

EXETER CIVIC SOCIETY

Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 18 February 2025

Present: Keith Lewis (Chair), Gert Vonhoff, Andy McKeon (Secretary), Jennifer Woodman, Jane Evans (Treasurer), Hilary Neville, Pamela Wootton

Apologies: John Monks

KL thanked GV for the great deal of work he had undertaken since the last meeting including bringing together comments on the Exeter Plan, commenting on and speaking at the council committee meeting on the Water Lane development, charring planning group meetings and leading a walk.

1. Minutes of previous meeting – 11 December 2024.

The minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising.

Item 3. Discovering Exeter Booklets. AM reported that over 70 booklets had been sold bringing in £375. RAMM had offered to take 25 copies at £3 each for sale at £5 and this was agreed by the committee. Total income including the RAMM copies would therefore be £450 against costs of £491. AM would visit the Custom House to see if there was any interest in taking copies. The St. Leonard's Neighbourhood Association had been provided with a copy. The ISBN number had been registered and a copy provided to the British Library. Copies would be provided to the other five statutory deposit libraries if they requested them. PW asked if the DEI had been given a copy – post meeting one has now been provided.

Blue Plaques Report. HN had provided a written report. Donations had covered the costs of the Margaret Jackson plaque with a small excess of £52.11. It was agreed this would be put towards the next plaque in line with the final donor's wishes. There had only been one response to the questions in the Bulletin about blue plaque policy. It was agreed the policy would remain unchanged with plaques only for individuals and where there was a building associated with them. HN would submit a proposal to the London scheme for a blue plaque for Dr Foulkes. HN would in due course investigate the suggested blue plaque to Henry Chadwick the reputed 'father of baseball'. HN would be meeting GV to discuss website entries.

Item 3. Community Alliance. This item was held over for the next meeting (KL).

4. Chair's Update

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

Exeter Energy. Although it was agreed that the Society should continue to press its case against the plant's location, KL considered it would be very difficult to get the planning application rejected given the council's apparent attitude although the rationale for the location of the plant had changed significantly as it would now use heat pumps rather than

extraction of river water. The potential for flooding was also significant. There was to be a presentation on 4 March at the St Leonard's Primary School about the intention to install district heating pipework at the Belle Isle Park development.

Clarendon House. KL noted that the meeting with the developer's representatives had been disappointing as they said the proposals were in line with what Heritage England and Exeter City Council wanted.

Royal Clarence. The new owners had not replied to KL's letter requesting a meeting with the Society and others. He would chase them.

The speaker programme is:

- 15 March Stuart Blaylock to talk about Bowhill.
- 12 April (Meeting date rearranged). Social event at the Friends Meeting House including a talk by Chris Dent. KL had already liaised with Corinne Richards about refreshments and would discuss logistics with Chris Dent.
- 17 May John Davidson on the lost rivers of Exeter. (KL)
- 21 June John Smith on Roman Life in Exeter (no AV required. GV would chair the meeting in KL's absence.)

KL asked that other committee members provide speakers for the rest of the year. GV would contact Fiona Carden CEO of Exeter Colab and, separately, the University Community Liaison officer to discuss speaking at Saturday meetings in the autumn which would also be an opportunity to raise working with the Society. John Davidson had agreed to speak in a light-hearted way about some Exeter buildings in January 2026.

Walks

- 5 March St Thomas, Wendy Rakestrow.
- 2 April University walk, GV.
- 7 May City Centre Trees David Solman.
- 4 June St. Leonard's Alms houses, church and school, Stephen Mariner.
- 16 July Pinhoe to Broadclyst, HN

5. Treasurer's Report

JE had circulated an up to date set of accounts. Life member payments (donations and 3 new subscriptions) totalled £585 with annual subscriptions at £1488. 8 new members had joined since January but total annual membership was lower than the previous year.

6. Strategic Planning and Highways.

GV had circulated a report on the group's activities. There were three additional points:

- GV would arrange a meeting in early March to discuss distribution and analysis of the supplementary documents to the Exeter Plan.
- GV and KL would seek a meeting with Richard Clark of Water Lane DMC to discuss flooding and flood egress, the potential use of the Tan Lane tunnel and other issues.
- AM would review the East Devon Plan and provide draft comments. These were likely to concentrate on the traffic implications of the proposals.

7. Planning Report

Minutes of recent Planning Group meetings had been circulated. Additional points were:

- Mallinson Bridge. The Society had asked for reassurance that the walkway would be made of slip proof materials. PW raised concerns about whether the bridge would be accessible to motorised wheelchairs. KL would check.
- Small energy plants (batteries) were being developed next to electricity sub-stations. It was noted that screening would be needed to prevent them being eyesores.
- KL would continue to seek new members for the Planning Group, who might be part-time if they could not realistically attend every meeting.

8. Recruitment

In addition to continuing to speak to other groups:

- Retirement homes/villages might be a fruitful source of new members. Catherine Johns might be a suitable contact for Millbrook.
- Arranging to attend a meeting of Community Builders.
- Exeter College and University geography departments may provide opportunities to give talks and recruit younger members.
- The Heritage Harbour Festival on 8 June presented another opportunity to sell Society publications and recruit new members (GV to arrange stall).
- Adverts or notes in local group newsletters. The St. Leonard's Neighbourhood Association had agreed to include a rolling piece in their newsletter. The committee agreed that a small fee/donation e.g.£20 could be given (JE to organise – committee members to offer suggestions.) Additional ones could be the St Thomas' Newsletter and the newly established website for West of the River.

9. Civic Voice In JM's absence this item was held over for the next meeting.

10. Any Other Business.

AM noted that the recently circulated report on the visit by the Heritage Panel to the council made some strong recommendations about community engagement and the city having a better narrative and greater emphasis on its heritage. Some recommendations about not including Sidwell Street in the East Gate development area and a much more modest proposal for the South Gate might already have been reflected in the Exeter Plan.

15. Dates of Next Meetings

Wednesday 23 April, Tuesday 15 July, all at 2pm Southernhay United Reformed Church. AM to organise.