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**LENHAM MEADOWS TRUST**

**MINUTES OF AGM HELD 7.30pm Thursday 23rd May 2024 at the Dog & Bear Function Room**

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chairman, Danny Matthews, opened the meeting by thanking everyone for attending and welcoming them to the 5th Lenham Meadows Trust Annual General Meeting. He introduced team members and guest speaker Dan Tuson of Natural England.

**APPROVAL OF LAST YEAR’S AGM MINUTES**

* Proposed by Angela Flint
* Seconded by Ken Obbard
* There were no comments raised and the Chairman signed off the Minutes of the 2023 AGM as a true record.

**CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**

The Chairman reminded attendees of the core objectives of the Trust; to promote the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment in and around Lenham. Steady progress had been made over the past year to enhance the green spaces owned or managed by the Trust for the benefit of our local community.

**Glebe Pond**

Glebe Pond was the first Trust project and regarded as its jewel in the crown. Recent grass-cutting and general maintenance has resulted in the pond looking at its best. Ducks and other wildfowl occupy the pond and are well fed by residents. The Chair reminded visitors to use only properly balanced duck food, available from the Lenham Farm shop in the village square.

Following a recent tree survey, potentially dangerous dead or dying trees had been identified and either removed or pruned. The remaining stumps had been carved by chainsaw expert Les Langley and had been welcomed by visitors to the pond. More carvings are expected shortly.

**Jubilee Garden**

A great deal of work had been carried out to remove dead ivy-covered trees, which had resulted in opening up the view of the church and tithe barn from the garden. Two flowering cherry trees had been planted in recent weeks along with a number of perennial shrubs, grasses, seedlings and hedging plants. Over 150 bulbs had resulted in a colourful display of daffodils and bluebells over the spring. It had been good to see that more and more residents were using the garden.

Weeding and the spread of wood-chippings around the two benches had improved access for visitors. A toolbox had been installed where garden tools can be stored. The Chairman asked that any spare garden tools be donated to the Trust for use on clean-up days.

**Land North of the Cemetery**

Work continues to manage this land on behalf of Lenham Parish Council with the intention of turning it into a wildflower meadow.

**Kettle Meadow**

The Chairman reported the acquisition of this ancient, beautiful wildflower meadow at Lenham Heath. A maintenance programme was being finalised and action was pending to carry out initial work. It is the intention to involve the local community in this project. The Trust was successful in its application for a grant of £500 to help with the costs of repairs and improvements to the Meadow.

**Working with local schools**

The Trust continues to work with local schools and groups and plans to create an educational role to interact with young people in the village.

**Working with developers**

Work continues, alongside Lenham Parish Council, to try to engage with developers to acquire green open spaces which the Trust could either purchase or manage for the benefit of the community. This was proving to be a difficult challenge as developers were reluctant to commit to donating land to the Trust until planning applications had been approved, then they tend to ignore calls for meeting with the Trust once planning is held. Many local developments had been ‘on hold’ because of the ‘Stodmarsh’ nutrient problem, but the Trust will continue to do all it can to improve engagement.

**Conclusion**

The Chair concluded by thanking all members, volunteers, Trustees and management team members for their hard work and support over the past year and encouraged other villagers to get involved with the Trust.

**TREASURER’S REPORT**

Valerie Woollven (Treasurer) took the meeting through the financial report, copies of which had been circulated to the Trustees and Management Team and to those attending the AGM. Total funds (to 31 December 2023) were just under £18k, down from £21.7k last year. This reflected the increasing cost of maintaining the Trust’s lands and a drop in donations. The Apple Pressing event continued to be a major source of income - £2.7k in 2023.

**MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

David Jackson, Membership Co-ordinator, reported a slight drop in members, currently standing at 62. Despite reminder letters sent to members for renewals and mail-drops throughout the new estates in Lenham, it was proving difficult to encourage new members. Details on how to join the Trust were published in the Lenham Focus each month. Trustees were conscious that specific events for members might help improve the membership, but this needed an ‘events manager’ and, as yet, it had not been possible to recruit a volunteer to this role.

It was intended to offer free membership to the Trust for a 2-year period to those who contributed to the purchase of Kettle Meadow in recognition of their donating the land to the Trust.

Duck food sales raised £170 in the last 12 months and continues to be available at 50p per bag from the Lenham Farm Shop.

**FUTURE PLANS AND EVENTS**

* The Trust is in the final negotiation stage of taking control of a new piece of land some 3-4 acres in size just outside the Parish boundary. The constitution had been amended to allow for this.
* The popular Apple Pressing Fun Day will be repeated this year on 13 October 2024. Details will be publicised. Volunteers to help with the organisation of the event are needed.
* A ‘Big Help Out’ day will be held on 9 June 2024 where all villagers are encouraged to spend a couple of hours to help with maintenance of the Trust’s lands. Meet at Glebe Pond between 11am and 2pm; bring tools and gloves.

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**PRESENTATION BY DAN TUSON, NATURAL ENGLAND**

Dan talked about the various grassland projects throughout east Kent, the re-seeding of wild flowers to encourage insects, birds, bats and other wildlife back to our locality, and explained how Natural England works in cooperation with other conservation groups and Trusts to improve the environment across the land.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending, inviting them to participate in some light refreshments

**THE MEETING CLOSED AT 9.30 pm**