

# MARESFIELD CONSERVATION GROUP

## Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Committee

Held at 7.00pm on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at The Chequers, Maresfield

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Jo Lawrance (JL)	Chair
Terence Brady (TB)	Treasurer
Richard Wane (RW)	Secretary
Bruce Milton (BM)	
Ian Shaw (IS)	
Tom Merchant (TM)	
Caroline Shaw (CS)	
Tracie Coe (TC)	

**PRESENT:** JL, TM, IS, RW, BM, TC, CS, TB (a quorum of 4 Trustees was achieved),

**APOLOGIES:** Stephany Reed-Perkins

**CONFLICTS OF INTEREST** – CS's involvement with the organization which was our chosen charity for the Quiz (East Sussex Young Carers) continues to be noted. BM noted that he is a member of the Maresfield Historical Society (MHS).

**The minutes of the previous Committee meeting were APPROVED**

### 1) MARESFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

We were joined by representatives from the MHS (Carol Jeffree and Jenny Eadon). In response to our written request back in January, they reported that they have 31 paid members and have completed their prior year accounts. They are still in the process of sorting out their physical assets, which are mostly stored in a cupboard box in the Village Hall and some of which are damaged. They are looking to buy some proper archive storage boxes for the contents. They are also in the process of determining what to do with the balance of funds they have and how to dissolve the MHS, which they are still intending to by their AGM in May. This may be a challenge because a number of members are required to physically attend.

After discussion MHS agreed to pass to us (1) a list of MHS members who had agreed to MHS passing on their email addresses to MCG, (2) a copy of their latest completed financials, (3) a hard drive containing old pictures kept by the Society and (4) a list of MHS physical assets. Items (1), (2) and (4) could be emailed to RW (Carol has RW's email) (3) physically handed over.

#### **AP1 – MHS to deliver items (1) – (4) to RW**

[Post-script note from RW: Under the heading 'Dissolution', the MHS constitution states:  
*The Society may only be dissolved by resolution passed by a two-thirds majority of those attending and voting at a General Meeting, at which not less than 50% of members are present. That meeting shall decide on the distribution of all assets, funds and property of the Society remaining after payment of all debts. Such assets, funds and property shall be given or transferred to such charitable institution or institutions having similar objects to the Society.*]

### 2) GOVERNANCE - RW

Charity Commission.

RW noted that he recently made some filings with the Charity Commission. These covered a change of correspondence address, an amended Trustee list and the updated MCG Constitution. The updated Constitution reflected the 2024 change to increase the number of

trustees to 8 (in addition to honorary positions). This change was approved at the most recent AGM in May 2024.

The address and Trustee changes have been accepted but, as reported in an email from RW to Trustees, the amended MCG Constitution has been rejected, on the grounds that the amendment to the MCG "Aims", adding a sentence saying: 'To promote and support village life and its amenities', is too vague to be seen as a charitable object in its own right. As RW noted, this amendment to the Aims wasn't actually the one made in 2024. In fact it was one of a number (nine in total) made to the Constitution back in 2019. On further investigation it appears that the only MCG Constitution filed with and accepted by the Charity Commission may actually be from July 2003 and that all of the amendments to the Constitution made in both 2019 and the latest one in 2024, have never been filled with the Commission until RW made the latest filing.

RW thanked those who have responded with ideas on how the Aims might be adjusted and proposed the following wording for discussion:

- 1. To promote the conservation, protection, and improvement of the physical and natural environment in Maresfield and the surrounding area for the public benefit.*
- 2. To advance community development for the benefit of the inhabitants of Maresfield and the surrounding area by supporting village life and improving local amenities.*

Following discussion the wording was **APPROVED**.

The next steps will be to put this wording to the members at the AGM and then re-file it with the Charity Commission.

Policies.

RW noted that three policies covering working practices for volunteers doing clearing work and using work tools have been provided by BM. With thanks to TM they are now stored under a Policies area in the Committee sign-in section of the website. RW believes this covers our declaration on the Charity Commission site that we have policies covering risk management and volunteer management.

RW has also put together a brief conflicts policy and register. This will serve to cover off the declaration on the Commission site that we have something covering 'Conflicting interests'.

RW proposed that these policies are approved by the Committee.

The policies were **APPROVED**.

**AP2 – RW to circulate draft notice of AGM for the next Committee meeting. The notice will include the agreed revised 'Aims' wording.**

JL thanked everyone for their contribution to the Parish Council Annual Report. This item is now closed.

### **3) ENGAGEMENT/MERCHANDISING/EVENTS - ALL**

Events

The Quiz was noted as a great success. A total of over £1000 is expected to be confirmed for the chosen charity. Big thanks to TM for setting the quiz questions and all for their help. Various comments were noted for future editions:

- Extra help with scoring needed
- Better clarity on who has not paid. Consider allocating tables (although this has been done before)

- Maybe still quite long and too many raffle prizes
- Consider alternatives to cash for raffle and games

**AP3 - Final ticket payments to be sorted and chased so that TB can provide an account of the event. A final total will also enable CS to confirm back to MCG the benefit of the sum raised. We can then agree the date for 2026!**

Cheese and Wine. (Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> July). IS to help arrange. Poster/publicity needed. Suggested ticket price of £10.

Litter Picking (Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> April). Kit to be sorted and grid for coverage to be arranged.

[Post-script from TM. *Our most recent 30 days of website activity: 112 site sessions / 81 unique visitors.*]

**AP4 – Litter picking to be shortened to 10am-12noon (TM to adjust website CS or TC to adjust FB).**

#### **4) MEMBERSHIP - TC**

TC asked what we should do in relation to those who we have records for as past members but who have not paid. We also discussed the need for a clearer process for how members join. After discussion, including concerning payment methods we **AGREED**:

1. Where past members have no longer paid we would not carry forward any of their data. So we will start with a clean list of paid members.
2. We will trial the membermojo system, details of which has been previously circulated. This will enable all the Trustees' information to be added, give everyone an opportunity to test the functionality of the system and mean that by the time of the next meeting (April) we should be in a position to determine whether to adopt it for use going forward.

TM noted that we should have a clearer message that sets out the reasons for joining the MCG. This could be used to drive people to our website, where with the new system it would be easier for them to join – and to join with a clear indication of the fee (for example £15 for an individual; £25 for a family).

**AP5 - TC to enable the trial period for Membermojo inviting all Committee Members to join and trial it.**

**AP6 - TM to set out a proposal for a membership message (including an annual fee).**

We noted that with the above we could have a refreshed set of materials to go out to encourage membership and a system that can help with sign up and maintenance of the membership records and renewals.

#### **5) TREASURER'S REPORT - TB**

Balances

TB noted that the balances of the MCG's accounts are: £2,550.44 (Current) and £94,637.92 (Deposit)).

TB has looked at alternatives for banking some of the deposit cash and that there are essentially two – The Charity Bank and the Charity Aid Foundation. After discussion, it was **AGREED** that we should proceed with an account at The Charity Bank.

**AP 7 - TB will follow-up and revert on the process of opening an account at The Charity Bank.**

Insurance.

The question of ownership of the renewal process was discussed. IS will follow-up to confirm renewal of our policies. It was noted that queries will be raised over the need for income to be disclosed (including the increase for this year from the legacy donation); and the number of volunteers to be specified (the current policy says '1').

**AP 8 - IS to follow up on insurance and liaise with TB.**

**6) FOOTPATHS GROUP UPDATE - BM**

BM noted that further work has been done on the Footpaths and messaged on the MCG FB page.

The Parish Council have confirmed they are willing to adopt the Fingerposts but clarification is awaited from Highways at the County Council as to how they are to be completed. In the meantime we hold a quote for the necessary replacement work.

BM had circulated a request from the Church for funding in connection with the proposed replacement of their notice boards. After discussion, the Committee determined not to contribute.

**7) PLANNING UPDATE – All**

Biodiversity survey.

RW explained that he has been in touch with the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre. The Centre is an environmental record centre, describing itself as a repository, custodian, manager and analyst of high-quality biodiversity, natural history and environmental information, covering East and West Sussex. It is a partnership project and partners include local and national environmental organisations and many Borough and District Councils.

RW has asked the Centre how we might go about a biodiversity survey. They responded to note that they can produce an ecological data search for us, which will provide information on protected/important sites and species that have been recorded in the area. This is free of charge and can then be used as a starting point to further recording activity one which they can provide guidance and assistance. One thing we would need to agree is the area of interest, which seems to be based on how far around Maresfield we want to record.

After discussion the Committee **AGREED** that:

- the main purpose of a survey would be for use with planning applications impacting Maresfield - and its surrounding area.
- RW should complete the initial Data Request Form; and that
- we would seek data for the conservation area of Maresfield and within a reasonable radius of say 3 kilometres for Maresfield centre.

**AP 9 - RW to report back on progress.**

Benches. IS noted no further update from the Parish Council

**8) ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The MCG Noticeboard near the shop needs a tidy up (calendar and membership form removed. Replace with latest QR code member form). BM will kindly take a look.

Members are reminded to confirm whether they wish to stay on the Committee.

Next Committee meeting items will include: Legacy Money and Membership update.

There was no further business and the **meeting closed** at 9.01pm.

Note: Remaining dates for 2025 Committee Meetings (so far) – all at The Chequers at 7.00pm:

- 14 April
- 19 May
- 24 June {AGM only}
- 21 July
- August – no meeting