

MIDDLE MARCHES COMMUNITY LAND TRUST
(Draft) MINUTES OF 2022 AGM, FEBRUARY 2023

1. Attendance & Apologies

Present: Richard Keymer (Chair), Rosie Wood (Vice-Chair), Sara Braune, Jonathan Brown (Acting Secretary), Louise Robbins (Treasurer, standing down), Janet Cobb, Rob Rowe, Richard Small, Pete Carty, Andrew Wood, Ruth Dennis-Jones, Jean Garner, Nigel Jackson, Kate Whapham, Rachel Gray, Lorna Taylor, Geoff Taylor, Carol Innes, Frankie Rickford, James Heap, Aiden Foster, Charles Edwards, Chris Naylor, Tess Pearson, Peter Rivers, Mike Watkins.

Apologies: Irene Vickers, William Tacon, Ric Morris.

2. Introduction & Welcome

Richard Keymer opened the meeting by thanking the Shareholders and supporters for attending, and pointing out that they should each have a full set of AGM documents to handⁱ. He went on to mention the loss during the year of two Board Members: Tim Selman and Oliver Goode, and apologised for the slippage in AGM dates, which means that to get back on track the next AGM will be on 7th October 2023

3. Minutes of Last Meeting: These were approved.

4. Report on MMCLT's Affairs & Progress

Jonathan Brown recounted the start-up of the MMCLT by its 6 founding members and the substantial progress that has been made since then. He emphasised the benefits that having a good number of women on the Board had brought to the management team. In terms of progress he listed three key points: the grant given by the Stepping Stones project was recognition of MMCLT as an important local organisation capable of delivering major projects; the increasing complexity of the sites, skills and events MMCLT are involved with and, finally, our growing support is evidence that we are successfully reaching out to a wide audience. As well as all the other Board members delivering projects, he expressed particular thanks to Janet for all her work on developing and delivering the Conferences and the Events programme and, finally, offered as our watchword Gandhi's Injunction to "be the change you wish to see".

The Report was approved by the meeting.

5. Treasurer's Report

Louise Robbins told the meeting that at our last AGM she had expressed concern about the General Reserve. She was pleased to report now that this is in the black. The improvements are a result of:-

- a. Regular monthly donations – now at £50 pm
- b. One off donations including a generous £370 from the Clun Methodist church
- c. Grant from NT Stepping Stones project
- d. Grants/awards/donations from various groups towards conference costs
- e. Gift aid

We now have just under 100 shareholders, and an increase of £830 in share capital as a result.

Cudwell Meadow had benefited from: donations, a Stretton Focus award (£350), a grant from NT Stepping Stones project, Rural Payments agency and wayleave payments, while Norbury Hill had also benefited from donations, the NT Stepping Stones project grant, the Rural Payments Agency and grazing income. Louise explained that as purchase of the Leasowes land was still in progress, she was unable to report any figures for it.

Finally, Louise told the meeting that a copy of the FCA Report 2020 – 2021, which contains the accounts for the year ending March 2022, and which had been filed by our acting Secretary, Jonathan Brown, was available should anyone wish for a copy.

At Richard Keymer's request, the meeting approved the Treasurer's Report.

6. MMCLT: Refocussing the Business

Rosie Wood prefaced her report by expressing the Board's thanks to Louise for all her hard work over the last year. As well as resolving the General Reserve issue, Louise had been responsible for setting-up the system that will be used to support our future Grant management. She had also put in place the process for managing the re-payment of our loan. As an illustration of Louise's professionalism, Rosie quoted the Stepping Stones Project Manager's comments that ours was the only project budget report that matched all of its agreed requirements receipt by receipt.

On the matter of refocussing MMCLT's business, Rosie remarked that, like most community groups, their wish to change the world was soon confronted by the realisation that there are strict limits imposed by time and resources. MMCLT have learnt what its limits are. Extending our partnership with all the like-minded groups would be ideal, but we don't have the capacity.. We will instead focus on working closely

with already-established Partners with the aim of encouraging and assisting community groups in the purchase and management of pieces of land, in line with our 'Land Acquisition Policy'. We still see part of our role being to act as a safety net to acquire land valuable for wildlife, as MMCLT is already legally constituted in a way which permits us to buy land whereas many community groups keen to protect their patch are not and have no wish to be, especially not in a hurry which is when land often comes up for sale. This is perhaps an understated aspect of our USP. Our other objective will be to continue delivering a range of events, large and small as our main outreach activity on relevant issues such as regenerative agriculture where landowners can network and learn from one another. We will also continue to expand our membership, ensure we have a clear understanding of the objectives before submitting grant bids, and we will, at all costs, resist undertaking stand-alone projects which deflect us from our core business.

7. Q & A

- a. Chris Naylor asked whether MMCLT saw its links to the farming community as core to its business or simply incidental?

Richard Keymer responded by saying that he was happy to reassure Chris that working with the farming community was emphatically MMCLT's core business. There are, of course, difficulties in delivering this objective, farmers are very busy people for whom times are hard, and they are often frustrated by the many organisations that want a piece of their time. DEFRA's labyrinthine development process for ELMS has produced some outputs but they remain frustratingly opaque to many farmers. We are planning to do more to get involved and assist the farming community.

Jonathan Brown mentioned our programme of events, in particular the 12th May Conference which will address the issues facing small landowners, in particular on habitat and conservation. We are also planning visits to some large Estates, probably taking place in November.

Pete Carty mentioned the Upper Onny Farmers' group, which had been established as part of the Stepping Stones project. A visit to James Rebank was organised for them, from which they returned convinced that we must farm with, not against, nature. Other local farmers will learn from their experience as their network expands.

Rosie Wood emphasised the importance of bringing farmers together to showcase what's working, which is a more productive approach than through time-consuming, face-to-face meetings.

- b. Andrew Wood sought clarification on whether the budgetary numbers were cash in hand and can thus be carried forward? He also asked if the expansion of Shareholders were all new?

To both questions, Louise Robbins said the answer is yes.

8. Election & Co-option to Board

- a. Richard Keymer announced that there were 3 Trustees standing down: Tim Selman, Oliver Goode and Louise Robbins. He voiced the Board's thanks to them for their contribution to MMCLT's progress over the last few years.

- b. Richard then informed the meeting that Jonathan Brown, Rob Rowe and he had all completed their 3-year terms and were standing for re-election. All present were in favour of their re-election, with no abstentions.

- c. Richard asked the meeting's approval for the co-option of Nigel Jackson to the MMCLT's Board. Once again the meeting voted its approval with no abstention.

9. Close of Business

Richard Keymer thanked all present for attending the AGM, and recommended they remain to listen to the interesting programme of talks that would follow. He asked them to bear in mind MMCLT's need for new Board members, in particular ones with business experience, and asked them to spread the word amongst their friends and colleagues.

Mike Watkins
Minutes Secretary
19th February, 2023

ⁱ AGM papers:-

Draft Minutes of AGM held on 27th November 2021

Annual Report for the AGM

Trustees & Decisions for MMCLT Members (Shareholders)

Business Plan: Highlights of Progress to date

Finances Balance Sheet for years ending 31st March 2022

All these documents can be accessed at [AGM 2023 | Middle Marches Community Land Trust](#)