MINUTES of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the FRIENDS OF ASTON'S EYOT, held on Wednesday 13th November 2024 at 7.30 pm at the James Street Tavern, James Street, Oxford.

Present: The Committee: Anthony Cheke (co-chair), Ruth Ashcroft (so-chair and meeting chair) Laurie Burrell (treasurer), Susie Jakobsson (membership secretary) Rosemary Cameron, Thelma Martin (minutes), together with 19 members and attenders, of whom a list had been retained.

1. Apologies: Ash Stally-Chudasama, Charlotte Ellis, Bernadette O'Reilly.

2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising: There were no matters arising from the minutes, which had been circulated, and they were approved.

3. Annual Report: Ruth Ashcroft presented the annual report, a copy of which is retained, highlighting the following matters: creation of the ponds, ditch pollution, problems with riverbank trees and the concept of zoning the Eyot for different levels of management.
She thanked all those who had helped with work throughout the year.

4. Treasurer's Report: Laurie Burrell presented his report. He explained the large difference between the start and end of year figures, being that there were grants unspent and bills not submitted at the start of the year which had all been covered by its end.. Tree work had been particularly expensive as large plant with a grab had been needed to remove a felled tree which had had nowhere to fall but in the river. He estimates that FOAE needs £3,000 to £4,000 per annum to cover its running costs and steps were being taken to raise funds. Members were asked to encourage their friends who used the Eyot to become members.

5. Future plans: Ruth Ashcroft explained the principle of zoning on the Eyot. Large deer numbers were reducing the biodiversity of the meadow areas by browsing and grazing, which in turn reduced pollinator numbers and insect life generally. Two large areas to exclude deer would be created, using stock fencing, one at the top edge of the plantation and the other on the Nettle Plain. Discussion of the proposal would be welcomed.

A questioner asked if there was a problem with ticks because of the deer. It was thought not in quantity, as the deer looked healthy and dogs were not picking them up.

A second question about Himalayan Balsam was posed. Members were encourage to pull it out if they saw it as it was highly invasive, and to explain if asked why they were doing it.

Ruth Ashcroft is also in the process of ensuring that the Whole of the Eyot ans Kidneys is included in the Nature Recovery Network scheme.
Members and other Eyot users who were bird watchers were encouraged to report sightings to the Friends by email..

6.Election of Trustees: Three Trustees, Anthony Cheke, Charlotte Ellis and Thelma Martin stood down, but offered themselves for re-election, which was proposed by Jackie Ingram and seconded by Jo Jakobsson and approved nem. con.

7. AOB and general discussion: Anyone who thought they might like to join the committee as a trustee or otherwise was invited to come to a monthly meeting to see how we operate before committing themselves.

The advantages of hand pulling of nettles over mowing was discussed, a member pointing out that an area carefully hand pulled had just produced thistles instead.
Greater use of mower or scythes would be considered.

Patch champions areas of responsibility would be mostly moved into deer exclosures, where they would be protected from browsing.

The formal part of the meeting being over, a video clip selection from the wildlife cameras was shown.

Meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Thelma Martin.