

Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society

MINUTES OF EXTRA MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Monday 30nd October 2023 at 10:30 in the Somerset Heritage Centre

MINUTES

Present: Lizzie Induni (Chair), Martin Salzer (Treasurer), James Spencer, David Reid, Nigel Pearce (Vice President and Trustee), Christine Webster (Honorary Secretary).

Matthew Blows (CIO Trustee) attended via Zoom but was not able to vote.

1. Apologies:

Nil

2. Declarations of Interest:

None declared.

3. Minutes and matters arising from the meeting of the board held on 12th September 2023

It was noted that "Corfe Castle" should be changed to "Castle Cary" at AOB 6.2. Otherwise, minutes accepted as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the chairperson.

Matters Arising

- LI had written to the council to remind them about our concerns in relation to the Mill Leat.
- LI had taken an electricity reading at the Wyndham Hall and would do so every month.
- CW had looked into the asbestos situation at the Wyndham Hall and Chris Jessop had taken over management of making the cut asbestos safe. CJ had contacted Roberts and had received a quote for the work.
- CW had not checked with LG whether the hotel had ever sought permission to erect their shelter in the alcove.
- CW had booked the SANHS room in the office for the next Communications Working Group on Wednesday 8th November at 10.30am
- A letter had been written a letter thanking Keith Gould for his donation of display equipment.

4. Reports

4.1 Financial position of General Purposes Fund

MS distributed document 320 which had been discussed at the last Board meeting. Document 321 was then discussed. MS pointed out that subscriptions had been higher than anticipated and estates income was as expected. Insurance and Professional fees, however, were much higher than expected – they would probably be £5,000 more than budgeted. The Mambo's rent had now been agreed and £1,500 had been offered from Mr Kreshi towards legal fees. This still makes the overspend in the region of £3,500. Website budget was roughly as expected. Rob Webley was fairly confident that Proceedings 166 could be sent out this year. The Marketing section was incorrect and required amendment. Seat donations at the Wyndham Hall was very popular and had already generated £1,400.

Overall, there was a difference between income and expenditure of about £5,000. This would leave about £2,000 in the General Purposes Fund which is not enough. JS pointed out that the Contingency fund was for this sort of situation and should be used.

The SANHS accountant had been in the office last week to discuss CIO conversion and the Murless Bequest. He recommended that the Charity Commission was informed of the bequest. They might wish to be informed of how this money was going to be spent in furthering its charitable aims. There was a discussion of whether this money could be invested to generate funding for the charity in the future. MS explained that the accountant had discussed a Deed of Variation whereby the terms of a will could be modified if an executor agrees. It was agreed that a mixture of funding for projects and investment to generate funding for the working of the charity was the ideal situation.

MS speculated how much the society would lose if 15% of members did not renew their membership in 2024. There would still be an increase of about £1,500 but we would need to spend more on printing because everyone now gets a copy of Proceedings. MS also suggested Life Membership subscriptions went into a separate fund. MB also put forward the idea of a hardship fund which could be used to subsidise membership for people on limited income.

4.2 Murless Bequest – the accountant had been invited into the SANHS office last week to discuss the implications of this generous donation. He had thought that keeping it in the CCLA account was safe under present financial conditions. JS wondered whether the precarious financial situation of Somerset Council might impinge on SANHS and whether this money might be required if there was a dramatic change in our situation.

4.3 Reports on the SANHS Estate

4.3.1 Castle Gardens – some of the trees in the garden were becoming quite large and it was thought the job of trimming these trees was a responsibility for the landlord. NP thought the Castle Hotel would appreciate more guidance on what jobs were their responsibility in the gardens and how to maintain them. CW thought the best people to do this was the old gardening team and she would contact Chris Jessop. LI asked whether we could have more clarity on the terms of the lease. NP would ask Rachael for guidance on this. It would also be useful if the hotel received guidance on how to look after the walls which were becoming very overgrown. Chris Chanter had provided an estimate for railings in the garden. However, they were non-compliant with the brief. NP had been promised a quote by the end of the week from Creative Landscapes and they could probably do the work before the end of the year.

4.3.2

Northern Gardens – The Mill Leat has still not been repaired. NP thought we should be reminding Somerset Council of their obligations in terms of Health and Safety. We should be asking what they are doing to monitor the safety and effectiveness of the Mill Leat wall in times of heavy rainfall. There is an obligation in the lease for the council to carry out repairs.

4.3.3 Wyndham Hall – a lot of work has been put into the hall by various volunteers. There has been an issue with finding appropriate fabric for the seats. Keith Gould has been working to ensure there is storage space under the stage. The group desperately need a vacuum cleaner. MS said there was £1,000 earmarked for such things. The trustees voted through this proposal to spend £1,000 on Wyndham Hall repairs etc. Roberts has provided a quote to encapsulate the cut asbestos surfaces and provide the necessary certification. This comes to £780 + VAT. MS explained that a donor was willing to cover most of the cost of this work as a

donation to the Wyndham Hall Project. MS asked for a vote from trustees to carry out this work – it was supported by all. LI wondered whether we would need a trading arm when we started to hire out the hall. MB agreed to ask Counterculture about this. It was agreed that we needed a business plan for the Wyndham Hall. NP pointed out that locking up was always an issue in the past. This needed consideration.

4.3.4

The lease for Mambo's had been agreed with the tenant and it was hoped that this would go through asap.

4.4 Membership report – it was agreed that LG had been carrying out very valuable work in completing the forms that would be used for members to renew, donate, apply, sign up for mailings and volunteer. Much still needed to be done to ensure this was ready for the end of the year and if it was to be completed on time and effectively, LG was willing to do some overtime (4 hours a week). MS said there was money (up to £2,000) in the budget for this work. All trustees voted in favour of this proposal.

4.5 Engagement and Marketing

4.5.1 Rebranding for CIO – LI thought this was an excellent time to consider what people wanted from the Society. Perhaps it was an opportunity to ask the members what they wanted. DR thought we were missing the opportunity to ask for bequests. NP thought that SANHS needed more social events. CW went through the new logos that had been suggested for the Society. The circular, double ringed logo was the favourite but with the date replaced by the acronym. LI also wondered about changing the font. CW to look into.

4.5.2 SANHS Flyer - CW pointed out that we do not have an up-to-date flyer and maybe this was the opportunity to ask a professional to design one.

4.5.3 Website for CIO – it was agreed that Mark Francis (who has been making running repairs to the website) needs to have a purchase order. The Dunster Project would like to have an area of the website for their work but would like it to be accessed by a limited number of people. The Society needs a Website Working Group to decide what work needs doing. MS thought we were all very busy at the moment and we do not have time to tackle this.

4.5.4 Eventbrite – CW explained that Eventbrite can be used as a marketing platform for all our events. It can be used for free events where donations are collected. 2% of donations were retained by Eventbrite. All trustees voted to approve the proposal to use Eventbrite for marketing.

4.6 Report from CIO Steering Group - JS asked what would be the implications for SANHS if Somerset Council went bankrupt? At the moment, the main block to progress is the lack of response from Somerset Council about our change to CIO. MB advised that the conversion required this response and we should hold fire until we had received it.

4.7 Training for Office Manager – MS explained that Paxton might not be the financial software used next year and we needed to decide whether we went over to using “Zero”.

5 Proposals

5.1 Review of Trustee Voting by Email – it was decided this needed rewriting.

5.2 Review of Purchasing and Delegation Policy – to be considered at next Board meeting.

5.3 Adoption of Privacy Policy – approved by all trustees.

5.4 Adoption of Membership Terms and Conditions – this required a few minor changes.

5.5 Adoption of Archive Retention Policy – approved by all trustees.

6. AOB

6.1 General Meeting on 2nd December at Wyndham Hall

The Wyndham Hall General Meeting on 2nd December was being planned. There had been a plan to ask the Flea Circus man to do a talk but he was not replying to emails. MS offered to do an illustrated talk on East Coker after the war. NP offered to use his Booker card to buy wine and other items. LI to buy Christmas lights.

NP had received a letter from CICCIC asking for support for a new Heritage Project. All trustees agreed this was a good idea.

6.2 Board Meetings for Next Year – all dates were approved.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 21st November at Castle Cary – DR to organize.

Actions

LI

- Write letter to council about our concerns in relation to the Mill Leat, reminding them of their responsibilities re Health and Safety.

CW

- Contact C Jessop about writing a report on Castle Garden Maintenance.
- Check with LG whether the hotel had ever sought permission to erect their shelter in the alcove.
- Ask for a different font for suggested logo.

NP

- Ask Rachael to provide a clear list of what the Castle Hotel should be doing in the gardens in terms of maintenance.
- Distribute quote for railings asap.