

EXETER CIVIC SOCIETY

Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 23 April 2025

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

1. Minutes of previous meeting – 18 February 2025.

The minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising.

12 April Social Event. This had been successful. The Quaker Meeting House was good value but might better be used for a winter social event so those attending stayed in one place.

Item 3. Community Alliance. The Alliance now had no premises and the newsletter was quarterly, not monthly. It was agreed that joining the Alliance would only be further considered if it secured premises.

Item 8 New Member Recruitment.

- A regular advert had now been placed in the St Leonard's Neighbourhood News. Depending on progress, a similar one would be placed in the St. Thomas newsletter. A West of the River magazine was due to start in April and this might be a further place for an article or advert (AM).
- The Society's stall at the Volunteer Fair on 3 April had attracted interest but there had so far been no subsequent follow-up by those expressing it. The list of possible opportunities was useful. People were generally unaware of the Society except for the blue plaques.
- KL would contact Exeter Forum to offer to speak at a meeting about the Society's current activities (KL). Exeter College had been contacted but there had been no reply.
- KL and GV were arranging a date to meet Fiona Carden, CEO of Exeter Colab in late May to discuss a meeting with Community Builders, involvement in the Exeter Partnership which she co-chaired and if she would speak at a Saturday meeting.
- GV had again contacted Rory Cunningham, the University's Community Engagement Officer, to ask him to speak at a Saturday meeting and how the Society could more actively engage with the University and its students.
- AM would investigate how the Society might be involved with the Heritage Open Days in September. It was noted that open garden days in Topsham and St. Leonard's might offer further opportunities for the Society.

4. Chair's Update

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

Exeter Energy. The Society had submitted its objections to the Planning Committee. KL would contact the local councillors about the objections. JE and AM had written to Devon County Council and local councillors about the closure of the path near Trew's Weir Reach which was poorly signed and, in some aspects, closure was potentially unnecessary. JE noted that the gate to Belle Isle Park had now been opened. The contractor was responsible for signage and complaints had been passed to them. There was concern about the way future closures to enable installation of heat pipes from the plant would be managed.

Heavitree History Society. KL and AM would meet representatives of the Heavitree History Society on 14 May to discuss updating the Discovering Exeter Heavitree booklet. It was noted that costs and any profits might need to be shared and would depend on the funds available to HHS and whether they were willing to contribute. It was noted that any update would need to use the Civic Society's branding and style and be consistent with the St Leonard's update.

Royal Clarence. JM agreed to contact the developers, Nooko, to ensure the Liszt blue plaque was retained/reinstalled.

Lucombe Oak. It was agreed that action to identify a planting site would be deferred until the oak was nearer to being planted out. The grassed area on Dunsford Road would potentially be suitable and already had commemorative trees.

Upper Leat. KL would contact the Environment Agency with the aim of getting the leat cleared.

416-418 Pinhoe Road. HN would pursue the question of local listing for these memorial cottages.

The speaker programme is:

- 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.)

Fiona Carden CEO of Exeter Colab and, separately, the University Community Liaison officer were being contacted about speaking (see above). If Fiona Carden could not speak, Lord Courtenay, the other co-chair of Exeter Partnership, might be approached. AM would approach Hugh Mellor to speak about memorials to notorious and notable Devon residents. Other suggestions for speakers would be welcome. John Davidson had agreed to speak in a light-hearted way about some Exeter buildings in January 2026.

Walks

- 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

Visits

It was agreed a visit would be arranged to Bowhill, potentially in place of the September or October walk. Those attending would need to contribute to the cost. KL would ask Wendy

Rakestrow to obtain further information, including the cost of Stuart Blaylock leading the visit, and perhaps arrange it.

5. Treasurer's Report

JE reported that there had been little change in the Society's finances. GV and AM were now able to access the CAF account digitally to make payments if necessary. She was waiting for information on the annual cost of maintaining the Matthew the Miller clock now that the major repairs had been completed so the Society could decide on its donation to help meet the cost.

6. Strategic Planning and Highways

GV had circulated a report on the group's activities. A significant issue was to get closer to the councillors from the Labour group.

Exeter Partnership seemed to be starting to engage the wider community with working groups on four themes. The Society would seek to be involved.

7. Planning Report

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

- JM thought that the proposal for a pontoon in the canal basin had not been thoroughly considered by the group and asked that they look again at it. KL would raise this at the next meeting..

8. Discovering Exeter Booklets

- AM reported that David Solman hoped to have a draft of the West of the River update available in June.
- KL and AM would meet Heavitree History Society representatives on 14 May (see above).
- The Magdalen Road Fair on 21 June at which the Society would have a table was an opportunity to sell the St. Leonard's booklet.

9. Heritage Harbour Festival 8 June

JM offered the Society a share of the Friends of the Canal's stall. This was gratefully accepted.

10. Civic Voice.

JM noted that it was too early to judge whether Civic Voice's public newsletter offered enough to the Society and whether joining for the members' newsletter was necessary. However, he had always been very surprised that the Society was not a member and proposed that this be reconsidered. It was agreed that this would be discussed further at the July meeting when research had been done on costs, the services offered and the impact of the change in chair and their location from London to Dorset.

11. Any Other Business

The Committee had a preliminary discussion about what should be done with Hazel Harvey's collection of books and other material which she had donated to the Society and

which had been catalogued by Ian Maxted. Possibilities were to see if the books and papers duplicated any in the DEI, Archives and Exeter Library. Non-duplicates could be offered to these institutions and, if not wanted, they and any duplicates could be sold, perhaps to members initially. It was questionable whether pamphlets and other such material would be wanted or could be stored. It was very unlikely that the collection could be kept intact and available by the Society or any other body except possibly Devon Archives.

AM would ask Ian Maxted to tabulate the list so that comments could be easily made against each entry. He would also see what could be done revise the list so other organisations' potential interest could be identified.

12. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 15 July 2pm Southernhay United Reformed Church. AM to organise. AM would identify dates for meetings for the rest of the year.