

HEREFORDSHIRE & GLOUCESTERSHIRE CANAL TRUST

Minutes of the HGCT Annual Meeting

7.30 pm Thursday 18th June

Meeting held via Zoom

Welcome. Ralph Barber, Chairman, welcomed all to the virtual AGM – virtual in technology only as the material covered was all real. He gave details of how the meeting would proceed, how to ask questions and how voting would be done.

Apologies: None

2019 AGM Minutes: No questions. Ed Helps proposed acceptance. Approved by majority.

Chairman's remarks:

As the written report could be found on the web site Ralph highlighted and expanded on some parts rather than just read it out verbatim.

“What a year. At the beginning of the year we had some changes to the board and I would like to thank the previous board members, Roger Holmes who left the board early in the year and John Kilpatrick who left us in the later part of 2019.

Thank you to the current board members for continuing the work of the Trust -

Philip, our Treasurer, has done a great job of getting the accounts completed, enabling us to get a brief statement in the Wharfinger and then on the web site in full.

Thank you to Vaughan who was chairman for most of the last financial year and has stepped down due to personal reasons.

Nigel as our longest standing Trustee helping with membership and giving talks to many interested groups.

Eamonn and Ed who bring their business inputs to the trust. They are both very much involved in the relationship with the new tenants at the Lock Keepers, which is developing. As with all of us, their business has been affected by the Coronavirus restrictions. Ed also taken on the role of H&S Trustee

Debbie working with the promotion of the Trust on Twitter, Facebook and the web site.

Tony who with his past in the house building industry has helped us continue to develop the sites, health and safety, as well as working with the volunteers on site.

I have not enough time to mention everyone, but we do have many opportunities for people to get involved.

We have had a number of new volunteers join the Herefordshire sites this last year, more across the whole canal corridor will be very welcome. But it is not just on-site work at a canal side site that is important – it includes the promotion work that is done attending stands at shows (which unfortunately this year have all been cancelled to date); dealing with questions requires some knowledge of the canal and a computer to reply to emails; looking at planning applications to check nothing is built on the protected canal corridor; helping with the office at Malswick and many other tasks that will help restore the canal.

A Strategy review was started and remains ongoing. This has brought together a number of groups looking at sections of the canal. A team in Hereford are looking at the start of the canal and discussions with the local council on a number of sites in Hereford city and further afield in Herefordshire are ongoing.

An engineering team has looked at the major crossing of a road in Newent. After many discussions an inclined plane solution is now under development with the track going through the original station. The railway line was originally built on the old canal – thus we now bring a mixture of different heritage to the restoration.

A team at Over are looking at the development of the site working with the local residents and the new lessee of the Wharf House. The site will be more multifunctional for the Canal Trust, the Model Boaters and Sailing for the Disabled who already use the site, and seeing if the site can be developed further for other water users.

Lots of work occurring with Neighbourhood Plans that are under development in Dymock and Newent, attending their open days and involvement in their steering groups. Further engagement with the councils to continue the work from the past of protecting the route with local plans as they get updated.

What a year with the very warm summer and then flooding over the winter.

A big thank you to all our volunteers, doing the stands, keeping the water way clear, ensuring the welfare of volunteers is looked after and while all these involve people on site.

A big thank you to those who work remotely – Nick Dymott with our new website released this year. Thank you to the readers of the Wharfinger, the feedback of the changes that have occurred to the Wharfinger have been welcomed.

Thanks again to Nick Dymott who has taken over getting the layout correct, whilst I will still be chasing people for those articles. Thank you to you all who have contributed articles. If you have something you would like to have in the Wharfinger, please contact me.

We have also updated Facebook and Twitter. If you have not passed on your email addresses, please do so and we can then get an electronic newsletter to you all. Most of you have replied, but a few still to do so.

Janet Moulton has done a great job of managing the selling of the Grand Holiday Draw tickets. Please contact her if you want some more or you can purchase them from the web site. Debbie and I have collected the cheques during lockdown, well thrown to us from Janet's balcony and got them to the bank, over £1100 so far."

While Ralph was speaking some slides were shown of volunteers at work – at shows and on sites.

There was a pause for any questions – Paul Brown said he had a couple, one on the risks to the charity and one on objectives and activities but he would email them in as not urgent.

Financial Statement and accounts for the year ending 28th February 2020.

Accounts, financial statement, and report were available to all before the meeting and links to them sent out again in the invitation to the AGM.

Thank you to Philip, who has done a great job in getting the papers through the processes required to enable us to have this AGM tonight.

Questions on Accounts

Roger Holmes said he had responded to the Mill Barn appeal and gave a donation - four to five years ago. Not seen any movement on project, is it still going ahead, is it going ahead in the same way, does he have any say in the project and funds?

Ralph Barber responded – also had a written question of similar nature from Caroline Jones. He confirmed that with the change of roles in trustees and additional work last year, Mill Barn had slipped down the list. But after the January strategy meeting and other input Mill Barn is now back on agenda. With the easing of lockdown plans have been shared, discussions and meetings taken place. The current thinking is not to have such a large building as originally planned, but to go for a single storey building, approx. size of two

containers with fully accessible facilities for welfare, situated towards the back of the site at Over. Also need to engage with other site users, Sailing4Disabled, Model boat group. Plus need to discuss with the planning authority, especially regarding flooding assessment. The original Mill Barn project did not obtain planning permission. Timeline? Hope to have made enough progress with ideas to report in the next Wharfinger when can ask other members for suggestions – not just those attending this AGM. Also, to approach original donors to ask if they wish their funds to be transferred to the new project or refunded e.g.

Roger – gave his money to a project, now aggrieved that the project has not been delivered. May request for return of donation.

Ralph replied – also disappointed that the project has not been delivered.

Caroline Jones – speaking as a long-term donor, also disappointed but not aggrieved that project not yet completed. More than happy for her donation to go to remain and go to new Mill Barn. Knows all the work that has to be done even though his no longer a trustee. Has been a lot going on – keep up the good work.

Paul Brown – Loan for £65k mentioned in Wharfinger. Philip Marshall said yes it appears in the canal trust accounts in loans and overdrafts.

Donations and legacies – one of amounts entered in wrong place.

Further queries but he will email.

Appointment of Independent Examiner

Philip Marshall proposed that the Independent Examiner for all the Trust Accounts should continue to be Griffiths Marshall, based in Gloucester.

Majority voted for appointment. One against.

Roger Holmes raised a point of order which was resolved.

Election of Trustees

Ralph then passed the position of chair to Ed Helps for voting of new trustees, commenting that it was a pity no new names have been put forward. Trustees standing down by rotation this year Ralph Barber and Philip Marshall.

Votes to reappoint Ralph Barber majority approval

Philip Marshall majority approval

Ralph took control over meeting.

Written questions.

Report in Wharfinger about tenants leaving one of the Llanthony Cottages with rent owing. Correct – no current information on his whereabouts. Kept deposit, although not enough to cover all rent due. Property now refreshed and up to date with the regulations. New tenants already in. A volunteer is calling in on site almost weekly.

£7403 expenditure – seeking donations, grants and legacies? This is actually the cost of printing and dispatching the Wharfinger – and yes, would be best to have had this as its title. Should not in future be described as a fundraising tool.

Other Questions -

Gillian Chowns – Llanthony tenants – how far in arrears when they left? Philip advised approx. 8 months owing.

Gillian – was surprised to hear that it had got that far, although appreciating work done by volunteers, eight months was a long time. Philip confirmed we now have someone helping out on a regular basis so hopefully such an occurrence won't happen again.

Caroline Jones – as a landlord herself could the trust not take out insurance for any loss of rent? Not much to add to general landlord insurance. Ralph confirmed would take this up with our new insurance brokers.

Paul Brown – had sent in a written query. Said still waiting for a reply to his email – Ralph advised said that he replied yesterday.

Completed first virtual AGM. If you haven't done so we would like to have permission to use email addresses for communication.

Thanks to Ed for the use of his Zoom meeting.

Gordon - would like to congratulate the Chairman for dressing appropriately for the meeting (H&G T shirt).

Ralph thanked everyone for attending and looked forward to seeing everyone down at the canal at some point.

41 members registered for the AGM.