**Lauriston Farm Limited**

**Charitable Community Benefit Society**

**Fifth AGM Minutes**

**Saturday 24 September 2022 11am**

**1. Farm Prayer** read by Spencer Christy followed by a reading about Michaelmas

**2. Attendees & Apologies**

**Members Present**: Monika Curry (chair), Jenny Chittenden (minutes), Spencer Christy, Odilia Kirst, Naoya Tatsuzawa, Andre Kleinjans, Jenny Wilson, Anne-Marie Sinclair, Chris Pudney, Evelyne Muller, Fiona Jameson, Gerald Lees, Guy van de Walle, Helen Clegg, Helen Hardwicke, Henry Matthews, Jan Brown, Joanna Ellis, Jonathan King, Jonney Aldridge, Juliet Heller , Malcolm Brown, Margaret Smith, Myriam Berger, Richard Adams, Rob Dejean, Rob King, Sally Ure Reid, Sharon Dejean, Susan Roche, Tracy Farthing-Clee & Ted

**Non-members present**: Steph Valentine, Adam Cohen

**Apologies**: Chris Tivey, Ann-Marie Briggs, Charlotte Frejya, , Christiane Mills, Dave & Linda Worley, Elia Valentini, Gilly & Martin Lutton, Hazel Morgan, Jackie Barber, Jacky Hems, Karen Wallace, Karin & Keith Cordwell, Malcolm Davy-Barnes, Mike Turner, Miranda Welton, Rosemary Tetley, Sarah Fothergill, Shona Grant

**3. Minutes of last AGM**

* Acceptance of minutes proposed Spencer Christy, seconded Helen Hardwicke and agreed by all present. The minutes were signed by Monika

**4. Receipt of 2020-21 accounts and auditor’s report – Adam Cohen**

* Bookkeeping came in house this year so more info to add to accounts including being able to identify different income sources. However this does mean like for like comparison with last year isn’t possible
* Turnover increased, partly due to lifting of covid restrictions
* Costs and donations both similar to last year
* Small portion of a new three year National Lottery grant included in this financial year
* Small profit made, which since we made a loss the previous year means that we are c£10,000 up on the previous year
* The treasurer added that accounts management has improved this year including tidying up some irregularities
* Answering a question from the floor, Spencer explained that following his parents’ deaths the Society now pays a peppercorn rent but has taken responsibility for maintenance costs previously paid by them
* Acceptance of accounts approved by all present

**5. Appointment of Independent Examiner/Auditor for 2022-23**

* Appointment of Adam Cohen of Maynard Heady LLP proposed Jenny Wilson, seconded Evelyne Muller and approved by all present

**6. Report from the Farm Director**

* Looking back to April 2021 when we were following rules, non-essential retail was shut and hugging was banned, it’s lovely to see everyone shoulder to shoulder
* Funding received for kitchen so shared lunches returning soon
* Sadly Barney the farm dog had to be put down
* Agricultural degree student Ben worked on the farm through summer 2021 when Spencer had an ankle problem
* Steph’s role has developed, revolutionising our paperwork and efficiency for which Spencer thanked her
* Day placements have grown, nurturing people out of the effects of isolation
* More grants than previous financial year. Applying for covid grants built relationships with funders such as Power to Change which helped with later grant applications
* Kate and Cameron were appointed September 2021. Cameron initially tended the cattle but when they are doing well the work is minimal so he moved into horticulture. He moved on at Christmas. Kate started with the sheep and chickens and is currently looking after the supported interns
* Two supported interns, AC and NW, started September 2021. Both are now employed. AC started in horticulture then moved to agriculture, which he loves. He also does maintenance work. NW works in horticulture
* Andre and Monique have been rejuvenated by changing to four days a week
* Markets started to reopen from Sept and we are now doing three a month
* In November MP Priti Patel and National Lottery Community Fund chair Blondel Cluff did a farm walk. Priti and Spencer got on well and she was presented with a felted bag. Priti was impressed with our aim to train people into employment and called for a round table meeting to discuss what we do and how it could be applied nationally. Unfortunately the meeting has been arranged then cancelled twice, first due to the Ukraine invasion and then due to the Queen’s death
* Awarded a three year National Lottery grant in March 2022
* We have a bursary which funds people who come here but don’t have other funding
* College visits three days a week. From Castledon College all year 12s come, in year 13 those who are particularly interested come, then from these students we hope to find two or three supported interns for the next year
* Awarded another five year grant under the Countryside Stewardship agreement. Payment rates increased after Spencer talked to someone on the relevant committee, which had not realised that the rates hadn’t changed for several years. Our grant included 80% of the cost of putting a new room in the area where the marquee currently stands. The new room allows for the possibility of another room above, which would need to include a lift for accessibility, we are talking to the Heritage Lottery Fund about making this a rural crafts area
* Won Maldon District Council’s Nature Conservation Award in 2021
* On a personal note it was a big year for Spencer and he thanked staff, volunteers and members for all their support
* Spencer finished his report by reading a Saturday prayer for renewal from the writings of Adam Bittleston
* Answering a question from the floor about renewable energy, we have applied to Power to Change for funding for consultancy on climate change matters. For example we could look into a ground source heat pump or a community wind turbine for the farm and other dwellings nearby

**7. Reports from Farm staff**

**Jenny Wilson, Social Farming Co-ordinator**

* People with learning disabilities and autism pay to spend the day here doing meaningful activities, interacting with others, developing confidence and independence and spending time outdoors
* Grown from three to four days/week since last year. Existing co-workers wanted to increase their days, also some new co-workers. Funding approval took a while
* Post covid there are more people needing support on the farm, staff rotas have been tightened up to help with this and there is a good structure in place to support Jenny
* Jenny and other staff have had first aid training
* Work done by co-workers continues as before. All enjoy interacting with sheep
* Challenges with chickens due to bird flu lockdown meaning new processes are needed
* Co-workers well motivated

**Andre Kleinjans, Biodynamic Gardener**

* Monique had an operation this week so cannot be here but sends regards, recovering slowly
* Soil very dry, some crops have suffered. More aphids and whitefly
* NW now employed 3 days week. Skilful and independent, can take own initiatives
* Supplying a new customer, Manningtree Whole Foods. Sales to London reduced
* Veg boxes going well
* Degree student Daniela helping during summer and whilst Monique recovering. Good generally and especially with rotovator
* College students help with the garden which is appreciated and makes it tidier
* Planning for second polytunnel build in October / Nov
* Monique growing more flowers, going well. Can do flowers for special occasions

**Steph Valentine, Office Manager**

* Supplying Manningtree Whole Foods who are in tune with our ethos. They buy veg and flower bunches, also act as hub for veg bag customers. Using veg bag hubs cuts down on cost, travel and time
* New link with The Mistley Thorn restaurant, to be developed further
* About 35 veg bag customers bringing in £1500/month. Includes unusual veg - Steph has embraced turnips
* We’ve done the Blackwater Country Show. Cressing Temple Barns show next month. Both mainly craft shows. Tom, Laura and Lois have helped
* Cressing Temple Men’s Shed restored Steph’s old mangle to use for felting
* Hoping to do winter workshops again this year, ideas for which are welcome
* Epic journey to open new Co-op bank account, giving us a company debit card and ability to pay in cash at Post Office, important due to bank closures

**Spencer - reporting on animals on behalf of farmer Kate Handford**

* Kate stepped up to help when AW moved from horticulture to agriculture
* Kate has the measure of ~250 North Ronaldsay sheep who are healthy. Didn’t lamb this year due to last year’s excess lambs following a lovely summer enjoyed by two young rams. This produced 120 lambs with only two interventions. Looking for new ram
* ~30 cattle, all well. Bull Duncan reached retirement, his last calf born February 2021. New bull Diamond Oak greeted by two ladies and got straight to work
* Bird flu lockdowns have affected the chickens. Using the polytunnels for them last year didn’t work so a different and better approach being used this time. Inspected this week by government vet, all good.
* Conservation – our habitats are good - lots of turtle doves including nesting pairs. More scrub to be added over next five years
* Following conversations with Blackwater Wildfowlers and RSPB we got funding for restoring old wetland habitat of scrapes and dykes. Work has started, watching it develop will be interesting
* Monika reminded everyone that Steph is our main contact. We’re looking for crafters, cooks and ideas, all volunteers welcome. We have knitting and weaving yarn. Everyone present was asked to fill in a questionnaire

**8. Elections to the Board**

* Monika explained that under Society rules the third of trustees who have served the longest must stand down each year. This year it was the turn of Jenny Chittenden who was willing to serve again. Naoya Tatsuzawa had been co-opted and was now standing for election
* Jenny, proposed by Helen Hardwicke, seconded by Rob King and duly elected
* Naoya, proposed by Tracy Farthing-Clee, seconded by Chris Pudney and duly elected

**9. Any Other Business**

* Member Rob Dejean thanked the team for their important work