

Minutes of Histon & Impington Green Spaces

First Annual General Meeting of the Charity

Saturday, 16 March 2024 at 2pm, Saint Andrew's Centre, Histon

Katharine Holliday, Trustee, chaired the meeting.

50 members were present out of a membership of 131 (15 signing up on the day).

1) Welcome

Katharine gave a warm welcome to all those attending the Histon & Impington Green Spaces (HIGS) AGM, the first AGM of the charity. Katharine commented that it was exciting to think of all that had happened in the last year, with much more to come.

2) Apologies

Robert-Bensted Smith, chair of the HIGS Board, had sent his apologies. He is working abroad at present. Rob is standing down as chair and Trustee, from the date of the AGM. Katharine warmly thanked him for all his hard work which culminated in securing the Abbey Fields land in 2023. He was duly thanked by members with a warm round of applause.

3) Trustees' Report – Katherine Holliday

Detailed information on the progress of the charity is available in the 2023 Annual HIGS report on the website.

Katharine reviewed the highlights of the last year and in particular two significant events - the purchase of Croft Close Set-aside following the programme to raise the funds, and the move of the charity to being one which is a members-based organisation. Katharine mentioned the important support of Sally London in purchasing Long Meadow and of the many people in the Community who donated to make all this happen. Katharine also thanked the army of volunteers, the lifeblood of HIGS.

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.

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 Annual Report.

4) Finance Report – Jon Pavey, Treasurer

There is a finance section in the 2023 HIGS Annual Report.

The most recent Accounts to 31st March 2023 are available on both HIGS and the Charity Commission's websites. The charity is currently in a positive financial position.

Currently there is a cash balance of £53,000. £20,000 of this is restricted to works and activities including those through grant funding – the activities are planned in the coming months. There are still historic costs related to the original purchase of the land which will soon be settled.

Under the Reserves Policy the charity aims to maintain a cash balance of at least £10,000 to cover unforeseen events. The annual operating costs, excluding capital projects have been running at around £11,000.

The charity is building an Early Response Reserve to respond quickly should another opportunity arise to secure additional sites for biodiversity and people engaging with nature. This is not a pot sufficient to make a purchase but would cover initial surveys and the like. The charity hopes to add to this pot during the coming year.

5) Q&A

Questions from members at the meeting, answers from the trustees

- Will the minutes of the AGM be available to members?
 - answer - yes, on the website.
- Will the charity be aiming to purchase new land?
 - answer - maybe, but main strategy as published is to focus on current land holdings and reaching out whilst at the same time be ready to mobilise to meet other opportunities to secure green spaces in the parish and/or support and work alongside others with similar aims.
- What has the charity done well, and not so well?
 - answer – the charity has spent time in establishing its governance and taking time in a responsible manner to assess the needs of the land of Abbey Fields in terms of good care and encouraging biodiversity. In terms of doing better, one element is to recruit more ‘backroom’ volunteers to support administrative and similar functions.

6) Election of Trustees

Jon Pavey is due to retire at this AGM but was willing to stand again.

David Jenkins, Anthony Jenking, Katharine Holliday and Daphne Fulcher continue as Trustees.

Four new people have declared themselves ready to serve as Trustees of the charity, and the Board was satisfied that publicly available checks had shown that there was no reason to believe any of them should not become Trustees. A short biography for each had been provided prior to the meeting and they were introduced at the meeting.

Katharine Holliday proposed Jon Pavey, Nicholas Bailey, David Dives, Ian Ellis and David Parkin as new Trustees of the charity.

Guy Richardson and Moira Neal seconded the proposal.

The five proposed Trustees were elected at the meeting by a show of hands. There were no votes against.

7) Any other business

The Chair had not been notified of any other business.

The meeting was duly closed at 2.15pm

The AGM was followed by an open meeting chaired by Simon Payne and entitled ‘ Connecting with Nature’, an interactive meeting which aimed to explore what people cherish about the natural environment within the two parishes and what developments they might like to see in the future. Four stations were created with a map and facilitator – Daphne Fisher, Sarah Smith, Carron Brett and Nigel Butcher. The stations focused on trees and mushrooms, birds and insects, water and water courses and animals with legs. The facilitators gave a short report back to the meeting which will be used to inform further work of the charity and Katharine thanked everybody for their great engagement and support.

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