

EXETER CIVIC SOCIETY

Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 15 July 2025

Present: Keith Lewis (Chair), Gert Vonhoff, Andy McKeon (Secretary), Jennifer Woodman, Jane Evans (Treasurer), Hilary Neville. Ian Maxted (non-committee member)

1. Apologies and welcome.

Apologies were received from John Monks and Pamela Wootton. KL welcomed Ian Maxted to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the 23 April meeting.

The minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising.

Item 3. Newsletter adverts. JE had placed a regular advert in the St. Leonard's Neighbourhood news. KL was waiting for a copy of the St. Thomas newsletter from Wendy Rakestrow before including an advert for the Society.

Item 3. Heritage Open Day. IM agreed to undertake a city centre walk on one or more of the open days. He would contact the ECC coordinator and seek to get the walk included in the publicly advertised list of activities.

Item 4. Royal Clarence. Nooko had replied to JM saying that the blue plaque would be carefully looked after and replaced on the façade of the building in the same place once work was complete. They had also offered a tour of the building at a later stage of the work. KL would also contact them about placing a time capsule in the new building.

Item 4 Upper Leat. KL had written to the Environment Agency but had had no reply. He would chase them for one. ECC and Devon Wildlife Trust were keen to see more water in the leat. He hoped all parties would come together to resolve the issue satisfactorily.

Item 4. 416-418 Pinhoe Road. HN had had a positive reply from ECC about local listing but any addition to the list would need to wait for the new local plan to be approved. HN would ask for more information from ECC about the listing process and information required.

Item 4. Bowhill visit. KL was awaiting a reply from Stuart Blaylock about leading a possible visit. He would also involve Wendy Rakestrow in its organisation.

Item 9. Heritage Harbour Festival. The placing of the stall had been disappointing and limited the number of visitors to it. GV recommended that the Society should not take part in a future event if the stall was to be similarly placed.

Item 10. Civic Voice. It was agreed that, in view of Civic Voice's current relative organisational weakness and the cost of joining, the Society would not become a full member. KL would join Civic Voice as an associate member.

Item 11. Hazel Harvey papers. IM reported that he had catalogued nearly all the textual material and added a few of his own. He was working on cataloguing the illustrations and

identifying those used in ECS publications. The Devon Heritage Centre held some ECS archived material and he had identified duplicates of items in HH's papers. Splitting the remaining papers between the Devon Heritage Centre and the Devon and Exeter Institution might be possible if they would accept them but his preferred approach was to retain them in the city centre in a Heritage Centre, perhaps associated with a Tourist Information Centre. In the meantime he would store the papers. He also recommended that the Society had a defined archival set of papers and publications.

Committee members doubted that there would be funding for a city centre heritage site to hold the papers. But they strongly endorsed the need for a city centre tourist office as part of stronger marketing of Exeter's heritage. InExeter supported these ideas as it would increase footfall for businesses. It was agreed that IM would raise the case for a city centre heritage centre/tourist office at Todd Gray's event on 26 July. ECS would also continue to argue the case for a central tourist office whenever possible.

Discussions extended to who controlled Exeter City of Literature. IM agreed to investigate who it is that controls activities and how they function and, if possible, to report back at the next meeting.

4. Chair's Update

KL had circulated a written report. Points considered further were:

KL and GV had met the chief executives of CoLab and InExeter. They shared several ambitions with the Society. KL and GV would continue to meet and if possible develop joint projects. They hoped to meet the Princesshay manager to discuss their plans for Paris Street and South Sidwell Street.

KL would meet the ECC urban design and landscape officer on 22 July to discuss how North Street could be improved, perhaps with a contribution from the developer of the Mary Arches car park site. KL would be accompanied by two members who had urban design qualifications.

The speaker programme is:

- 19 July Hugh Meller, Devon Dead and Buried (AM)
- 20 September Fiona Garden of CoLab invited.
- 18 October Ben Clapp, Restoration and Restorers of St Nicholas Priory. (AM)
- 15 November AGM
- 13 December Rory Cunningham, University lead for community engagement had been approached. (GV)..
- 17 January John Davidson, Exeter buildings (KL)
- 21 February Internal discussion of city developments.

JW suggested Saturday morning meetings should be extended to 1230 to leave more time to wrap up and look at any materials brought by speakers. AM would investigate the costs.

Walks

- 3 September, Trees in Exwick Cemetery, David Solman.
- 9 October 1920s Exeter (AM/HN with JN leading).

- November Tbc

The Pinhoe to Broadclyst walk had been successful. The longer walk gave more scope for engagement and the format should be repeated in the future.

5. Treasurer's Report

JE reported that there had been little change in the Society's finances. She was still waiting for information on the annual cost of maintaining the Matthew the Miller clock. HN reported that the clock did not seem to be working.

6. Strategic Planning and Highways

GV had circulated a report on the group's activities. The group would meet on 31 July and agree responses to the Mary Arches car park development and the proposals for the Heavitree Road Police Station and Magistrate's Court site.

GV and KL would also be pursuing opportunities for further engagement with the Exeter Partnership and follow-up meetings and actions with CoLab and InExeter.

The Tree Preservation Task Force would meet on 21 August to consider trees which may need protection. David Solman was considering a leaflet on Exeter's trees.

7. Planning Report

Minutes of recent Planning Group meetings had been circulated. The proposed pontoon in the canal basin had been reconsidered by the group and objections raised (Item 7 of 23 April minutes). KL would contact Diana Taylor about help in following up what happened to planning applications when the Society raised concerns or objected.

8. Discovering Exeter Booklets

It was agreed that updating the booklets will be a priority for the Society over the next few years, and that due to the cost and time required for this, that new Blue Plaques will be suspended. However, supporting information for the Blue Plaques will be developed.

- AM reported that David Solman was undertaking further research for the West of the River update.
- KL and AM had met Heavitree History Society about updating the Heavitree booklet. They had agreed. They had been asked to consider taking in the area of Newtown which would not be included in the St. Sidwell's update. AM would follow-up.
- IM reported that he had circulated the latest draft of a Countess Wear booklet and that the community are interested in including this into the Society's Discovering Exeter Series. AM would meet the authors.
- 25 copies of the St. Leonard's and the Quay booklet had been sold at the Magdalen Road Fair. The booklet was now in profit.
- AM was considering writing a version for the centre of the city which had never been covered in the series.

9. Any other business

There was no other business.

10. Dates of Next Meetings

Wednesday 27 August, Tuesday 28 October and Tuesday 16 December. All at 2pm
Southernhay United Reformed Church. AM to organise.