

EXETER CIVIC SOCIETY

Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 16 May 2023

Present: Keith Lewis (Chairman), Gert Vonhoff, Jane Evans (Treasurer) Andy McKeon (Secretary), John Monks, Jennifer Woodman, Pamela Wootton. Hazel Harvey attended as President.

Apologies: None.

1. Minutes of previous meeting – 28 March 2023.

The minutes were approved. They had been posted on the Members' section of the website

2. Matters arising.

Item 3 Matters Arising. Central Station Cupola. KL had identified who in Great Western Railway was responsible for the station and cupola. They had said that they intended to return the cupola to its site but had given no date. KL had written seeking a definite timescale.

Item 3 Letter template. A sample of the letter template was tabled. GV would circulate an electronic version to committee members only.

Item 3 Advertising stand. GV had purchased the advertising stand.

Item 3 Discovering Exeter Booklets. AM reported that comments could still be sent to Ian Maxted. A copy of Ian's draft would be sent to HH (AM) .

Item 8 Blue Plaques. AM reported that there were spaces available for the talks preceding the unveiling of the Mary Willcocks' plaque on 9 June. This would be advertised in the forthcoming bulletin. Topsham Museum had pencilled in the Dick Pym plaque for 31 July. (Now confirmed for noon 31 July.) The plaque will be on Ferry Road on the wall immediately below Topsham Parish Church.

Item 9 Revising the constitution. It was expected that a draft revised constitution would be available for discussion at the July meeting.

Item 11. Pyramids Leisure Centre Foundation Stone. JE would be contacting the developers to seek the stone's preservation on the new development.

4. Chair's Report.

New Member Event. Five new members had said they wished to attend the blue plaques walk and meeting on 22 May. It was agreed that the walk would go ahead (AM) but that the meeting at St Stephen's would be cancelled and refund sought (GV – now confirmed a refund would be given). Instead, the walk would end at a suitable central bar for discussion with light refreshment and drinks for new members paid for by the Society (AM).

Exeter Observer. KL said that he would be attending the Exeter Observer meeting on 17 May. GV had attended a previous one in the series but commented that it had been mostly about the Observer's fund-raising campaign. The Observer had highlighted the relative secrecy of some ECC discussions. Committee members had had similar experience and commented that it was often difficult to identify individuals and committees responsible or accountable for particular activities. JM suggested that the Civic Society might

research and report on these issues. KL said he would consider this but it was noted that it would substantially fall outside the Society's charitable objects.

Community Alliance membership. This was deferred to the next meeting to allow time to consider the Alliance's response to the Society's questions and concerns.

Heritage Harbour Festival. Volunteers had been found for the stall. KL and GV intended to lead two walks round the Water Lane/Haven Banks areas so that festival-goers would have a better idea of the developments proposed. GV had prepared some flyers for the stall describing the Society and its forthcoming campaigns. KL would provide a crib sheet about the Society for people on the stall.

The speaker programme for May to December would be:

- 20 May Dr Suaad Genem-George on the Respect Festival.
- 17 June Dr Julia Neville on 1920s Exeter. (AM to lead meeting]
- 15 July Darren Stockley of Gorst Energy with a follow-up visit to the plant on 28 July. (GV).
- 19 August. No meeting.
- 16 September. Diana Moore (Green Councillor) with others on sustainable transport in the city centre. (GV)
- 21 October. Dave Crump on Fred Karno (AM)
- 18 November AGM
- 16 December Peter Stevenson of St Petroc's (JM)

Other future possible speakers and talks for 2024 were:

- Martin Redfern of Exeter Observer (KL)
- Topsham Museum who had offered a talk in return for the Society talking to their members about blue plaques. (Hilary Neville)
- Dave Hodgson, ECC's Finance Director, on local government finance and Exeter.
- Bindu Arjoon, ECC's new Chief Executive.
- Tony Buller on Exe Bridges (PM to provide details to KL).
- Dissenters' Graveyard speaker (PM to provide details to KL).

Then, Now, Next walks. The next walk led by Lynn Hornblower would be on 6 June starting at St David's station, finishing at the new Marsh Barton station and would feature transport down the Exe. The July walk (date to be arranged) would follow the flow orchards from the swing bridge to Countess Wear and might be marketed as a family occasion. The May New Town walk had been washed out and would be rearranged.

Tuckers' Hall Visit. KL proposed that a guided tour be arranged for members in the autumn. The cost would be c£5 each. He would take this forward.

Cathedral Archive Visit. KL proposed that committee members might visit the archives, possibly in August, as only a small group could be accommodated. He would take this forward.

Heritage Assets. KL had discussed ECC's reply with Anthony Harding (AH) who had raised the topic originally. They had agreed that AH would take photographs of the dilapidated walls for a press release and further publicity to put pressure on ECC to repair them.

Letter to ECC CEO. KL had written to the new CEO, Bindu Arjoon, to introduce the Society and raise concerns about the proposed 'Canalside' development at the canal basin. The letter proposed that any development proposals should be deferred until the Heritage Harbour and canal strategy had been completed and Historic England given an opportunity to review their initial comments in light of that.

Working arrangements with Topsham Association. KL had written to the association but not yet received a reply.

Planning Workshop. Chris Dent, a planning consultant, had recently joined the Society and had offered to hold a planning workshop for members, with help from Paul Barkley. KL would take this forward.

5. Treasurer's Report.

JE said that very little had changed since her last report. JE would report at the July meeting on her writing to Life Members about making donations.

It was agreed that people joining now would pay the full 2022/23 subscription. Those joining two months before the start of the next subscription year would be charged the 2023/24 subscription of £15 which would cover the 2023/24 year as well.

6. Planning Report.

PW apologised that she had been unable to circulate her planning report because of ill-health. (The full report is circulated with these minutes.) She detailed the applications considered by the sub-group.

Significant points were:

- Paternoster House development with retail on the ground floor and basement and apartments above, accepted.
- 35 Church Road and proposed development of St Thomas' Library. Significant concerns had been raised about the nature of the proposal and its presentation.
- Walnut House, which had been empty for 3 years and was now proposed for possible co-living accommodation – accepted as the building had badly deteriorated and this was likely to be the best solution.
- St Leonard's Road/Wonford Road junction, erection of a 16m telecommunications pole. A very poorly sited proposal in a conservation area which would be opposed.
- Summerland Street, 9 storey co-living development. Although well-supplied with communal spaces the proposed building was high and some room sizes were potentially very small. KL noted that comments on this scheme should be sent to PW.
- University campus solar panels proposal. No objection had been raised.

Lower Hoopern Valley. This was not a planning application. PW said that the University was seeking ideas about how the valley could be used for educational purposes. GV expressed concern that significant use would damage the valley which formed a green buffer between the campus and the city. Any proposals needed careful scrutiny. PW would be attending the University's open event on the valley.

KL mentioned that there had been a meeting between the developer and planning officers about the Moor Exchange planning application. The developers are now to provide more information to clarify some aspects of the proposal.

7. Strategic Planning and Highways Group report.

GW had circulated a report on recent activity. The sub-group proposed two projects for the next year:

- Work on 'active travel' to understand more fully its implications for Exeter and how progress could best be made, including securing general support.
- Ensuring preservation of mature trees which might come under threat. This had been sparked by identifying that the mature trees beside the Pyramids Leisure Centre which might be threatened by the centre's development were not subject to preservation orders. The ECC website identifying trees

with preservation orders had not been updated since 2022. ECC's tree officer had been approached about both issues and would put forward a council supported tree preservation order for the trees beside the leisure centre.

The need for volunteers for both working groups would be publicised in the bulletin, at the Heritage Harbour Festival, at Society meetings and elsewhere (GV/AM)

KL had emailed Ian Collinson (IC) of ECC, copy to Emma Morse Planning Committee chair, seeking a meeting about proposed CIL allocations. IC had replied that there would be a further engagement with stakeholders in due course – effectively declining a specific meeting with the Society in the near future. Diane Moore had written to IC saying there should be greater engagement with local people. KL would follow-up the correspondence, mainly to raise issues about the proposed new bridge over the canal and how this would obstruct canal users.

8. New Information Leaflet

GV tabled copies of the new leaflet about the Society and flyers about the two new projects on active travel and tree preservation. These could be produced very cheaply on a home printer.

9. Any Other Business

The Committee approved expenditure for a small present for Sam Freeman for renewing the website (GV/JE)

10. Dates of meetings

18 July 2023 at 2pm Southernhay United Reformed Church. AM to organise.

29 August 2023 at 2pm Southernhay United Reformed Church. AM to organise.

31 October 2023 at 2pm Southernhay United Reformed Church. AM to organise.