

The Kennet & Avon Canal Trust

TRUST COUNCIL MEETING: Monday 27th November 2023 by Zoom, 0930

Minutes

Trustees present: Mike Bailey,(MB) Ali Cannon,(AC), Rob Dunton,(RD) Susan Hill,(SH)Terry Mundy,(TM) Graham Puddephatt,(GP) Graham Snook (GS).

In attendance: Rob Dean (RDe)(Chairing at request of trustees), Alison Selby (AS) (Minutes Secretary)(from item 3)

1. **Welcome & apologies.** Minutes

RDe opened the meeting at 9.33am and reminded everyone that he was there in a non-executive and advisory role. Trustees asked that he chair the meeting. Trustees thanked Chris Sims (in his absence) for all the work he had done as Chair of KACT since 2019 until his resignation on 12th November and wished him good health for the future. Trustees noted the need to find a new Chair in due course.

The minutes of the TC meeting on 30th October were agreed with amendments, as were the minutes of the TC meeting on 8th November.

2. **Greeting and co-option of Graham Puddephatt as a trustee.**

GP introduced himself and was unanimously co-opted as a Trustee.

He agreed to take on the role of Volunteer Liaison.

RDe mentioned a potential new Trustee suggested by David Bruce. Trustees asked that he follow this up.

The trustees introduced themselves to, and thanked, Alison Selby who had agreed to become Minutes Secretary

3. **Enterprise report:** (GP)

GP had chaired the Enterprise Board following the resignation of Darren Bone.

Susan Hill (Finance Director) and Paul Hanson (Director of Boat Operations) had been appointed onto the Enterprise Board.

GP noted the need for a new chair for Enterprise.

GP commented that there was scope for raising money from sales of mugs, tea towels etc on trip boats.

Trustees agreed that they should review whether there was a continuing need for the Trust to have Enterprise as a trading company. It was agreed that the Trust's auditors, Monahans should be commissioned to review the pros and cons. There were implications for VAT registration if Enterprise was dissolved. Action: SH

There was discussion of links between trustees and branch chairs. It was agreed to set up a meeting with the latter to discuss future reporting and delegation arrangements. Trustees agreed to revive the former open invitation for Branch chairs to attend TC meetings as observers. Action RD

4. **Crofton report:** (GS)

Crofton 2030 project and next steps.

Consultation finished. Branch committee could now take steps forward towards implementing some of the suggestions – Improving facilities for staff and volunteers and tweaking room use. (Phase 1)

Permanent café was not viable so there had been a successful pop-up café on some occasions.

We would eventually have to apply for change of use of the cottage from residential to business.

However, the cottage had damp problems following a major water leak.

There was disagreement between the Insurers and the contractors over the payment as the damp issue had not been resolved. This was an historic problem from when the cottage was refurbished previously using the incorrect materials.

The financial reputation of the Trust could be damaged by not paying the contractor.

Action: GS to engage with loss adjuster and insurance company and resolve the issue.

Other issues: GS (with help from Chris Bolt) will apply to the National Lottery for final funding for the first phase of Crofton 2030. The branch had decided that at present there were no people resources to proceed to a full bid. It was noted that, despite the remit of the phase 1 report, Crofton would not be self-funding by 2025.

Trustees agreed to meet at Crofton in the warmer weather so all would have more understanding of issues discussed. AC requested summary accounts for Crofton. GS agreed to provide

RD will proceed with the Building Reg application for the planned work on the cottage and then get quotes.

Items 8 & 9 were discussed before MB left the meeting.

8. **H&S report.** (MB)

Annual H & S review of policies is outstanding and will be done in December.

Trustees agreed that all accident reports must be seen by MB as trustee responsible.

To achieve this, arrangements for sending to Trust office would require review. Action MB

9. **Bradford on Avon branch** (GP/MB)

Complaints and accusations between volunteers in the branch had caused significant discord and several resignations. Trustees reviewed a letter and email of complaint. GP and MB had engaged with several of those involved and trustees agreed with GP's recommendation that trustees should be firmly future focussed rather than attempting to judge the details of criticisms raised. It had been agreed that a new Boat Manager would be appointed when a suitable candidate was identified.

Trustees agreed to send letters to 2 volunteers acknowledging the issues raised and expressing an intention to help the branch move on.

5. **Bruce Branch report** (AC)

AC noted a slow start on re-establishing bookings, but this had now started with about 10% of the annual target achieved. There were issues with access to the Facebook

page. The marketing team were building up publicity and there were several new initiatives. The business case for conversion of a boat to hybrid power was underway and would be presented in January.

6. Office staff (GS/All)

A message of grievance had been received on 16th November by email from the 3 Devizes based staff. GS and GP would be meeting the staff on 30th Nov to discuss this. Trustees had not seen details of the complaints and agreed there was a need to investigate and to rebuild relationships with staff. New arrangements would be needed for their management and trustees expressed concern at the separation between Trust and Enterprise that had been created.

7. Finance report (SH)

Chris Bolt had uploaded some files to a shared drive and SH would review these. She did not yet have access to finance emails but was now a bank signatory. SH asked how Trustees want financial reports presented. RDe offered to provide some suggestions.

10. Policies and procedures – grievances & complaints (AC)

Noting that the Trust had recently suffered from a lack of good complaints and grievances procedures, trustees agreed new policies for Bullying & Harassment, and Whistle Blowing. They also agreed that the Abuse policy be reviewed and resissued as part of the package. The volunteer handbook would require updating to signpost the new policies.

11. Date of next meeting: Thursday 11th Jan 2024 at 10am by Zoom.

Apologies from AS – on holiday.

12. A.O.B.

SH noted that she was best contacted by email

It was agreed that Enterprise Directors should consider a working agreement to regard a quorum as being 3 rather than the 2 directed by the Articles

GP will nominate an individual to be a Vice President at the next meeting

Meeting finished at 12.06 with RDe thanking all the Trustees for what they'd done & what they were doing.

Happy Christmas.