

Trustees' report

As Rob Bensted-Smith has written in his introduction to HIGS' 2023 Annual Report 2023 was indeed a significant and successful year. The two significant highlights have been the purchase of Croft Close set-aside following the program to raise the funds to do so and the move of this charity to being one which is a members-based organisation.

It would be wrong to refer to the success of last year without noting that it was the result of a three year journey which began in the middle of 2020. Our charity was formed in August 2021 when fund raising began in earnest. The support of Sally London in purchasing Long Meadow and of the many people in the Community who donated cannot be understated. Without them we would not be where we are today.

We have been fortunate, throughout this journey, that we have been supported by an army of volunteers. They are the lifeblood of HIGS and we would not have been successful and will not continue to be so without them. Some have been name checked in the 2023 Report but they are merely exemplars. Many others made similarly significant contributions.

The change in HIGS constitution which results in us coming together as a member-based organisation is significant. It anchors us in the community and makes us answerable to it. Members will choose new Trustees later in this meeting and have the right to hold them to account. Today we have over 100 Members and we trust that they will engage and be active.

HIGS has set out its stall: 'to secure long-term access to land in and around Histon & Impington and to enable this to be managed for nature conservation and the community experiencing nature for its enjoyment, health and well-being'. And recently the Board agreed a set of priorities which support this and to which it will commit time and resources. They are set out on page 6 of the report.

It's a bold ambition but we know that HIGS cannot and should not do it alone. We will be working with the Parish Council and other institutions in the same space. And we will work with others including landowners to identify opportunities which provide benefit to all.