

## **West Kent Downs Countryside Trust**

### **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2013 in the private room at the Cock Inn, Luddesdowne**

The meeting opened at 8.00 pm, minutes taken by Mike Adams.

1. Sixteen members attended, apologies for absence: Marja Kingma, Ken Law
2. Minutes of the last AGM on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2012 were read and approved.

#### **3. Chairman's Report**

A copy of the Chairman's report had been supplied to all members with the AGM notification and Roger gave an abbreviated account, then invited questions. Eddie asked how the PIG group was proceeding, Roger replied with a brief summary of progress in the last year. Simon pointed out that meetings of the PIG group had not been necessary since the practical work required in the orchard was clearly defined and required no further discussion.

Eddie asked about progress on the new Management Plan, Mike replied that Curtis had it in hand but had been very busy with his business. However he had found time to deal with a planning application for us. It was agreed that since the lack of a plan was not holding up current work we were not inclined to push Curtis.

Eddie referred to the extraction of a few large sycamores by Andy Baylis from Site 1 without payment for them and enquired whether the Trustees had attempted to get a better deal. Roger and Mike replied that they had investigated the value of standing sycamores and had discovered that they are worth very little where extraction is difficult. It was felt that the exchange of extraction at no cost for the timber was satisfactory.

The Chairman's Report was adopted unanimously.

#### **4. Treasurer's Report. Current financial position**

A Statement of Accounts had been supplied with the AGM notification. Hilary confirmed the figures and pointed out that we had received a large donation and had not purchased any plots this year.

It had been previously noted that we are not required to have our accounts audited and that this should be formally discussed at the AGM.

Chris had previously asked the meaning of the term 'Amounts Capitalised'. Hilary has investigated and found that this referred to the initial funding of the project. Eddie said that this term had been erroneously required by the auditor. Eddie asked whether the Gift Aid donation had been processed, Hilary replied that this was under way and accepted Eddie's offer of help.

The accounts were agreed.

#### **5. Appointments**

Roger and Hilary stood down as Trustees and were unanimously re-elected.

The retirement of Sue Quarendon as Company Secretary due to ill-health was regretted and a vote of thanks for all her hard work was unanimously agreed.

Mike Adams was proposed as Company Secretary by Eddie, seconded by Roger and this was agreed.

Lee Youseman was proposed as a Trustee by Francis, seconded by Mike and this was agreed.

## **6. Communications**

Mike made an impassioned plea for a better method of communication with the membership, suggesting email rather than post on the grounds of cost and convenience. It was generally agreed that this would be preferred although there were some practical difficulties to be overcome, and members should not be forced to comply. Andrew pointed out that this may be forbidden by the Articles of Association or the Trust Foundation documents. Mike to investigate.

## **7. Talk on The Use of Timber in School Playgrounds**

Andrew and Peter Baylis gave a talk on the construction of play areas in primary schools which are designed to stimulate learning and play. It was generally agreed that this was an important development and that the Trust should cooperate further and to permit them to refer to WKDCT on their website.

## **8. The Trust's Direction**

Roger said that the Trust is currently focussing on the restoration of the chalk grassland area, formerly a part of Warren Plain on which the Orchard was planted 40 years ago. This is singularly the most important project, removing the fruit trees and implement a continuous management regime that involves protecting and bringing back short and long grass through grass cutting and rabbit grazing to encourage its natural biodiversity of plant and animal life.

Re-coppicing of Sweet Chestnut will continue to introduce a coppice rotation. There appears to be the start of a worrying trend. Original plot owners may now probably be in their late 70s and 80s and Deeds have been passed on. The concern now is, if new owners are uninformed and uncaring the woodlands may become vulnerable once again and open to inappropriate activities. Therefore the Trust has taken steps to draw attention to Natural England and local Authorities of this fact. Natural England have offered to prepare and carry out the survey, research owners, find out their intentions and ask if they would like support in managing their land by Natural England and the Trust. If opportunities arise we would then seek to purchase.

## **9. Any Other Business**

Fred asked if it is possible to allow members to pay subscriptions electronically. Chris has investigated this and found that it is not possible using our current service provider for the website, but it would be possible using a BACS transfer if the member uses online banking. It was concluded that we could provide bank details with our renewal form.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm