

MIDDLE MARCHES COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

MINUTES OF 2024 AGM

5th OCTOBER 2024

1. Attendance & Apologies

Present: Richard Keymer (Chair), Anne-Helen Harding (Secretary), Sara Braune, Jonathan Brown, Janet Cobb, Zannis Mavrogordato, Richard Small, Rob Rowe.

Janice Bailey, Tony Bywater, Isabel Carter, Michael Carter, Peter Carty, Ros Coleshaw, Tim Coleshaw, Sue Dancey, Ruth Dawes, Keith Evans, Alison Fraser, Jill Heywood, Peter Heywood, John Higson, Anthony Legg. Stephen Lewis, Peter Rivers, Chris Smith, June Smith, John West, Rosie Wood, Ruth Dennis-Jones, Paul Harding, Alison Heuvelink, Sarah Jameson, Susan Lockwood, Sarah Marriott, Tess Pearson, Carl Pickup, Laurence Rose, Peter Sheppard, Miriam West, Peter Whitlock, Sandra Whitlock, Carol Wood.

Apologies: Nigel Jackson

2. Introduction & Welcome

Richard Keymer opened the meeting by thanking the shareholders and supporters for attending. He mentioned that a full set of the AGM documents were available.¹ Richard then introduced the invited speaker, Laurence Rose. Laurence is naturalist, conservationist, author and composer, and he spoke on the topic of 'Nature and the Imagination'.

3. Following the talk and a tea-break, the AGM Business Session began.

4. **Minutes of Last Meeting** These were approved.

5. **Annual Report April 2023-March 2024** Richard Keymer began by pointing out that the displays in the hall and the Annual Report provide a good summary of what the Middle Marches CLT and the sites have done during the year. He thanked everyone for their support during the year and highlighted the importance of the farmers who provide valuable assistance in keeping the sites in good order.

During the year, Janet Cobb ran a series of very successful conferences. They brought together decision makers from across the county and nationally, and have increased knowledge, generated debate and influenced leaders.

Governance The Middle Marches CLT meets monthly as is required by the Rules. It is still looking to recruit a Treasurer, who would be assisted by a bookkeeper. Rosie Woods resigned from the Board and continues as a shareholder.

Richard mentioned that the Middle Marches CLT works closely with the Marches Meadows Group, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Roads and Verges Project, and the Shropshire Hills National Landscape. He concluded by thanking John Higson, the CLT's voluntary

¹ **AGM papers:-**

MMCLT Draft Minutes of AGM held on 7th October 2023

MMCLT Annual Report 2023-24

Trustees & Decisions for MMCLT Members (Shareholders)

Finances Balance Sheet for year ending 31st March 2024

All these documents can be accessed at <https://middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk/2024-agm/>

bookkeeper, and Sarah Jameson, who looks after the CLT's PR, website, posters and other published materials, for all their invaluable help with the work of the CLT. He also thanked the members of the Board who keep the CLT going.

- 6. Annual Accounts 2022-2023** Hard copies of the accounts were available at the AGM and were also accessible on the website. Richard Keymer reminded the meeting that in line with its constitution, the Middle Marches CLT does not charge membership fees. Instead, the CLT has shareholders who can buy shares and vote at the AGM. Consequently, the CLT is dependent on shares being bought, donations and grant funding.

At the beginning of the financial year, the CLT was focussed on buying High Leasowes. Overall, the Middle Marches CLT income in 2023-2024 was higher than in the previous financial year. The Annual Accounts have been signed off and submitted to the Financial Conduct Authority as required.

7. Shareholder Questions & Answers

- i. A review of the Middle Marches CLT. The CLT was set up five years ago, and Mike Carter suggested that it could be a good time to undergo an independently facilitated review. Richard Keymer agreed that the CLT should have a review and that the CLT should also update its business plan with input from the community.
- ii. Shareholding and Donations. Ruth (Dennis-Jones or Dawes??) mentioned that she had not realised that paying towards land did not make her a shareholder. Richard explained that there is a separate shareholder application form on the website. Ruth also queried whether the CLT should have more shareholders, but it was pointed out that growing the list of shareholders can be difficult.
- iii. A query was raised about why the shareholders were not consulted about the purchase of Minsterley Meadows because they have a financial interest in the CLT. It was also suggested that the Board could consult with the shareholders before they go ahead with the next land purchase. Richard explained that the CLT has an Executive Board which acts on behalf of the shareholders. Another shareholder stated that they approved of the Board going ahead with purchasing things like Minsterley Meadows.
- iv. Update on the purchase of Minsterley Meadows. Richard Keymer informed the meeting that the CLT was still raising funds to reach the target of £240,000. At the time of the AGM, the pledges had reached £152,000.
- v. Update on the National Lottery Heritage Fund application. A grant application was submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund to match fund money raised by the community to purchase Minsterley Meadows. The results of the application were expected a few days before the purchase completion date of 19th October. Richard mentioned that Pete and Harriet Carty had done all the work for this application for which everyone was all very grateful.
- vi. General discussion/comments
 - Currently the CLT has approximately 130 shareholders, and in England our CLT is unusual in that the CLT buys land rather than housing plots. A request was made to provide the members with the spread of shareholdings across the trust.
 - If the Middle Marches CLT were liquidated tomorrow, the liabilities would be paid off and any residual would be passed on. Each parcel of land is separate and would go to an appropriate equivalent body, such as the Shropshire Wildlife Trust or the National Trust.
 - Share money is not used for general spending. Board members are not paid, but general spending on insurance, overheads, etc are met largely from conferences and money earned by the land itself. A grant application has been made to cover £5000

back-office costs. It was suggested that the Board should investigate the freedom or ties on spending shareholder money.

8. Election and confirmation of Trustees to the Board of the Middle Marches Community Land Trust

Jonathan Brown started by thanking people who put themselves forward to help this small voluntary organisation. The current members were willing to continue serving on the Board and were all in the middle of their three-year terms. Jonathan proposed that the existing Board of Richard Keymer (Chair), Anne-Helen Harding (Secretary), Sara Braune, Jonathan Brown, Janet Cob, Nigel Jackson, Rob Rowe, and Richard Small be duly confirmed. This was seconded by Keith Evans and was approved unanimously.

Jonathan then introduced a new Board member, Zannis Mavrogordato and asked the shareholders to confirm his position on the Board. Steve Lewis put forward the proposal, Isabel Carter seconded, and it was carried unanimously.

Jonathan finished by reminding the meeting that according the CLT Rules, the maximum number of Board members is 12, the minimum is five, and it is possible to have five co-optees.

9. Summing Up and Thanks

Richard Keymer reflected that five years is not a very long time, but he hoped that the CLT members felt that the we had made good progress and were doing the right thing. The Board had hardly hesitated when Minsterley Meadows came on the market. It is an SSSI, but the government does not protect such sites. The community has however been very generous and raised a large sum of money to help with the purchase of the meadows.

Richard finished off by reminding us that a CLT can take into account interests across the community and acquire land on an equitable basis. He also mentioned that some people are offering to hand over their land to Middle Marches CLT or to leave it to us in their wills so that it will remain protected and managed for wildlife. Richard again thanked everyone for coming and for their on-going support.

Anne-Helen Harding
Secretary
30th November 2024