

EXETER CIVIC SOCIETY

Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 15 May 2024

Present: Keith Lewis (Chairman), Gert Vonhoff, Andy McKeon (Secretary), Rita Watson, Jennifer Woodman. Hazel Harvey, Ian Maxted (to Item 4)

Apologies: Pamela Wootton, John Monks, Jane Evans

1. Minutes of previous meeting – 11 March 2024.

The minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising.

Item 3. Heritage Harbour Group. Kept on hold.

Item 3 Heritage Assets letter. Exeter City Council (ECC) had now replied explaining that there was no fixed budget for repair of the city wall. Staffing difficulties had also caused problems but they expected that a reorganisation of responsibilities would improve matters.

Item 3 AGM Follow-up. RW had now been added to the list of trustees held by the Charity Commission.

Item 3. GV reported that the digital versions of the Discovering Exeter booklets had been moved to the Members' Area of the website. A note on the website explained how copies could be purchased.

Item 5. Larkbeare House. AM reported that Devon County Council had accepted a tender for Larkbeare House and grounds. Historic England were still considering listing the building and grounds.

4. Discovering Exeter Booklets

AM had circulated a paper on progress on revising the St Leonard's booklet and on potential costs. Ian Maxted (IM) had circulated a revised draft in A5 landscape. It was agreed that:

- The booklet would be in A5 landscape;
- The cover would include one or more modern photographs, with a further small one on the back;
- The map for the walks would be inside either the front or back cover;
- consideration should be given to renaming the booklet 'St Leonard's and the Quay';
- Exe Valley would be used for printing and any design work, being the cheapest option and having done a good job on the Water Lane prospectus;
- Aylwyn Bowen's design idea would be used but as much as possible would be done by IM in order to limit costs. Specific design work might need to be done on the map for the walks.

- IM would work on editing the draft with help from AM and Hilary Neville with the aim of publishing the booklet in the autumn. Comments from other committee members would be welcomed.

5. Society Presidency

Hazel Harvey said that she would stand down as President before the AGM in November. Dr Julia Neville had indicated that she would be willing to stand for the Presidency at the AGM, which was welcomed by committee members. HH was thanked for all her work over many years for the Society.

6. Chair's Report.

KL had circulated a written report.

The speaker programme to July is:

- 18 May Peter Knight, Stagecoach South West Region Managing Director (AM)
- 15 June To be arranged (now John Davidson on Exeter floods, AM to chair)
- 20 July Richard Holladay on the past retail trade in the centre of Exeter (KL)

Other possible speakers and talks for 2024 were:

- 'Mark' from the Exeter Food Bank (KL has approached and awaiting response)
- Exeter Cycle Campaign.
- Stuart Blaylock, Devon Archaeological Society, who had agreed to talk about Rougemont Castle later in the year and lead a walk round the city walls (which would need to be done in two halves) with a possible visit to their premises in Dix's Field.

The next walk would be on 5 June along the River Valley Park – a re-run of the cancelled May one.

KL noted that the Society had responded to a number of significant consultations. He hoped that the Society could work with the local community on the St Luke's redevelopment although it was probably too late to produce a design code as the University aimed to submit its planning application later in the summer.

KL, GV and AM had met the Devon Archaeological Society mainly to discuss the state of the city walls. He hoped that there would be closer cooperation between the two organisations on campaigning for the city's historical assets to be better looked after.

7. Treasurer's Report.

In the absence of JE, KL noted that the Society had about £3000 in its bank account.

8. Planning Report

KL had circulated the minutes of the 12 March, 2 April and 23 April planning group meetings. There had been a further meeting on 14 May. There had been no major items. The group had opposed 18 zero carbon bungalows in Pinhoe, the demolition of the Wonford Inn and the revised proposals for 88 co-living rooms at the rear of 81 Victoria Street. Comments on the proposed city wall repairs were being left to the Devon Archaeological Society which had greater expertise. No decision had been made but the

group was unlikely to object to the proposed 19 apartments at 7-11 North Street although might express some specific concerns. The group considered the proposed Exwick parish hall to be a good design.

9. Strategic Planning and Highways

GV had circulated a report on the group's activities and on discussions with groups for and against the Heavitree and Whipton Low Traffic Neighbourhood.

There was insufficient support for a roundtable discussion of the LTN based on the Society's draft response. The response had therefore been finalised and submitted and published on the Society's website. Several people had commented on it and GV proposed to respond with a composite reply rather than to individual comments.

Comments had been submitted on the proposed bus corridor improvements on Pinhoe and Heavitree Roads, and on the proposed St Luke's campus redevelopment. GV and AM would meet the agents for the Water Lane development on 16 May to hear their latest proposals. At the meeting it was learnt that a revised application has been submitted and will be published on the planning portal. There is an agreed timeline with ECC to move towards a planning decision by this autumn.

10. Blue Plaques Report.

AM updated the Committee on the report circulated by Hilary Neville. A date for the Margaret Jackson plaque unveiling had been agreed with the centre trustees for Saturday 28 September. Additional donations had been made by the Faculty of Sexual Health and Reproductive Medicine (£100) and the Medical Women's Federation (£250). Letters of thanks have been sent by the Society. Local individuals were also underwriting the cost of the plaque. A grant application had been made to the Elmgrant Trust. A suitable venue for the celebration after the unveiling was being sought – members suggested the Barnfield Theatre. Stephen Timms who had proposed the plaque intended to organise a speaker and produce a booklet about Dr Jackson and her work.

The committee noted that Frederick Long, an Exeter photographer at the end of the nineteenth century, had been nominated for a plaque but the evidence provided did not yet support the criterion that the individual be a 'notable person of Exeter'. The nominator had been asked to provide further evidence in support of a plaque.

11. Heritage Harbour Festival.

GV had circulated a paper on the event and proposed competition. The Committee agreed £20 expenditure to finance the competition and some prizes. Volunteers were needed for the afternoon session and would be sought via the Bulletin and Saturday's open meeting.

12. Healthy Streets Coalition.

GV had circulated a paper on the proposed Healthy Streets Coalition which was being led by Mike Walton (Exeter Cycle Campaign) and Kate Jago (Exeter Doiughnut – a new economics group). The proposed management arrangements had been significantly amended in light of the Society's and others' comments. GV and KL proposed that the

Society joined the coalition with its revised terms of reference as set out in the paper. The Committee agreed.

13. Website Visits.

GV had circulated an analysis of the website usage for the first 3 months of the year. The data showed steady traffic with some 3900 visitors over the 90 days, with spikes aligned to news items and Society activity on X and Facebook. GV would look to refresh old pages with news items so as to encourage more visits.

14. Any Other Business.

JE and IM were working on curating the Society's archive. IM had listed the Society material held in the South West Heritage archive.

15. Dates of Next Meetings

Wednesday 23 July, Tuesday 8 October and Wednesday 11 December, all at 2pm Southernhay United Reformed Church. AM to organise.