

Minutes of Oxton Society Executive Meeting

2nd July 2019, 7.30 p.m.

Present

Rhiannon Evans (RE) (Chair)	Paul Smith (PS) (History Group)
Jeff Willis (JW) (Vice-Chair)	George Harrison (GH) (Trees)
Alan Chape (ACh) (Secretary)	Steve Ferguson (SF)
Patrick Toosey (PT) (Recruitment)	John Booth (JB) (Hanging baskets)
Dave Barden (DB) (Membership Secretary)	Chris Jarrey (CJ)
Steve Weber (SW) (Planning and Amenities)	Graham McLean (GM) (Acting Minute Secretary)
Annette Capper (ACa)	

1. Apologies were received from

Griff Round (GR) (Treasurer)
Bob Knowles (BK) (History Group)
Don Firth-Williamson (DF-W)
Carolyn Weber (CW) (Minute Secretary)
Ian Wray (IW)
Jane Horton (JH)
Councillor Allan Brame (AB)

2. Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 14th May 2019 were accepted as a true record.

3. Matters arising

a) Conservation Areas Wirral (CAW)

ACh circulated notes from a conversation between CAW and David Ball (DB), Acting Head of Strategic Development and Regeneration, Wirral Council, regarding the forthcoming Local Plan.

It was established that:

- i) the Council is still undecided about how conservation and heritage issues are to be addressed in the Plan — separately, or inserted into the Plan?
- ii) Green Belt land may have to be included in the Building Programme but Members of the Council are resistant. A consequent delay in the publication of the Local Plan could lead to Wirral losing its planning powers;
- iii) CAW have not received a direct reply to their response to the Council's consultation on the Local Plan, but DB confirmed that the responses will be incorporated into the final Plan;
- iv) the Planning Advisory Service recently carried out a peer review of Wirral's Planning Department. The outcome has not yet been made available;
- v) Councillor Stuart Kelly, LibDem councillor for Oxton, is now Chair of the Council's Planning Committee.

b) Blue Plaques

GM reported on the recent unveiling of the Blue Plaques to composer Cyril Scott that took place on 15th and 16th June, along with the dedication of the painted window memorial to Scott in Birkenhead Priory and two concerts that same weekend that included Cyril Scott's music. Vasily Petrenko, Chief Conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and concert pianist Nino Gvetadze were formally thanked on behalf of the Society for unveiling the plaques. A video of the ceremonies and of places associated with Cyril Scott is being produced by Valentine Laout of Challenge Records,

Amsterdam, who attended the event. This, or an excerpt of it, will be made available for posting on the Society website. Also welcome at the celebrations was Jill Mann, a relative of Cyril Scott from Surrey.

Accompanying booklets on Cyril Scott, written by Graham and Gillian Ingram, were displayed. They are now available for sale in Oxton Books in the Williamson Art Gallery.

c) Hanging Baskets

JB reported on:

- i) the judging on week commencing 22nd July of the Village hanging baskets display for RHS Village in Bloom award. This year Secret Gardens will not be included in the submission;
- ii) the need for a tidy-up of the Village prior to the visit of the judges. The criteria used by the judges may be available on the RHS website or from previous correspondence;
- iii) the need to consider a contingency plan for the future for the installation of the baskets after the problems experienced this year.

Action JB

e) Article 4 Directives

SW indicated that there was no further progress on this matter.

4. Friends of the Arno

ACa reported on:

- a) improvements in the Arno, including a bug hotel;
- b) a memorial plaque in memory of the late Sally Spencer, previous Secretary of the Friends; c) liaison between the Friends and Wirral Council's Parks Manager;
- d) judging for the RHS in Bloom award will take place week commencing 22nd July and for the Green Flag Award in the same month;
- e) the agreement by the Earl of Shrewsbury to become the Patron of the Friends of the Arno. ACa read a letter from the Earl.

5. Strategy Workshop

Officers will report on the conclusions of the workshop by September.

6. Annual General Meeting and 40-year celebration

RE thanked those member of the Executive Committee who had submitted reports and reminded others that their reports have still not been received.

A proposed programme for the event was discussed:

- a) introductory wine and nibbles, during which time the video of the Secret Gardens 2018 will be shown;
- b) after the formal business of the AGM, a showing of the 1996 video of Oxton Village, with comments from ACh;
- c) David Ainsley to lead a session on audience memories of Oxton;
- d) Kate Wyness and/or Allan Brame to lead a discussion on the future of the Village;
- e) a quiz, or the results of a previously circulated quiz on Oxton, devised by the History Group;
- f) possibility of extra time needed at the venue to allow the extended programme.

The draft programme was approved. RE will finalise it and send to the Committee.

Action: RE

ACH asked the intention of those present members of the Committee to stand for election for next year. All members indicated their intention to stand again. The Secretary will contact another Committee member, who has moved from the area.

Action ACh

The forthcoming newsletter will be a special 40-year edition. It will include an interview with David Ainsley, the first Chair of the Society, highlights of the 40 years, a history of the newsletter etc.

7. History Group

PS reported on the Heritage Open Days on September 13th - 22nd. Four walks will take place during the week, including the new Williamson Walk. He stressed that booking must be done through the Williamson to ensure the right number of walk leaders.

There was discussion of a paper from Allan Brame on the Wirral Together Fund and the possibility that the History Group may have a project that could be supported from this fund. PS suggested an application for digitising and indexing the History Archive, although it was pointed out that this had received funding previously but the work had not continued. An alternative suggestion was funding for installation of QR-read indicators at points on the Wirral Walks. There is a short deadline for submissions (31st July). RE will contact Allan Brame for more information and advice.

Action: RE

8. Financial Report

A written report was received from the Treasurer on the financial outcome of Secret Gardens 2019.

9. Planning Report

SW gave a verbal report on an alleged application by Thyme Restaurant in Rose Mount to install an illuminated sign, but further information was not yet available on the Council's Planning Application listings.

SW said that the Planning Group Code of Practice would be available soon.

10. Village Centre Report

a) Bank Site

ACH circulated a letter from solicitors acting for the leaseholder of the former Bank Site (now The Willows) that seemed to be enquiring about the Society's interest in continuing with its restrictions imposed as freeholder of the site on, in particular, the sale of alcohol from the property. The Society replied to indicate its intention to retain those restrictions in the current and any future freeholder agreement.

b) Ashton House

SW circulated a note of a meeting on Ashton House held on 14th March and subsequent email correspondence on the matter between Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (CWP) and Oxton Councillors. This related to proposed development on the site after its change of use. The email appears to indicate that CWP no longer intend to undertake a land appraisal of the site, as originally intended, yet at the same time are proposing an Open Day for potential developers and the

local community. A promised consultation with the Oxton Society had not taken place and the current situation only came to light when Councillor Allan Brame enquired. SW will write to CWP expressing disappointment about this. Progress on this matter will be followed closely by the Planning Group.

Action: SW

c) Former Brimark building

Extensive redevelopment of the building is taking place.

d) Proposed bakery in Rose Mount

A new bakery by Paul Edwards is planned for the building previously held by Simply Drinks. The Society has already made suggestions for the design of the external facade.

11. Secret Gardens

The outstanding financial success of the 2019 Secret Gardens was noted

RE reported that Jay Little and Lesley McGarrity, current Secret Gardens Co-ordinators, are confident that they have identified new co-ordinators to shadow them in the coming year and to take over the role for 2021. They will be Kirsty and Paul Cotton of Wirral Rotary, and Lisa Stafford.

A group will be convened by Griff Round to discuss the implications of the changes in co-ordination and reach of the Secret Gardens event from 2020 onwards. SF requested that the Executive Committee should provide the group with a framework for any new proposals. He offered to provide written suggestions for this framework.

Action: SF

12. Newsletter, website and social media

RE reported that she, GM and Pete Flynn would be helping CW with the production of the next newsletter. The finished newsletter needs to be ready for distribution by 23rd August.

There was nothing to report on the website. Discussion continues about the extent of control over the posting of material on the Society's Facebook page.

13. Other business

a) Parking

JW reported that the Oxton LibDem Councillors have initiated a parking survey for the Village. ACh will organise a meeting with them to discuss the survey.

Action: ACh

b) Christmas Lights

Marie Pennington will be calling the first planning meeting this month. A brief discussion followed on the future role of the Society in the Lights display. There are conclusions on this in the Strategy Report to be issued this September.

The meeting closed at 9.00 p.m.

Date of next meeting: September 3rd 2019 at 7.30 p.m.

