

The Kennet & Avon Canal Trust

TRUST COUNCIL MEETING: Monday 25 September 2023, 0900 by Zoom

Minutes

Trustees present: Chris Sims (Chairman), Mike Bailey, Chris Bolt, Alison Cannon, Rob Dunton, Graham Snook

In attendance: Darren Bone, Rob Dean

Apologies: Terry Mundy

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Terry Mundy.

2. Declarations of interest

CS and CB - Directors of Enterprise; CS and AC - members of Bruce Boats Operating Committee

3. Approval of minutes of meeting on 31 July 2023

These were approved, subject to correcting the date of the meeting.

4. Actions from previous meetings

4.1. Review of Trust priorities

This will be on the agenda for the November meeting when the full recommendations of the Crofton 2030 project are available.

4.2. Nominations for John Gould award

CS made a proposal which was endorsed by Trustees.

5. Matters approved in correspondence

5.1. Intermediate leases at Bradford on Avon and Aldermaston

The final versions are still awaited from Blandy & Blandy.

6. Health and Safety

6.1. Future arrangements for Health and Safety advice

MB summarised the arrangements now agreed with Crofton and Enterprise. Although Enterprise accident and incident reporting was now to the Enterprise Board in the first place, the report would be copied to MB.

7. Report from Crofton Branch

GS updated Trust Council on developments since the report was prepared. These included a successful site meeting with the contractors for the chimney repairs which will start at the end of October, subject to weather, and last about two weeks. GS will copy the method statements to RD for his review.

8. Report from Enterprise Board (taken as first substantive item)

DB reported on the activities of The Kennet & Avon Canal Trust (Enterprise) Ltd, and in particular:

- implementation of the new booking system: despite some teething issues this was now settling in and over £13K sales have been made in just over a month;
- in parallel, the new website was launched on behalf of the Trust; and
- a further in-person meeting was planned for 23 October, to include Boat Managers and Treasurers as well as Directors, to discuss lessons from the 2023 season and forward planning (including budgets) for 2024.

DB also outlined recent incidents as now recorded in the detailed accident and incident report reviewed at each meeting of the Board.

DB then summarised the discussion at the Board on 22 September relating to the future of Bruce Boats, and the reasons why the Board had decided that the operation should not continue within Enterprise. In accordance with the terms of the MoU, he was therefore consulting Trust on the decision to dispose of the assets.

After long discussion, a majority of Trustees agreed to ask Alison Cannon and Chris Sims to bring a proposal to Trust Council at a special meeting on 30 October which considers three options:

1. winding up of Bruce Boats operations as agreed by the Enterprise Board (with sale of the boats on the open market);
2. transfer of the assets to the Trust, to be operated by the Trust as a charitable activity; and
3. transfer of the assets to another charity.

The proposal should include a clear statement as to which option is recommended, and should address any legal or accounting issues involved in implementation. If either Option 2 or 3 is recommended, this should be supported by a business plan which shows likely costs and revenues.

In the meantime, Trustees agreed to ask Enterprise Directors to pause any action to wind up operations.

9. Finance and Governance

9.1. Finance report

Trustees noted the current financial position and expected end-year cash balance. They endorsed the proposed approach to preparation and approval of 2024 budgets. The proposed amendments to the Finance Manual were agreed and will now be issued to Branches.

In the light of the discussion at item 8, Trustees decided to defer a decision on the restricted donation to Bruce Boats until the meeting on 30 October, but agreed that there needed to be a firm and deliverable proposal by then which could be put to the donor.

9.2. Governance report

Trustees noted the amendment to the risk register, agreed the revised Safeguarding Policy and approved the new Environmental policy. Under the latter, Crofton and Enterprise will now need to develop environmental action plans.

Trustees also endorsed the approach taken in the draft Conservation Policy, and thanked RD for his work on this. Before it is formally approved, RD will recast this to put background material explaining the basis of the policy into an Annex.

Trustees agreed that Susan Hill should be added to the Bank Mandate with full powers.

10. 2023 Projects

10.1. Aldermaston Wash House

Trustees expressed concerns that the Wash House was still not routinely opened to the public, and agreed to ask Reading Branch to expedite this. RD also noted that the final review of the Kingsmen Construction contract was due shortly; he will contact Reading Branch to establish the status of the AV installation that was part of the contract.

10.2. Devizes Wharf

This will be discussed at the November meeting.

10.3. Archive relocation

There has been no recent contact with the History Centre. This will also be discussed at the November meeting.

11. Communications

11.1. Autumn edition of The Butty

CS summarised arrangements for the next edition of The Butty.

11.2. Launch of new website

This had been covered under item 8.

12. Future meetings (0900 by Zoom unless agreed otherwise)

30 October - to discuss future of Bruce Boats

27 November

13. Proposed meeting dates for 2024 (0900 by Zoom unless agreed otherwise)

29 January

25 March

20 May

22 July

24 September

25 November

AGM - Saturday 1 June 1100

These dates were agreed.

14. Any other business

There was no other business.