

The Thoburn Land Trust.

Minutes of a meeting of the Thoburn Land Trust

held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 11 December 2024 in Rolvenden Village Hall

Present: Councillors: A. Hinge (Chair), E Barham, M. Geerts, M. Gilchrist

In attendance: Louise Goldsmith, Parish Clerk.

1. Apologies for absence:

An apology for absence was received from Cllr. Balch 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 22 October 2024 were approved and signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

It was noted that the Clerk has advised the current grazing tenant that the Trustees are unable to offer any further extension of tenure after the 31 December 2025. The tenant has responded to advise that they can be flexible and would be happy to continue to rent the land beyond the 31 December 2025 if this is an option.

4. Finance

a) To receive information on the accounts

The balance as at the 11 December 2024 is £1,664.13.

b) To approve and sign a new bank mandate

It was noted that the Clerk is in the process of trying to get the mandate signed.

5. Future use of the Land

a) To review the quote for land management services

It was noted that three land management companies were approached to provide a proposal for the preparation of a management plan to include providing advice on the availability of appropriate grant funding, the future management of the land and a public consultation exercise. A site visit with CLM took place on the 8 November 2024 and a proposal has since been received. CLM has advised that approximately £1,500.00 to £2,500.00 per annum could be generated from a Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) agreement and that grants could be available for installing fencing and gates. It was noted that the current tenant pays rent of

just £900.00 per annum. The Trust is not currently registered with the Charity Commission because it does not meet their minimum annual income threshold of £5,000.00 so the generation of more income is an important factor. It was noted that CLM estimate the cost of carrying out a baseline survey and a public consultation leading to the preparation of a management plan and assistance with grant applications to be in the region of £8,000-9,500.00 (excluding VAT). Cllr. Barham suggested that certain aspects of the project, such as the preparation and submission of grant applications, could be undertaken by the Trustees which would save money.

b) To receive an update on possible S106 funding

It was noted that at the last meeting the Clerk was asked to find out if S106 funding from the allocation for capital expenditure for informal green spaces from application 13/00755/AS, Halden Fields, could be used to pay for this specialist advice and ongoing support. ABC has responded to an informal application to advise that the proposed project would fit the restriction of spend from the S106 Agreement and have invited the Parish Council to submit an application to draw down the funding.

c) To discuss the next steps

It was agreed to instruct CLM to carry out the baseline surveys and public consultation and to prepare a management plan.

It was agreed to formally request the Parish Council to submit an application to ABC to draw down S106 funding to pay for these works.

6. Date of the next meeting: TBC