. Apologies for absence:

An apology for absence was received from Cllr. Geerts and the reason for absence was accepted.

2. Declarations of interest:

Cllr. Barham declared an interest in the residual S106 funds.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 11 December 2024 were approved and signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

4. Finance

a) To receive information on the accounts

It was noted that the situation remains the same and neither the Clerk nor Councillors have access to the bank account. The balance as at the 11 December 2024 was £1,664.13. The Clerk was asked to find out if the tenant has paid the annual rent for the grazing contract and if necessary, issue an invoice. The Clerk is also unable to check that the allotment rent due has been paid.

b) To receive an update on the new mandate

It was noted that the previous Chair of the Parish Council had prepared and signed a new mandate to remove all the previous Councillors and to add the Clerk as an administrator and Cllrs. Hinge and Balch as signatories. It was noted that the new mandate has been signed and submitted to the Unity Bank but not yet processed. It was noted that the Councillors therefore still do not have control of the bank account. The Clerk will attempt to contact Unity Bank and the previous Chair of the Parish Council to find out when the application will be processed.

c) Accountability and Charitable Status

The Trust is not currently registered with the Charity Commission because it does not meet their minimum annual income threshold of £5,000.00. However, the Clerk is hopeful that the S106 grant will be accepted as income meaning that the Trust could be registered with the Charity Commission. The Clerk advised that any application needs to be accompanied by accounts or a bank statement showing the income.

5. Future use of the Land

a) To receive an update on S106 Funding

The Clerk reported that ABC has approved the allocation of £9,500.00 for capital expenditure for informal green spaces from application 13/00755/AS, Halden Fields. The Clerk has signed the funding agreement and the Parish Council should receive the funds in the next 5 working days. It was agreed that the Parish Council should not send the S106 funds to the Thoburn Land Trust bank account full control of the account has been achieved.

b) To receive an update from CLM

Baseline Survey.

It was noted that CLM have carried out a desk-based Constraints and Opportunities Assessment and have reviewed various designation, ecological, soil, geological and historic environment data sets. The next step is for CLM to visit the site in the Spring to confirm habitat classifications and to carry out an assessment of the trees.

Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI)

CLM has prepared one option for the land for obtaining the SFI. The proposal includes creating three areas where livestock are excluded and which are not cut. Scrub will be left to develop in these areas and a lowland wildflower meadow would be created in another area. The remainder of the land would be managed as very low input grassland and the pond would be part of a management plan. As currently drafted the SFI agreement would be worth approximately £4,300.00 per annum which would be paid quarterly by the RPA. Cllr. Barham explained that a substantial amount of fencing, costing in the region of £3,000.00, would be needed and that grant funding for this type of scheme has now been withdrawn. It was agreed that the cost of this option could therefore be prohibitive. Cllr. Barham also advised that the scheme will need to be managed and that PROW at KCC will need to be consulted regarding the footpaths that cross the area.

It was suggested and agreed that the Clerk should ask CLM to provide alternative schemes to include an option to leave the land as it is and to include some options for walkers such as mobility gates and oak tree benches. Residents will then be consulted on all the options at a public event.

Rural Payments Agency Registration

CLM has advised that the Councillors need to set up the Trust as a Single Business Identifier (SBI) with the Rural Payments Agency (RPA). The Clerk advised that the previous Chair had already registered the Trust with the RPA. It was resolved to take all necessary steps to take full control of the RPA registration.

c) To discuss the next steps

Land Registry: It was agreed to check with the Land Registry the registration details for the two parcels of land, (title number K806834 for the parkland and K957751 for the parking area), prior to considering further action to enforce the restrictive covenants in the car park.

6. Publication of Future Agendas and Minutes

The Clerk suggested that both agendas, minutes and updates are published on the Parish Council website or a dedicated website. It was agreed that 'The Thoburn Land' could be a sub heading on the main Parish Council website. As members of the public do not attend the meetings it was agreed to publish just approved minutes on the website.

7. Date of the next meeting:

To be held on either the 9 or 10 April 2025 at 7.30pm. Clerk to confirm.

The meeting closed at 8.12pm

Signed:

Date: