Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the Northam Burrows Corporate Trustee held on the 28th October 2026.

Present: Cllrs Bell (Chair), Bach, Edwards, Hames, Himan, Hodson, Horrocks, Leather, Lo-Vel, Newman-McKie, Sawyer, Singh, Tait and Whittaker.

In attendance: G Langton (Town Clerk), Michael Day (Burrows Ranger)

1. **To receive and approve apologies for absence**
   All members were present

2. **To agree the agenda as published**
   The published agenda was agreed.
   Proposed: Cllr Hodson, Seconded: Cllr Whittaker (all in favour).

3. **To receive any dispensations and disclosable pecuniary or other interests**
   Members were reminded that all interests must be declared prior to the item being discussed. None were disclosed.

4. **Chair's announcements**
   The Chair made no announcements.

5. **Public Participation**
   None were present.

6. **To consider ratifying the decision of the Management Committee that the Northam Burrows Charity earmark £35,000 of its funds on deposit to part-fund a trackway to a new access point ~~for~~ to Follyfoot Stables.**
   The meeting considered the proposal to address the safety and other problems caused by horses gathering at the Sandymere gate to be taken off the Burrows. That proposal was to install a new gated entrance to Follyfoot Stable's land to be accessed by a bridge some 800m to the east of the Sandymere entrance. The intention would be to move the horses onto Follyfoot from the Burrows via this new entrance location, so removing the hazard from the Sandymere entrance, improving the safety of both the horses being grazed on the Burrows and people accessing the Burrows by foot or vehicle at the Sandymere gate.

   The need for a track on Follyfoot's land had been identified to maintain the integrity of the land over which the horses would be walked to and from the stable yard each day. Torridge District Council's Coastal Engineer had sought estimates from grounds work contractors from, which were considered at the Management Committee. The lowest quote was accepted, £34,724 plus a cost for the disposal of the spoil (approx. £7,000). The Committee resolved to apply a condition that all spoil was to be retained on the land occupied by Follyfoot Stables, a saving of approximately £7,000 of the cost of the whole works.

   Other related work to make full use of this new trackway had also been identified, the installation of a replacement bridge on the Burrows across the Pill and the installation of a gate and bridge at the point where the new track meets the Burrows. The cost of this work, plus any permissions required (for example, perpetual rights of and formal planning permission) would be met by Torridge District Council as the Burrows landowner.

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Cllr Tait spoke first, detailing her considerable concerns that the matter had not been thoroughly discussed by the Management committee, including the responses to questions raised at the Charity Commission and with the Corporate Trustee's legal advisors. Further she noted concerns that Follyfoot Stables had no permanent right to graze their animals on the Burrows. Applications to graze were considered annually by the Management committee, so the money could be spent to instal a trackway with no guarantee of its long-term use and not all horses grazed were stabled at Follyfoot. She was concerned that members of the Trustee that were also members of Torridge District Council should have declared an interest, that council being the landowner of the Burrows. Finally, Cllr Tait requested a recorded vote.

Cllr Singh entered at this point (18:40)

The Officer noted that, without specific governance documents detailing the regulations for meeting of the Corporate Trustee, such a declaration of interests was not required.

The Burrows Ranger addressed the points raised by Cllr Tait, clarifying that the Trustee of the Grazing and Commoners' rights was not the Burrows landowner but the Corporate Trustee as Lords of the Manor. The owner of Follyfoot Stables had agreed that all horses that formed a herd with those stabled at Follyfoot would be brought off the Burrows together, as was currently the practice, to avoid distress to the animals. Further, he noted that the origination of the proposal arose because the grazier's rights conflicted with other commoners' rights of access, specifically at the Sandymere gate. Both Torridge District Council and Northam Town Council had received complaints and comments over the years regarding this matter, citing times when cars had been damaged, horses injured and dog walkers unable to pass through the herd gathered at the gate (he read out one such complaint and circulated a photograph).

The Ranger detailed the process that would be needed at Torridge District Council, where the project would need to be approved by the relevant committee and then Full Council. Planning permission would also have to be obtained.

Cllr Whittaker considered that the Charity had a duty if care to those that accessed the Burrows so should seek to minimise the risk to animals, vehicles and pedestrians. She considered the questions asked by the Town Clerk and the responses received were sufficient but noted that future owners of the stables should be required to use the new entrance rather than Sandymere gate.

Cllr Bach asked how the herd would be moved to congregate at the new entrance?
The Ranger explained that the horses only gather at the Sandymere gate to be taken off the Burrows, should this happen at a new gate, the herd would quickly learn the new location.

Cllr Sawyer asked if the stable owner was making a financial contribution?
The Ranger explained that the stables were giving up part of their land for the trackway and to accommodate the spoil created, which was estimated to cost £7,000 to remove otherwise.

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Cllr Lo-Vel asked what would happen to the horses that herded with the Follyfoot animals?
The Ranger explained that the whole herd would be taken off, not just those animals grazed by Follyfoot.

Cllr Newman-McKie considered that the proposed trackway could solve a problem for users of the Burrows and that Follyfoot had been positive in working with the Ranger to find a solution.

Cllr Leather noted that horses gathering at the Sandymere gate had been an issue for a number of years – it was not fair to people or the horses. The proposed solution would improve the situation rather than enhance the business value of Follyfoot Stables. He proposed the recommendation as written.

Cllr Horrocks agreed that creating a new gate and entrance would make the situation safer for all users of the Sandymere gate.

Cllr Edwards detailed his concerns. In his view, the project had been initiated by the landowner of the Burrows and that the trackway was on private land owned by Follyfoot and neither had been asked if they would part-fund the project. He did not consider that every avenue had been explored to alleviate the problem, for example cars could be restricted from the Burrows or from entering at the Sandymere gate whilst horses are gathered and removed from the Burrows. The issue was one which the landowner should meet the cost of, the issue being theirs rather than the Charity's. The Charity was to safeguard the grazier's rights rather than provide numerous accesses to the Burrows. He was concerned that this could create a precedent for other landowners adjoining the Burrows, should they identify the need for a track across their land. The landowner would need to ensure the right of access was legally required, the expense of which should be met by the Landowner and owner of Follyfoot. He was pleased the Town Clerk has asked questions of the Trustee's legal advisors and the Charity Commission. He closed his remarks stating he considered this to be an embezzlement of the Charity's funds.

Cllr Singh asked if Torridge District Council was contributing to the project?
The Ranger explained the TDC was contributing the cost of the required bridges and gate and the landowner's administration, legal and formal permission costs.

Cllr Bell noted that as a common, the land should not be driven on unless to tend to their grazing animals. Others access at their own risk.

Cllr Tait made a further comment that this would set a precedent for other landowners that may want access in the future. She noted her concern that, in her view, all solutions had not been adequately explored. She requested a recorded vote.

Cllr Hames asked if all horses would use the new access?
The Ranger clarified that all horses in that herd would, there were two herds on the Burrows.

Cllr Hodson noted that this proposal had been discussed at five meetings of the Charity Management Committee and that all the points raised had been raised previously. She noted her concern at and objected to Cllr Edwards' use of the word embezzlement. For safety reasons, she agreed the Charity should earmark the funds (£35,000) and so seconded Cllr Leather's proposal.

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Cllr Leather proposed that the Corporate Trustee ratify the decision to earmark £35,000 of its funds on deposit to part-fund a trackway to a new access point for Follyfoot Stables. This was seconded by Cllr Hodson. The recorded vote was as follows:

Cllr Whittaker	In favour	Cllr Newman-McKie	In favour
Cllr Himan	Against	Cllr Bach	In favour
Cllr Hodson	In favour	Cllr Sawyer	Abstained
Cllr Horrocks	In favour	Cllr Tait	Against
Cllr Singh	Abstained	Cllr Leather	In favour
Cllr Lo-Vel	In favour	Cllr Hames	In favour
Cllr Edwards	Against	Cllr Bell	Against

There were eight (8) votes in favour of the proposal, 4 votes against and two (2) abstentions. The motion was carried.

7. **To note the annual grants as awarded by the Management Committee**
   The item was deferred to the Annual General Meeting.

8. **To note the Insurance premium for 2026/27**
   The item was deferred to the Annual General Meeting.

The meeting closed at 7:30pm

Signed..... Date.....

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