Ide Parish Council

Pynes Community Orchard Working Group

Minutes of a Meeting held at 6.30 pm on 12 April 2018

 at Smallridge House, Ide

1. Present: Peter Cloke (chairman), Nick Bradley (Parish Council Chairman), Mel Liversage (Parish Clerk), Carolyn Tysoe, Julian Perrett, Trevor Gardner, Barry Hookins, Andy Bragg.

2. Apologies from Richard Sharman and Mark Thomas.

3. The venue was chosen because NB was grounded, injured.

4. NB announced that the Church Commissioners (CCs) had written on 11 April 2018 accepting our offer of £17,000 per acre for Pynes Orchard. The land measures 3.87 acres, making a total price of £65,790 plus VAT. We have also, reluctantly, agreed to meet the CCs’ standard conditions to pay their legal fees, but with a cap of £2,000; and their agents’ fees, at 1.5% of the purchase price. The Parish Council’s own valuation of the Orchard by Rendells in March 2017 was in line with this figure: Rendells’ estimate gave a range either side of the agreed sale price.

We have also agreed to take on the Orchard without insisting on full resolution of the CCs’ current dispute with an adjacent land owner over rights to a strip of land along the old railway track.

5. The group expressed delight and a resolve to move ahead fast to raise the money.

6. Members were, however, also alive to the risk of the two land purchase projects in Ide – Pynes Orchard and Weir Meadow – becoming unhelpfully conflated in people’s minds. The group emphasised the need to be very clear about the aims of the two projects, their differences and their similarities. Different grant giving bodies would come into play for each project. It was imperative to avoid competition, or a race, between the two working groups. Good communication would be key.

7. To this end, we agreed that key, too, will be the production of a clear prospectus document, explaining the reasons for buying the Orchard; why our group feels so moved to save and run this ancient gem of Devon heritage; the history of the Orchard [RS has offered to write this section]; the benefits to the village of owning the Orchard; and the types of activity and amenity we see it providing. The prospectus document will set out the strategy and detailed timetable for the project from here on in. It will be concise, and be suitable for individual donors, grant giving bodies, the Parish Council, residents of Ide, the CCs and this PCOWG.

**ACTION: PC, TG, RS, NB - asap**

8. We agreed to seek authorisation from the Parish Council to open a bank account, in the Parish Council’s name, dedicated to handling the financial administration of the Orchard project.

9. We agreed to ask the Parish Council to authorise the appointment of solicitors to act on its behalf in conducting and completing the purchase of the Orchard.

10. NB and ML agreed to call an extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council at 6pm on Wed 18 April 2018, in The Hub, to discuss and authorise the PCOWG to pursue the purchase at the agreed price; to open a bank account; and to appoint solicitors.

**ACTION: ML and NB**

11. There remain a number of potential options for how and when we conclude the purchase, from immediate purchase to a period of lease to allow time to raise funds. TG said that an ideal time limit for fund raising would be Sept 2019 – long enough to allow grant giving bodies to operate, short enough to keep up a head of pressure. The favoured method for the group would be signing a contract at end of Sept 2018, when the present tenancy ends, putting down a deposit then, with a view to completion one year thence.

It would have to be clearly agreed what the status, ownership of and rights of access to the Orchard would be during the year Sept 2018 – Sept 2019 if we pursued this option. A lease to the Parish Council for that year would be our ideal solution.

12. We agreed that once the horses are removed from the orchard, the ground will take at least a year to recover. Members felt strongly that we should look to the CCs for action to correct the dilapidations which have occurred to the ground, and to the boundary fences and hedges, during the current tenancy.

**ACTION: PC & NB at meeting w CCs**

13. To resolve the issues raised in 11 above, PC and NB will arrange a meeting as soon as possible with the CCs at Church House, Westminster.

**ACTION: NB & PC**

14. An early requirement from the CCs will be a letter of agreement from the CCs to sell us the Orchard, with the agreed time scale and interim arrangements, which we can show to funding bodies and individuals, over and above the email from CCs on 11 April.

**ACTION: PC & NB**

15. The date of the next PCOWG meeting will be announced when PC & NB know when they can meet the CCs [which we hope will be either late April, or 2nd week May 2018].

TBC.

NCAB 13 4 18