

OXTON SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

7.00 p.m., 25 SEPTEMBER 2019,

WILLIAMSON ART GALLERY

Present: 81 members of the Society and guests. Apologies were received from 22 members

1. Welcome

The Chair of the Society, Rhiannon Evans, welcomed members to the AGM.

2. Minutes of the last AGM

The minutes of the last AGM, which had been previously been made available to members, were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

Arising on Minute 4 (Chair's Report), the Chair reported that there had been some progress with the proposal to provide a defibrillator in the village. The Society had registered with the British Heart Foundation, who would part fund a defibrillator, leaving the Society to find £600. A bid would be put to the Council's Community Fund and a fund raising initiative would be launched after Christmas. The Chair said the Committee would welcome volunteers to become involved with the project.

4. Chair's Report

The Chair, Rhiannon Evans, introduced the annual report, which had been made available to members. The report reminded members of the key aims of the Society:

- Planning and conservation of the landscape and architecture
- Public awareness of the history, architecture and environment, via the Newsletters and periodicals, social media and other means
- Community involvement and partnership working
- Maintaining membership, the financial basis and sustainability

The Chair's report highlighted some of the main highlights of the 2018-19 year:

- The Willows development on the old Bank site had been largely completed;
- A second Blue Plaque, to Edith Smith, had been unveiled and produced a large amount of publicity for the Society;
- It had been a bumper year for Secret Gardens, with income exceeding the previous year and £21,252 shared with three local charities;
- The hanging baskets won another prestigious RHS Britain in Bloom Gold Award
- The first planned improvements to the Christmas Lights, with new white lights and decorations on the lampposts

Since the end of the reporting year there had been developments in many areas:

- A strategic review of the Society's business had been held
- New Secret Gardens Coordinators had been recruited who would shadow the current Coordinators in 2020 and then take over in 2021;
- Discussions were ongoing about village traffic and parking issues, and about CCTV in the village centre;
- The Society had taken the necessary actions to become compliant with the General Data Protection Act (GDPR);
- A successful bid had been made for funds to progress digitizing the History Archive;
- A third Blue Plaque had been erected, with an accompanying booklet;
- Plans were in hand for further enhancement of the Christmas Lights;

The Chair noted that looking ahead the Committee would be finalising the Strategy Review, with a view to setting out priorities, including the core business of preserving Oxton's character. There would also be a review of fund-raising and other income options, and a plan for succession to sustain the Society into the future. Communication would be another priority, to engage members and the business community and encourage feedback to the Committee.

Members approved the Annual Report.

5. Financial Report

The Treasurer, Griff Round, introduced the Financial Statement for 2018-19. He reported that it had been a financially stable year with a small rise in the end of year reserve, which stood at £21,700. A very successful Secret Gardens event had raised £9,000 for the Society, and membership income raised £4,000. There had been major investment in Christmas Lights and in work on the website. He said that a continuing challenge for the Society was the key dependency on Secret Gardens income to fund its activities.

Arising on the report, members asked questions on the following topics:

- Whether the Christmas Lights could become 'Winter Lights' and remain in the village for an extended period after Christmas. Jeff Willis, Vice Chair, replied that this year further enhancements to the lights would include lighting the three large trees in the village centre, one funded by the Community Fund and the others by fund-raising, and the question of extending the period of the lights would be discussed.
- How the proceeds of Secret Gardens was divided between the Society and the partner charities. The Treasurer explained that the split was 40% to the Oxton Society and 60% divided between the three charities for the year.
- Whether the Society should consider raising the membership fees, which were considered very reasonable. The Treasurer replied that it was not a high priority at the moment because of the good financial situation and it was important not to disenfranchise members.

The accounts were formally adopted, and thanks expressed to the Treasurer for his work.

6. Election of Officers and Committee

It was reported that there was a maximum of 13 members on the Committee, along with 4 Officers. The AGM elected the following to serve as officers:

- Chair – Rhiannon Evans
- Vice-Chair – Jeff Willis
- Secretary – Alan Chape
- Treasurer – Griff Round

The following were elected to serve on the Committee: Steve Ferguson, Patrick Toosey, Steve Weber, Dave Barden, John Booth, Bob Knowles, Carolyn Weber, Chris Jarrey, George Harrison, Dominic Wilkinson.

There were also three co-opted members: Annette Capper (Friends of the Arno), Councillor Allan Brame and Don Firth-Williamson.

Three vacancies remained on the Committee.

7. Motions

No motions had been received for the Annual General Meeting

8. Oxton Design Award

Steve Weber introduced the Design Award Scheme and explained the way in which nominations are made and how the Assessment Panel, which includes two expert advisers, assess the nominations. For this year the Panel felt that whilst there was not a nominated project that met the very high threshold required for a Design Award, there were four which fully deserved recognition with a Commendation for the way in which they contribute to the enhancement of the character of the Conservation Area. The Panel particularly welcomed the fact that three of the projects were for improvements to the frontages of village centre businesses. The Commendations went to:

- Cathy Frost, Thyme Restaurant, Rose Mount, for shop front reconstruction
- Michelle Fenton, Oxton Boutique, Rose Mount, for shop front improvements
- Jane Williams and Sara Poland, The Drawing Room, Christchurch Road, for shop front improvements
- Chris and Jenny Dodd, 16 Kylemore Road, for reconstruction of boundary brick wall

The winners of the Commendations were presented with their certificates by Councillor Allan Brame.

9. Outstanding Contribution to Oxton Awards

Rhiannon Evans, Chair, introduced the first Award, to Kate Wyness, for her impact on the village since she and her husband opened Greens of Oxton less than three years ago, and for her partnership with the Society. Rhiannon highlighted three areas to illustrate Kate's contribution. Firstly, she had a vision for improving the Christmas Lights and replacing the old coloured lights with new high quality white lights. She started a fund-raising initiative and within a few weeks had raised £600 from residents and businesses which was matched by the Society and paid for the new lights. Secondly, she was also imagining a new and revitalized village centre for the Secret Gardens event in May 2019. She invited the artisan

makers who supplied her shop to purchase a pitch in the village and create a 'Makers Market' to fill the pedestrianised area and invited young musicians to play throughout the day. Thirdly, Kate realized that the Society sometimes struggled to recruit new members, and she started keeping a list in the shop of people who had expressed interest and passed these on. She then offered the Society table space in the shop on Saturday mornings and Committee members used the space to talk to people about the Society and invite them to join.

Griff Round, Treasurer, introduced the second Award, to Jane Horton. Jane had for many years been the Treasurer of the Society before recruiting Griff to act as her 'apprentice' who had now taken over the role from her. Griff said that Jane's greatest legacy has been the sound financial footing that she achieved for the Society, and despite some decisions that were not universally popular, she had pushed home the argument that strong finances are a strong enabler and allow an organisation to achieve so much more. There is a great deal to the Treasurer's role: dealings with banks, accountants, the Committee and individual members. There are also two large annual events, Secret gardens and Christmas Lights, that involve a great deal of work for the Treasurer and their team before, during and after the event. Jane had turned the Treasury into a well-oiled machine and her contributions to the Committee and the Society would be greatly missed.

10. Vote of thanks

Rhiannon Evans thanked all members for their support during the year, and the Officers and other members of the Committee. Particular thanks were expressed to Jane Horton who was retiring from the Committee.

11. Close of AGM

Rhiannon Evans thanked all members for their attendance and for their contributions to the discussions, and closed the Annual General Meeting at 8.00 p.m.

CMW/September 2019