



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SANHS BOARD OF TRUSTEES held on 4th January 2019 at 10:00 at Somerset Heritage Centre

PRESENT: Chris Jessop (Chair), Martin Davidson (Vice-Chair), David Victor (Treasurer), David Reid (Trustee), Sue Goodman (Chair of Library Committee), David Dawson (Chair of Heritage Grants Committee); Anthony Bruce (Chair of Historic Buildings Committee); Chris Chanter (Trustee); Robert Hutchings (Trustee), Tom Winsborough (guest), Rob Webley (Proceedings editor, guest), Louisa Gillett (Office Manager).

1. **Apologies:** David Baker, Liz Caldwell, Adrian Webb
2. **Declarations of interest:** David Dawson – former curator of SANHS' collections (see item 7, Paper 11).
3. **Co-option of new Trustee**
Sue Goodman, Chair of Library Committee, had been proposed as Trustee by Chris Jessop, the proposal supported by David Victor, Adrian Webb, David Reid, Liz Caldwell and Robert Hutchings. Sue signed the Agreement and was duly declared co-opted as a Trustee of SANHS.
4. **Minutes and matters arising of the Board meeting on 5th November 2018**
Action listed after item 4.2.3 was inaccurately described – **LG to amend.**
Item 4.4: Application to Maltwood Fund described as unsuccessful but was in fact incomplete - **LG to amend.**

Matters arising:

4.1. *Review of SANHS' investments (item 4.1.3).* MD had received submissions from the external fund managers approached, was awaiting internal feedback.

Action: MD to present findings to the Executive on 28 January.

4.2. *Exchange journals (item 4.2.3).* 40 organizations currently receive copies of our Proceedings in exchange for their publications.

4.3. *Society's Proceedings (item 4.2.3)* Evaluation of the future of the Proceedings ongoing – AW not present to report. The Library Committee will discuss potential reduction in the publications exchange programme at next meeting, 27 February. Possible sponsorship for Proceedings – research ongoing.

4.4. *Disposal of duplicate items from library (item 4.3.1).* Disposal is proceeding, payments in cash have been received.

4.5. *Website working party (4.3.2).* Recommendations still under discussion.

4.6. *SANHS contingency fund (5.1).* A meeting with Anthony Porter is scheduled for next week.

4.7. *Charges for SANHS events (5.3).* Committee chairs have been notified of new arrangements for booking events and collecting charges; the new system is in place from January 2019.

4.8. *Data protection policy (5.5).* RH, as DPO, is working with LG on this issue. CJ has updated the Welfare policy regarding food at SANHS events.

The minutes as amended were accepted as an accurate record and adopted by the meeting.

5. Reports

5.1. Chairman's Report

5.1.1. *SANHS President.* Lady Gass has been approached to become President for 2019-20, and has agreed. Her name will now be recommended to the AGM.

Proposer: CJ

Secunder: RH

The proposal was accepted by the meeting.

- 5.1.2. *Access to and use of the SANHS room in the MOS.* The room is not much used by members, and tends to become overflow storage for Museum staff. A small selection of duplicate Library books has just been shelved there, for members' use (see note in the January 2019 e-bulletin). Trustees were in favour of keeping the room in the Museum in order to maintain a presence in the Museum and because other accommodation such as Castle House would be costly.

Action: Trustees and chairs of committees to encourage more use of the room by members and SANHS groups.

Action: LG to publicise the Library annexe on the website and Facebook page.

- 5.1.3. *"Taunton Castle" painting.* Restoration is nearly complete, and it will be sited in the Discovery Room (the old library) at MOS when returned. A joint launch event is planned, date to be arranged when restoration is completed.

- 5.1.4. *Review of 2018 business plan.* Five items from the plan had been put on hold (as listed in paper 2b). The meeting agreed to this change.

5.2. Joint meeting between SANHS and SWHT

- 5.2.1. Minutes of the joint meeting on 9 December 2018 had been circulated, and were accepted.

It was clarified that the four existing agreements are:

- Forward Loan Agreement
- Archive Collection Agreement
- Collections Loan Agreement
- Library Collection Agreement

5.3. Treasurer's Report and Accounts

- 5.3.1. *Year-end 2018.* Accounts were presented up to the end of December 2018, but excluding the Dunster Project accounts. They show an overall loss of £5,495, the budgeted figure having been £4,137. DV pointed out that these figures do not include rent withheld by the Castle Hotel, and an invoice from Hatfield White (estate agents) – taking these into account the loss is a little over £9,000. This level of loss is not sustainable. However, DV assured the Trustees that the Society is not insolvent. The accounts will be passed to Amherst & Shapland (accountants) in the next few days, for the year-end reconciliation and to prepare accounts for the AGM. This will take 6-8 weeks, and no major problems are foreseen.

- 5.3.2. *Budgets and spending.* The following points were made during discussion:

- Several grant awards have slipped from 2018 to 2019.
- It is unclear who is the budget-holder for the Museum Collections Fund.
- The large loss in free funds must be improved next year.
- The Society has no overdraft facilities at the bank.
- The Society expects to have reserves of approx. £15K this year. Income from endowments is not available to spend.
- The Castle Hotel is currently withholding its rent for the Norman Gardens.
- As a separate issue, the Castle Hotel rent review is in dispute.
- Quarterly Trustees meetings will be set up, alongside the regular Board meetings, specifically to monitor the financial position during 2019.

- 5.3.3. *Specific economies & fund-raising ideas*

- Consider stopping the printed newsletter
- Examine production costs of Proceedings, e.g., reduce colour printing.
- Review legal fees.
- Grant £450 from the Tite fund towards the Library budget – the Trustees agree this move.
- Put on specific exhibitions from our collections, e.g., a bird exhibition jointly with the Blake Museum in Bridgwater.

Action: AW to report back from the Proceedings review group as soon as possible, with costs.

Action: LG to set up first quarterly budget review meeting, in conjunction with AW's report.

Action: AB to follow up with SWHT the use (if any) of SANHS images at Bridgeman Images, and subsequent royalty payments (if any).

5.4. Report on the Collections Insurance

5.4.1. DV's paper dated 18 December 2018 followed a joint meeting between SANHS and SWHT. SANHS library books cannot be insured while out on loan to members; this is acceptable for the Society but must be confirmed by SWHT. DV will ensure the formal exchange of letters occurs.

5.4.2. There is an anomaly in the Society's overall insurance, which is arranged through Somerset County Council's insurance department. DV will approach SCC, informally at first, to discuss this.

Action: CJ/DV to write to Tom Mayberry confirming library insurance position, with relevant data.

Action: DV to contact SCC through the Society's named contact, regarding insurance.

5.5. Report and Accounts of Early Dunster Project

Position remains as at last Board meeting (5/11/18).

5.6. Reports from Chairs of Committees

5.6.1. *Response levels.* Reports had been received from the Natural History and Historic Buildings Committees; the Library and Heritage Grants Committees had sent null reports. Other Committees had not responded at all. CJ will remind them all of the need for regular reports to Board.

5.6.2. *Charging for events.* Bookings for specific events, and managing fees for these events, are now the responsibility of individual committees. LG asked whether committee chairs were happy to receive event enquiry emails forwarded directly by her. The meeting accepted this.

5.6.3. *Herbarium.* DR reported that the natural history group now has some extra herbarium cabinets, funded by the Rare Plants Group. He also noted that photographs of the Society's newly-remounted herbarium specimens can be seen online. He will liaise with the Website Working Party on potential use of these photographs on the Society's new website.

Action: CJ to email committee chairs about regular reporting.

Action: RH and DR to clarify where herbarium photos are stored online, and how they can be used by the Society.

5.7. Estates Report

5.7.1. MD has asked TDBC whether they would deploy Parks Department staff to help with work in the Norman Gardens (see item 5.9 in his Estates Update); this would be instead of a cash contribution to the project. No reply yet received.

5.7.2. Volunteers are in place, organised by AB, to start preparatory work in the Norman Garden before the main project commences. This would have the extra benefit of showing the Castle Hotel that progress is being made.

5.7.3. The position regarding the Norman Gardens project is complicated – see MD's paper to this Board meeting for full details. The situation has not been helped by Castle Hotel erecting two electric vehicle charging posts on a Scheduled Monument within the Garden, without the necessary permissions. This is unlawful; MD is seeking advice from Historic England.

5.7.4. The Board recommends the following course of action:

- The Board notes the contents of MD's paper 8a presented to this meeting.
- The Board instructs MD to follow up the Society's professional advice and meet Castle Hotel representatives as soon as possible for further discussions. If there is no satisfactory development on the issues of rent withholding, SANHS should send a solicitor's letter to underline our position.
- MD will meet Hotel people within a couple of days of this meeting and expects a response within a month.
- Volunteers should start the preliminary work.
- MD to complete and submit the HLF application.

6. Proposals

6.1. 2019 Budget

The 2019 Budget cannot be adopted as this meeting is not quorate.

6.2. 2019 Business Plan

6.2.1. Following discussion of the Business Plan for 2019, the meeting agreed that the focus of work for 2019 should be: Norman Gardens project, Fundraising, Budget 2019. Any items not covered under these headings will be moved to the 2020 Plan.

6.2.2. CJ will write a realistic strategic plan.

6.2.3. The Plan cannot be formally adopted as this meeting is not quorate, however the 2019 plan was accepted in principle.

Proposer – MD

Secunder – CJ

Accepted *nem con*.

Action: LG to rewrite Business Plan for 2019.

Action: LG to email absent Trustees to ask for their approval.

7. AOB

7.1 “The Society’s Museum Collections: their status as endowed heritage assets”

David Dawson’s paper with this title had been circulated previously. DD spoke to the paper, pointing out that the Museum Collections Fund (previously known as the Museum Replacement Fund) is limited in application and any change of use would have considerable – in DD’s opinion, negative – consequences.

He is also of the opinion that the Society’s museum collections are endowed assets and as such should not be diminished in any way since they enhance the Society’s educational, research and display activities. AB pointed out that there is currently no prospect of replenishing the Museum fund.

DV’s paper on Collections (dated 3 Jan 2019, also previously circulated) makes the case for a clear acquisitions & disposal policy, agreed by the Trustees, for the Museum collections. He stressed that he is not advocating any disposals at present, but pointed out that the collections should be relevant to Somerset and should support the Society’s Objects, i.e., education, research and dissemination/display.

He also noted that SANHS is not an accredited museum, although SWHT is so accredited.

Action: AB to ensure that the Museum Panel minutes are circulated to the Trustees after each meeting.

Action: DD to ensure that the Museum Panel set out their Acquisitions & Disposals policy for discussion by the Trustees.

Action: MD to ask DD [who had left the meeting by this time] for a position statement of the Museum collections, for the Trustees.

8. Date of next meeting

6th April 2019, 10:00 at Friends’ Meeting House, Taunton

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Meeting closed at 13.30