



Minutes of a meeting of the trustees of
Market Harborough and The Bowdens Charity
Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) Registered Charity number 1157787
on 27th February 2025 at 7 pm
The Old Grammar School, Market Harborough

1 **Attendance**

- Mrs Sue Berridge
- Mrs Rohini Corfield
- Mrs Chris Davies
- Mr John Feavours QPM (Chair)
- Mr Ed Green
- Mrs Wendy Hempson (Charity Secretary)
- Dr Sarah Hill (Vice-Chair)
- Professor Bill Jones
- Mr Gordon Kellie
- Mrs Linda Kvatch
- Mrs Kerry Merryweather
- Mr Tony Walters

2 **Apologies**

- Mrs Jenny Balme
- Mr Geoff Buxton
- Mr John Richardson (Ex-Officio Trustee)

3 **Conflicts of interest and/or loyalty**

Rohini Corfield declared a conflict of interest with VASL. John Feavours declared that he was personally acquainted with one of the people who represented Home-Start South Leicestershire at the Contact Group meeting on 30th January 2025. Ed Green reminded the Board that he was the CEO of Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, but had no influence over Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust. Wendy Hempson and Ed Green declared conflicts of interest with Market Harborough Cricket and Squash club, as both were members.

The remaining trustees present confirmed that they had no conflicts of interest or loyalty related to any item on the agenda and that if such a conflict emerged, they would declare it and not participate in any related decisions or votes.

4 **Governance**

4.1 *Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair*

*John Feavours QPM was nominated and unanimously reappointed as Chair.
Dr Sarah Hill was nominated and unanimously reappointed as Vice-Chair.
John confirmed that he would be standing down at the end of 2025.*

4.2 *Serious Incident Reporting Policy – **Appendix I***

Decision: The Serious Incident Report Policy was approved by the Board.

5 **Draft Minutes of the previous meetings**

5.1 *28th November 2024 – **Appendix I***

The draft minutes from the Board meeting on 28th November 2024 were approved as an accurate record.

6 **Matters arising from the previous meeting (not on the main agenda)**

6.1 *Actions from previous Board Meetings – **Appendix III***

The Actions table was noted. There were no actions outstanding.

7 **Charity Secretary's report – Appendix IV**

The report was noted, and the following matters brought to the Board's attention.

*7.1 Recommendation, based on the 30.01.2025 General Grants Contact Group's report, to grant £30,000 to Home-Start South Leicester for 2025 and £20,000 for 2026 and 2027 – **Appendix V***

Trustees unanimously approved the recommended funding and expressed the hope that it would provide some security for Home-Start South Leicestershire and its invaluable work with very vulnerable young families. In addition to regular reporting, some form of monitoring of the project would be implemented by the General Grants Committee, perhaps in the form of a liaison person.

Action: Grant £30,000 to Home-Start South Leicester for 2025 and £20,000 for 2026 and 2027 – Charity Secretary

7.2 It was agreed that all members of a Contact Group would be invited to the committee meeting where the contact group report was discussed. Trustees were reminded that all trustees could access the documents and minutes from any committee meeting on Dropbox. The Chair of Relief in Need invited all Trustees to attend any meeting of the Relief In Need Committee, should they wish to do so.

7.3 *Fisher German's Report to the Board – Appendix VIII*

Trustees noted Fisher German's concise and useful report and Fisher German's expertise in property and land management. It was agreed to delegate increased decision making authority to Fisher German for the routine management of Scotland End Flats and Charity land under their supervision. Fisher German would have the authority to make decisions on the Charity's behalf and the Charity would be kept informed of actions taken.

Action: Delegate decision making authority to Fisher German for the routine management of Scotland End Flats and Charity land under their supervision.

7.4 *Market Harborough Cricket & Squash Club*

A meeting between the Charity and the club was planned for mid-March 2025 at which the club's plans to develop the club would be explored. There was enthusiasm to support the club's plans on condition the development could be guaranteed to be beneficial to residents of the Charity's Area of Benefit. John clarified that some of the Charity's endowment funds could be used if the development would clearly benefit the Area of Benefit.

7.5 *The Old Grammar School*

It was now clear that the land immediately adjacent to The Old Grammar School was not owned by anyone and could potentially be purchased by the Charity. The flooding problem at the entrance of this Grade I listed building was an on-going concern which Leicestershire County Council had failed to address, despite repeatedly contact from the Charity.

Action: Write to Leicestershire County Council to request urgent assistance with the repair of the paving at the entrance to the Old Grammar School, a Grade I listed building – Chair

7.6 *Leicester Road Paddock (East & West)*

At the Away Day in January 2025, Trustees discussed the possibility of planting trees on the Leicester Road Paddock (East) to create a long term environmentally friendly wood within the town's boundary. The paddock was steep and access was poor and development was not an option. Subject to any planning restrictions, Trustees agreed to approach third parties with the intention of creating a wood on the site.

Action: Subject to any planning restrictions, to approach third parties to create a wood on the Leicester Road Paddock (East). The Charity to retain ownership of the land – Charity Secretary

The fencing of Leicester Road Paddock (West) was completed in February 2025 and the paddock would be let for the grazing of sheep. A number of large trees would be planted along the canal to compensate for trees removed by necessity during the hedging process and/or along the Charity's ransom strips.

8 Finance - Appendices X, XI, XII & XIII

Continuing the trend since the Charity's move to Mercer, Q4 2024 had not generated sufficient or expected income from the Charity's investments.

When the Charity moved its investments to Mercer in 2023, the Charity's auditor had recommended that a review of the move be conducted after 18 months. It was therefore agreed that the Finance Committee would engage a third party to review Mercer's management of the Charity's investments and to review the options available to the Charity, including Total Return. This was in line with the Charity Commission's recommendation to seek expert advice when necessary.

Action: Engage a third party consultant to review the management of the Charity's investments by Mercer and the Total Return option – Finance Committee

9 Away Day 2025 – Appendix IX

Trustees appreciated John's comprehensive summary of the Away Day 2025 discussions and its conclusions.

The Board's enthusiasm to create a charity hub in the town was undiminished and a way forward would continue to be explored. A charity hub would not generate a significant income but would allow the Charity to provide facilities for other charitable organisations and groups, in lieu of supporting them with grants.

Trustees were encouraged to propose free events for residents of the Area of Benefit which the Charity could support financially.

Decision: The seven actions from the Away Day were all approved by the Board:

- To develop a Charity / Community Hub through the development of the former Joules building, with early relocation of the Charity's office
- Consultation to better understand residents' priorities, with specific feedback from young people
- Facilitation of free local events, for the enjoyment of local residents
- To adopt a new environmental policy in 2025
- Consideration of the options for Gallows Lodge Farm including the potential creation of a nature reserve and the sale of biodiversity credits.
- To review the investment policy to alter the profile of investments to increase income, or to adopt a total return approach to allow the use of capital growth as income

- To review the grant application process and adopt a more progressive approach to grant giving

10 Gallow Lodge Farm Update – Appendices VI & VII

There was a wide-ranging discussion regarding the proposal to create a wildlife park at Gallow Lodge Farm. Nicholsons, who produced the biodiversity report in September 2024, were commissioned in early 2025 to produce a landscaping plan and a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP). The HMMP would allow the Charity to approach contractors to sell 30 year biodiversity credits on the land, which would generate an income for the Charity, protect the land and create a wildlife haven which was accessible to the public.

Local housing developments would be required to buy biodiversity credits within the local planning authority, which would enable local residents to benefit from local BNG gains. The Charity was the only local landowner which did not have commercial gain as its motive and the creation of a country park/wildlife haven could help prevent the town from becoming an urban sprawl.

The site could generate community engagement from all ages within the Area of Benefit, and offer opportunities for learning, wellbeing, benefits to mental health and volunteering programmes.

Trustees agreed that the Charity would need a documented record of the decision making process but also acknowledged that a final decision was a long way off.

11 Letter from VASL – Appendix XIV

The letter from VASL was noted and regret expressed that it had not been possible for the Charity to provide office space for VASL at the former Roman Way site.

12 Dates of 2025 meetings

- Wednesday 28th May
- Wednesday 3rd September
- Wednesday 26th November

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Serious Incident Reporting Policy

Appendix 2 - Draft minutes 28th November 2024

Appendix 3 - Actions from previous Board meetings

Appendix 4 - Charity Secretary's Report Feb 2025

Appendix 5 - Contact Group Report re Home-Start South Leicestershire

Appendix 6 – Nicholsons Quote January 2025

Appendix 7 – Nicholsons Fee Table January 2025

Appendix 8 - Fisher German Report Feb 2025

Appendix 9 – 2025 Away Day Report

Appendix 10 - Q4 2024 Quarterly Management Report

Appendix 11 - Finance Committee One page summary

Appendix 12 - Mercer Investment Overview

Appendix 13 - Mercer Individual Fund Summaries

Appendix 14 – Letter from VASL