

LOWER MIMRAM VALLEY INITIATIVE

MARDEN FIELDS [NEWCO]

KEY FEATURES

1.0 STATUS NOTES

1.1 This document is a precursor to the drafting of the constitution and rules required to incorporate a community-based enterprise which will be related to other parts of the Lower Mimram Valley Initiative including:

1. A brief history of the landscape of the Mimram Valley – October 2021
2. The case for a local landscape designation – January 2022
3. Repton’s Trail – a potential signposted mid distance walk from Digswell to Hertford using existing footpaths and rights of way (work in progress)

1.2 In draft form, this document is intended to invite discussion and comment.

1.3 When finalised it will:

- (a) inform supporters of LMVI of the Stage 2 proposals for the Initiative;
- (b) provide guidelines for funding pledges by individuals – see later;
- (c) contribute to the feasibility assessment of a community enterprise.

1.4 Throughout the formative stages of the Initiative, there will be the opportunity for contributors to offer other ideas and ways of working.

2.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 The principal aim of Marden Fields NewCo is to recover the use and appearance of the area from its fragmented ownership and unused state.

2.2 The enterprise relates solely to an area of some 179 acres/72 hectares identified as Marden Fields and bounded by:

- Old Hertford Road
- Cannons Meadow
- Grass Warren
- Archers Green Lane
- Hertford Road B1000
- Archers Green/Tewin Mill
- Marden Hill

2.3 The objectives include:

- (a) to secure common stewardship and beneficial use of the whole area;
- (b) to promote conservation of the historic landscape, its features and natural history;
- (c) to acquire and manage land where appropriate and necessary.

TRAVELLING DRAFT – 5 October 2022

2.4 The achievement of the objectives will be assisted by the preparation and adoption of the Marden Fields Recovery Scheme (see later).

3.0 LEGAL STRUCTURE, CONSTITUTION AND RULES *(subject to advice from the Plunkett Foundation)*

3.1 The community enterprise will be constituted as a Community Benefit Society and seek 'charity' status.

3.2 At the next stage, the Marden Fields NewCo constitution and rules will be informed by the Plunkett Foundation's model.

3.3 Marden Fields NewCo will consist of:

- (i) members who pay an annual subscription;
- (ii) members who have bought shares;
- (iii) officers elected by members
- (iv) others?

3.4 All members and officers will be obliged to declare any interests potentially in conflict with the objectives or management of the enterprise.

3.5 All members will be expected to adhere to the Marden Fields Land Recovery Scheme (see later).

3.6 There will be an 'asset lock'.

3.7 In the event of a dissolution of the enterprise, any net assets will pass to Tewin Parish Council or a prescribed local charitable body.

3.8 Legal, financial and other specialist professional advice will be sought prior to incorporation.

4.0 MANAGEMENT

4.1 Management and decision-making rules will be agreed democratically and guided by convention.

4.2 The key team members to be recruited include:
Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Land Co-ordinator, Legal Co-ordinator and Website Manager .

4.3 All team members will be volunteers and elected/re-elected at a General Meeting of members.

4.4 An outline of the role of each position is included at Appendix A.

4.5 The principal 'challenge' for the enterprise, ie land recovery, is expected to be addressed by a 'lands committee'.

5.0 MARDEN FIELDS LAND RECOVERY SCHEME

- 5.1 If individuals as well as the community enterprise are existing or future land owners, it is important that all owners subscribe to an agreed 'scheme'.
- 5.2 The Marden Fields Land Recovery Scheme will be prepared and agreed by members to provide a basis for all land management decisions. It will comprise a plan(s), specification description and acquisition protocol.
- 5.3 The scheme will be approved (and amended) by members.
- 5.4 It will include the following matters:
- (a) geographical priorities/interests/acquisition pecking order
 - (b) land use and access
 - (c) landscaping – trees, hedges, fences
 - (d) maintenance
 - (e) security
 - (f) 'land committee' constitution
 - (g) land valuation principles, eg existing use/amenity/agricultural
 - (h) funding logistics
 - (j) professional advice
 - (k) other?

6. FINANCIAL PRINCIPLES

- 6.1 The enterprise will seek 'charity' status.
- 6.2 Each member will have [one] vote [regardless of shareholding].
- 6.3 Funding potential including 'pledged' contributions will need to be confirmed to ensure feasibility and inform an initial financial plan eg:
- (a) share subscriptions
 - (b) donations
 - (c) bequests
 - (d) grants including Defra
 - (e) lotteries
 - (f) subscriptions
 - (g) loans/debentures?

Pledges will be invited, with or without conditions.

- 6.4 If the enterprise seeks to acquire a large part of Marden Fields over many years the funding requirement is likely to be many £millions. The enterprise might also use funds to help realise the objectives in other ways.

6.5 The predicted expenditure stream will be staged.

Stage 1 – Formation and organisational costs

- legal (formation) fees
- landscape architect fees
- website host
- banking/insurance/compliance/regulator
- other?

Stage 2 – Land acquisition

- surveyor?
- legal (conveyance) fees/stamp duty?/land registry
- other?
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Stage 3 – Land management

- planting
- security
- maintenance
- other?
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6.6 It is important for all potential funders to note that there is no prospect of a financial return. Any surplus income over expenditure will be ploughed back into the scheme. The benefits from investments will be altruistic, visual, aesthetic, educational, recreational and environmental.

Appendix A – Team members and roles

IMPORTANT NOTE

- 1. *The Initiative does not intrinsically threaten existing householders, farmers, businesses, or other local interests. On the contrary, it seeks to build partnerships.***
- 2. *As well as supporting the environmental interests of the area, the Initiative will aim to enhance the intrinsic qualities, such as the ‘secrecy’ of the River Mimram and the bucolic atmosphere.***

APPENDIX A – TEAM MEMBERS AND ROLES

Chair)
Vice-Chair) fairly standard responsibilities
Treasurer)
Secretary)

Land Co-ordinator

- organise GIS database
- manage lands committee
- respond to land sale alerts

Legal Co-ordinator

- oversee formation of NewCo
- co-ordinate legal advice
- oversee land acquisition and land management agreements

Website Manager

- design and manage NewCo website and communications generally