

## **The Kennet & Avon Canal Trust**

### **TRUST COUNCIL MEETING: Monday 31 July 2023, 0900 by Zoom**

**Trustees present:** Chris Sims (Chairman), Chris Bolt, Alison Cannon, Rob Dunton, Terry Mundy

**In attendance:** Darren Bone, Rob Dean

**Apologies:** Mike Bailey, Graham Snook

#### **Minutes**

**1. Welcome and apologies:** Apologies were noted from Mike Bailey and Graham Snook. Zaira Puddephatt has resigned as a Trustee, and was thanked for her hard work on communications, including the Butty.

**2. Declarations of interest:** CB declared an interest as Vice Chairman of Crofton Branch relevant to item 7. CS and CB declared an interest relevant to item 8 as Directors of Enterprise.

**3. Approval of minutes of meeting on 22 May 2023:** Approved

#### **4. Actions from previous meetings:**

##### 4.1. Safeguarding

Trustees agreed the appointment of AC as the Designated Safeguarding Officer. CB will liaise with her on development of Guidance to support the Safeguarding policy.

#### **5. Matters approved in correspondence**

##### 5.1. Revised Enterprise Articles

##### 5.2. Revised MoU and delegation to Crofton Branch

##### 5.3. Leases

##### 5.4. Young Volunteers Policy

##### 5.5. United Trust Bank savings account

These approvals were noted. CB will shortly sign the new leases for Bradford on Avon and Aldermaston; the intermediate leases between Trust and Enterprise and underleases between Enterprise and the operators can then be finalised. CB also noted that he was in the process of opening the UTB 180 day notice account.

#### **6. Health and Safety**

##### 6.1. Review of incidents and near misses

##### 6.2. Future arrangements for Health and Safety advice

MB had provided a written report. Trustees agreed that further consideration should be given to future monitoring and reporting arrangements, in particular to ensure effective single-point accountability for Enterprise and Crofton issues. CB will liaise with MB, DB and GS on this.

#### **7. Report from Crofton Branch**

Trustees noted the need to carry out chimney repairs at the end of the current season and the risk mitigation now in place. They agreed the expenditure request of up to £66K for the repairs, with 50% to be raised locally, and noted that £13K had already been raised. They also agreed that the final procurement decision should be delegated to GS, RD and CB. The remainder of the report was noted.

## **8. Report from Enterprise Board**

DB outlined progress to date in responding to the five challenges he had identified on his appointment as Enterprise Chair. This included changes to the Articles, agreement to a revised MoU and new delegations and reporting arrangements for the six 'boat' branches, filling the Chair vacancy at Bradford on Avon and holding a strategy review based on three year forward budget projections. Progress was also being made on a new booking system, which it is hoped will go live on 14 August, with parallel improvements to the rostering system. The new website would be activated at the same time.

DB also reported on the Enterprise Board meeting on 10 July which had agreed that the Bruce Boats Operating Group (CS, AC and Steve Coleman) should report back by 18 August on whether both a robust business strategy and effective management structures could be established for the Bruce Boats operation, which was currently trading at a loss. The Board was meeting again on 21 August to receive the report from the Group and agree next steps. Trustees agreed that, if at all possible, a way should be found of continuing the Bruce Boats operation, and noted the requirement in the MoU for the Enterprise Board to consult with Trust if it was proposed to sell one or more of the boats.

## **9. Finance and Governance**

### **9.1. Finance and Governance report**

The report on the financial position at the end of June was noted.

Trustees confirmed the appointment of Graham Snook as Chair of the Crofton Branch Management Committee and endorsed the Committee membership and procedures. Trustees agreed that action in respect of the restricted donation to Bruce Branch should be deferred until their September meeting. They also agreed that Trust should bear legal costs relating to the new headleases for tea rooms at Bradford on Avon and Aldermaston; CB will consider further the best way of achieving this.

Trustees discussed the request from Enterprise Board to designate donations raised on trip boats for a new trip boat and agreed that, subject to a persuasive business case being developed by Enterprise and any other Trust priorities at the time, this suggestion had considerable merit.

### **9.2. Medium term financial prospects**

CB noted that the current estimate of full year outturn for 2023 was for a Group cash position at the end of the year of around £300K. This was slightly below budget. He explained the basis of the projections to 2026, which reflected the outcome of the Enterprise strategy discussion and a review by the Crofton Branch Management Committee of the 'business as usual' projections for Crofton Beam Engines. He noted in particular that the projections did not include any actions to reduce the deficit at Crofton that might emerge from the Crofton 2030 work, or actions to reduce the deficit at Bruce Boats. Taking account also of greater caution about future income projections, the cash position at the end of 2026 was over £100K worse than the corresponding projection last year. While this was still above the target minimum level of reserves, it suggested that the scope for further capital projects was limited without significant new fundraising activities.

Trustees noted the projections, and agreed that it would be helpful to identify future priorities for the Trust.

### **9.3. Review of policies**

CB introduced the paper and took Trustees through the revised corporate risk register. Trustees agreed that the risks facing the Trust were tending to increase, and that it was therefore appropriate to retain the current target minimum level of reserves.

Trustees agreed that all the policies due for review should be unchanged apart from updating contact details, and that the data protection responsibilities should be incorporated within the Trust governance role. CB will ensure that all policies are updated and uploaded to the new website.

AC noted a potential issue with the Safeguarding Policy and will bring forward a proposed clarification.

## **10.2023 Projects**

10.1.Aldermaston Wash House: Displays are now being installed. DB noted the concern of the tea room operators that the Wash House was still padlocked; CB will pursue this with Graham Puddpehatt.

10.2.Devizes Wharf: no action pending completion of the Crofton 2030 project and decisions on the future of the Museum.

10.3.Archive relocation: no recent progress. CS noted that he had received a request for archive material relating to Claverton to be relocated to Bath

## **11.Communications**

11.1.'Protect our Waterways' campaign: CS reminded Trustees of the recent announcement about reduced funding for the Canal and River Trust from 2027, and encouraged all Trustees to write to their MP. Figures provided through Richard Parry suggested that total maintenance costs for the Kennet and Avon Canal were around £10m a year, with £2.5m relating to pumping costs (of which about £1.4m was for Caen Hill alone).

11.2.Future arrangements for the Butty: Jen Furmage-Smith has agreed to coordinate production of the next issue of the Butty.

## **12. Future meetings**

25 September and 27 November, at 0900 by Zoom.

## **13. Any other business**

13.1.John Gould award

CS will contact Branches for nominations.

13.2.Other

There was no other business.