Terms of Reference

Marsh Lane Lakes Community Purchase Steering Group

1. Purpose

The Marsh Lane Lakes Community Purchase Steering Group ("the Steering Group") is established to lead, coordinate and oversee the investigation, planning, funding, and potential purchase and long-term management of Marsh Lane Lakes, Hemingford Grey, for the long-term benefit of the local community.

The Steering Group will ensure that all activities are undertaken transparently, responsibly and in accordance with the interests of the community, while providing strategic direction and governance throughout the project.

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2. Aims and Objectives

The Steering Group will:

- Evaluate the feasibility of acquiring Marsh Lane Lakes into community ownership.
- Develop a clear vision for the future use and management of the site to enable long-term community use and to restore, enhance and sustain biodiversity.
- Coordinate investigations into financial, legal, environmental, recreational, and community matters.
- Oversee community engagement and consultation activities.
- Secure funding and other resources necessary to support the acquisition.
- Review recommendations from specialist sub-groups.
- Make recommendations regarding any decision to proceed with the proposed purchase to the Parish Council (as current sponsor) or any constituted body established for that purpose
- Develop proposals for the long-term governance and management of the site should acquisition proceed.

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3. Scope

The Steering Group will oversee all activities associated with:

- Assessing the viability of acquiring Marsh Lane Lakes.

- Liaising with Tarmac and their representatives.
- Undertaking due diligence.
- Securing grants, donations, loans and other forms of finance.
- Gathering evidence of community support and demand.
- Assessing environmental, ecological, recreational and social impacts.
- Developing future management arrangements.

The Steering Group shall not enter into legally binding agreements except where authorised by the Parish Council (as current sponsor) or any constituted body established for that purpose.

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4. Structure

The Steering Group shall operate through a series of specialist sub-groups established to investigate defined aspects of the proposed acquisition.

Each sub-group shall appoint one representative to sit as a voting member of the Steering Group.

This structure is intended to ensure detailed examination of key issues whilst maintaining coordinated decision-making at Steering Group level.

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5. Sub-Groups

The Steering Group may establish additional groups as required, but initially the following sub-groups shall be formed:

A. Finance and Fundraising Sub-Group

Responsibilities include:

- Estimating acquisition and operational costs.
- Investigating funding opportunities.
- Preparing grant applications.
- Exploring community fundraising initiatives.
- Producing financial forecasts and business plans.
- Assessing financial risks.

B. Legal and Governance Sub-Group

Responsibilities include:

- Commissioning legal advice.
- Reviewing ownership and title information.
- Investigating acquisition structures, such as a charity or similar organisation
- Reviewing future ownership structures
- Developing governance arrangements.
- Assessing liabilities and legal risks.
- Overseeing regulatory compliance.

C. Environment and Biodiversity Sub-Group

Responsibilities include:

- Assessing ecological value of the site.
- Identifying protected species and habitats.
- Reviewing environmental opportunities and constraints.
- Developing conservation objectives.
- Liaising with environmental organisations and experts.
- Developing reports for grant bids, charity commission submissions, etc
- Liaison with Community Use and Recreation sub-group

D. Community Use and Recreation Sub-Group

Responsibilities include:

- Identifying and assessing community priorities for future use and recreational activities / opportunities.
- Considering access arrangements.
- Reviewing opportunities for education, wellbeing and community activities.
- Liaison with Environment and Biodiversity sub-group

E. Community Engagement and Communications Sub-Group

Responsibilities include:

- Conducting community consultation.
- Managing public communications.
- Maintaining websites and social media.
- Coordinating volunteer involvement.
- Gathering evidence of community support.
- Organising public meetings and events.

F. Planning and Infrastructure Sub-Group

Responsibilities include:

- Reviewing maintenance and operational considerations.

- Assessing long-term management needs.
- Developing proposals for sustainable site management.
- Assessing access, parking and infrastructure requirements.

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6. Membership

The Steering Group shall comprise:

- Chair
- Vice-chair (if appointed)
- Secretary
- Treasurer/Finance Lead
- One appointed representative from each sub-group (if not covered by one of the above)
- Up to four additional co-opted members providing specialist expertise

The Steering Group should comprise between 8 and 12 members.

Sub-groups may recruit additional volunteers and advisers from within the wider community.

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7. Responsibilities of Sub-Groups

Each sub-group shall:

- Meet as necessary to undertake its work programme.
- Elect a Chair and Steering Group Representative.
- Maintain records of decisions and actions.
- Prepare reports and recommendations.
- Submit findings to the Steering Group in a timely manner.
- Operate within any delegated authority provided by the Steering Group.

Sub-groups may investigate and recommend actions but shall not commit expenditure or enter agreements unless specifically authorised.

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8. Decision-Making

Steering Group

The Steering Group shall:

- Review recommendations from sub-groups.
- Determine strategic priorities.
- Approve project plans and budgets.
- Authorise funding applications.
- Recommend whether to proceed with acquisition.

Where possible decisions shall be made by consensus.

Where a vote is required:

- Decisions shall be carried by a simple majority.
- Each Steering Group member shall have one vote.
- The Chair shall have a casting vote if necessary.

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9. Meetings

Steering Group

- Meetings shall normally be held fortnightly/monthly.
- Extraordinary meetings may be convened by the Chair.
- Where appropriate papers shall be circulated at least three working days before meetings.
- Notes shall be published where appropriate to ensure transparency.

Sub-Groups

- Meet as required.
- Report formally to each Steering Group meeting.
- Maintain action logs and records.

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10. Quorum

Steering Group

A quorum shall consist of:

- The Chair (or nominated deputy); and
- At least 50% of current Steering Group members; and
- Representation from a minimum of three sub-groups.

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11. Conflicts of Interest

Members of both the Steering Group and sub-groups shall:

- Declare any personal, professional or financial interest relating to Marsh Lane Lakes.
- Withdraw from discussions and decisions where a conflict exists.

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12. Community Accountability

The Steering Group shall operate openly and transparently by:

- Publishing regular updates.
- Providing opportunities for public participation.
- Reporting on progress and risks.
- Maintaining records available for community review where appropriate.

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13. Project Completion

The Steering Group shall continue until:

- The acquisition process has concluded; and/or
- Appropriate long-term governance arrangements for Marsh Lane Lakes have been established;

or

- The community determines that the project should not proceed.

Signed:

Approved by: Richard Allen

Date: 20th August 2026

Review Date: 20th October 2026

Version: 2.0