

**Draft/ THE HEATH & HAMPSTEAD SOCIETY**  
**Minutes of the 120th Annual General Meeting held at**  
**St. Stephen's, Rosslyn Hill, Hampstead on Monday 19 June 2017 at 7.30pm**

Members of General Committee present: Lord Hoffmann (President), Martin Humphery (Vice-President), Marc Hutchinson (Chair), Maureen Clark-Darby (Treasurer), John Beyer, David Castle, Tony Ghilchik, Frank Harding, Vicki Harding, Gordon Maclean, Peter Tausig and John Weston (Members of General Committee)

Apologies were received from Nigel Steward, Jessica Learmond-Criqui, Robert Linger, Douglas Maxwell, Thomas Radice and Peter Noble.

**President's Welcome**

The President welcomed members to the 120th Annual General Meeting and extended a particular welcome to the Society's guest speakers from the City of London Corporation, Meg Game and Jonathan Meares, both of whom had kindly stepped in to give a talk to the meeting in lieu of Piers Plowright, the scheduled speaker, who was indisposed.

**1. Approval of Minutes**

The Minutes of the 119th Annual General Meeting of the Society held on 2 June 2016 were tabled for approval.

RESOLVED that the Minutes be approved and signed by the President.

**2. Election of President**

Marc Hutchinson proposed the re-election of Lord Hoffmann as the Society's President.

RESOLVED that Lord Hoffmann be re-elected as President.

**3. Chair's Annual Report**

The President invited the Chair of the Society to present his Annual Report for 2016-2017.

The text of that report is contained in the appendix to these Minutes.

**4. Treasurer's Report**

The President invited the Treasurer to present the Society's Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2016, which had been examined by Fisher Phillips, Chartered Accountants, and which were then tabled.

The Treasurer delivered the following report to members.

The major items of difference between the Society's 2016 Financial Statements compared to prior years were the increase in subscription income and the one-off expenditure for the Athlone House planning inquiry, to which the Society contributed £8,834 in 2015.

Membership was sustainable year on year, standing at over 2,000 members in 2015. Subscription income, including gift aid, was up by 13% year on year.

During 2016 the Society's expenditure exceeded income by £4,108; there was a £927 deficit in restricted funds and a surplus of £4,731 in unrestricted funds. There was a gain on investment for the year giving a total surplus for 2016 of £5,035.

The Society's running costs were down by 18% year on year, an improvement on the rate of reduction of 14% in 2015. The Society continued tightly to control costs.

The Trustees reviewed the Society's accounting policies. It was decided by the Trustees that no changes to these policies were required.

At 31 December 2016, the Society's capital and reserves were in a satisfactory position, standing at £58,852: £26,077 was held in unrestricted funds and £32,775 was held in restricted funds.

The membership subscription rates proposed by the Trustees for 2018 were are the same as those currently in place.

There were no questions from members on the above report.

RESOLVED that the Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2016 be adopted.

## **5. Appointment of Auditors**

The President thanked Fisher Phillips, Chartered Accountants, for acting as the Society's auditors for the last financial year. He then proposed their re-appointment as the Society's auditors for the current financial year.

RESOLVED that Fisher Phillips, Chartered Accountants, be re-appointed as the Society's auditors for the current financial year.

## **6. Subscription Rates**

The President noted that the Trustees were not proposing any increase in the subscription rates for the year 2018 and invited members to resolve to accept that recommendation.

RESOLVED that there should be no increase in the Society's membership subscription rates for 2018.

## **7. Amendment of Society's constitution**

The Chair proposed an amendment to the Society's constitution to allow a limited discretion to the Trustees to offer free or discounted memberships, for the first year of membership only, to new members where the offer was part of a scheme to increase paid membership.

The amendment and the detailed reasons behind it were set out in the notice of meeting. The text of the amendment is attached to these minutes.

In response to questions from members, the Chair stated that the local estate agents involved in the so-called "estate agents scheme" were not themselves prepared to fund the cost of the first year's free membership for their clients, and that the Society wished to remain free to ask those agents for occasional donations for other Society activities such as at the art exhibition currently at

Burgh House which was financially sponsored by Knight Frank. He also explained that the figure of 200 as the number of memberships which referenced the cap on the overall number of free and discounted memberships in any year was an estimate only because, in its first year of operation, it was not foreseeable how successful the schemes would be; but the Society did not want to find itself in the position of having to shut down the schemes in the first year because the cap had been exceeded, and therefore a higher, rather than lower, initial estimate had been chosen. At the 2018 Annual General Meeting, a report would be given to members and the figure of the cap reviewed in the light of experience with a view to its possible alteration.

RESOLVED that, pursuant to Rule 7(2), the amendment be approved.

## **8. Election of Officers and other Members of the General Committee**

Following receipt of nominations, the President proposed the election of each of the following Officers, each of whom was elected:

Martin Humphery – Vice-President

Gordon Maclean – Vice-President

Marc Hutchinson – Chair

Maureen Clark-Darby – Treasurer

Evelyn Ellis – Secretary

Following receipt of nominations, the President then proposed the election of the following as members of the General Committee for three-year terms, each of whom was elected:

Frank Harding

Robert Linger

John Weston

The President advised that the following would be appointed or re-appointed as Chairs of their respective Sub-Committees and thereby would be appointed as Vice-Chairs of the Society and as members of the General Committee with effect from 30 June 2017:

David Castle – Planning Sub-Committee

John Beyer – Heath Sub-Committee

Martin Thompson – Town Sub-Committee (new appointment)

## **9. Any Other Business**

Linda Chung noted that it had recently been confirmed to her that Cycle Superhighway 11 would not be extended north beyond Swiss Cottage.

Leslie Hillman asked to the Society to consider marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hampstead Conservation Areas in 2018. The current photography competition could be extended to those Areas and perhaps guided walks organised.

A member asked about the Society's attitude to the Business Improvement District (BID) for Hampstead. Frank Harding explained that the Society had observer status on the BID board but was unaware of any specific forthcoming proposals for the BID.

## 10. Conclusion

The meeting concluded at 8.20 pm. and was followed by a talk by Meg Game (Senior Heath Ecologist) and Jonathan Meares (Conservation and Trees Manager) on the ecological improvements to Hampstead Heath connected with the recently completed Dams Project.

*(Note: a précis of the talk is to be found in the Society's Newsletter for October 2017).*

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Chair

Date:

### Appendix – Text of Chair's Annual Report

This year is our 120th anniversary as, as I believe we are, the oldest local conservation charity in England. Noticing that we did not particularly mark our 110th anniversary, your trustees decided to plan for special celebrations for our 125th anniversary in 2022. However this year will not go entirely unmarked because a former vice president of our Society, Helen Marcus, has written and is going to publish later this year, under the auspices of the Camden History Society and with the support of our Society, a new book on how Hampstead Heath was saved and has been conserved as London's most important public open space. And I understand her text will, unlike earlier texts on the same subject, give due recognition to the work of our Society to those ends. When we have a publication date, we will alert you to it.

Perhaps the most significant development this year in the way the Society runs itself has been the decision to expand the methods of communication with our members. We now have Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts, and our hundreds of followers include local politicians and councillors. Whilst we regularly get letters and e-mails from our members and others, there is no doubt that we have to be contactable via these new forms of social media, and I am very grateful to our new Communications Subcommittee - comprising John Weston, Latoya Austin, John Beyer and Mahima Luna (our press officer) for the work they are doing on this. Our current website is 12 years old and the software on which relies is even older. The Communications Subcommittee are going to manage the creation of a much more user- and reader-friendly website with the latest software, and this will enable us to upload more material onto it in a timely manner, and to simplify the online joining procedure for new members. The new site, which we expect to have operational in the autumn, will link directly to our social media accounts that I mentioned earlier.

In September 2016 we started advertising in lift number four at Hampstead Underground Station - and to get passengers attention, we started a linked quarterly photographic competition - #myhampsteadheath – on Instagram.

We had no idea that it would to date bring in over 700 entries and, even if we do not continue with the tube poster next year, we may well continue with the competition. The standard of entries has been remarkably high and I hope you have been to look at them on the websites I mentioned in recent newsletters

It seems to be the case that the tube advertisement has not significantly increased the Society's membership (although we are still endeavouring to verify that), unlike our local mail drop which clearly has been very successful at recruiting new members. The by-hand drop in selected local streets (carefully omitting the residences of existing members) included a personalised letter from me to the householder, a membership form, and a recent newsletter. We think it is the high quality of the last which gets the occupant's attention, stops them discarding the application form as junk mail and, when they have some free time, leads them to take the time to apply. So we shall be rolling out a much larger mail drop in this autumn.

For the last five years a large part of the Chair's report to the annual general meeting has been concerned with the Dams Project; so this year I intend to deal only very briefly with it. The project was completed on time and on budget, which is a credit to its managers; the changes to the landscape have been less unnatural than we feared; and the grasslands have recovered very well. We will be hearing later this evening about ecological improvements to the Heath. As mentioned in our last newsletter, we have reluctantly decided to lobby for the sealing off of the new island at the model boating pond in order principally to protect the trees on it. We do not think that their roots will survive the footfall that the unfenced island will attract.

We look forward to the Open Spaces Bill receiving the Royal Assent next year in 2018, following which the City will be able to control, restrict and license the use of the Heath by third parties for commercial purposes - such as commercial dog walkers whose rapidly increasing use of the Heath, following the closure to them of other local open spaces, is spoiling the enjoyment of the general public.

Before leaving the topic of the Heath, I want to remind you that we intend to see the use of drones on the Heath totally outlawed, and we oppose the creation of any new cycle routes.

Turning now to the Village, I'm glad to say we continue to be successful in maintaining the present restrictions on off-licence alcohol sales in Hampstead. Our latest success has been against Tesco's in the High Street who recently applied to sell alcohol every day of the year from 6am to 11am, but subsequently withdrew their application in the face of opposition from us and - after we alerted them - the police.

We have reinvigorated the Hampstead Card with an updated participants list and the recruitment of new participating shops.

We do not think we can campaign to stop cycle superhighway 11, the planned new cycle superhighway from Swiss Cottage to Baker Street; what we must do is campaign against the intended or unintended diversion of southbound Finchley Road traffic into the residential streets of Hampstead and Belsize, and we will be lobbying Camden to introduce appropriate traffic controls.

On the planning front we have had two important successes. The developer lost his appeal to rebuild the Water House and effectively close Millfield Lane to enable the project to proceed. The house has now been sold and its new owner has no redevelopment plans. And the developer of Heath House by the Hampstead War Memorial has abandoned his proposal to turn

the house into a disproportionately large number of flats - so we hope that the house may now be restored as a single dwelling.

A current planning controversy, which is likely to run for some while, involves the acquisition of the South Fairground Site at the Vale of Health by a developer. The site abuts the Heath and the Vale of Health Pond and sits alongside Spencer House. The site is metropolitan open land and we have told the council and the new owner that we, the City of London, the Highgate Society and the Vale of health Society will oppose any attempt to build on the site.

I wish to express my thanks to those committee members who are stepping down.

Peter Noble was elected to the general committee three years ago in the context of the Dams Project. He is not seeking a second term and I'm very grateful for his help and support during his first term.

Frank Harding has been chair of the Town Subcommittee since 2008. He is stepping down from that position and will be seeking election as an ordinary member of the General Committee. Again, I want to thank Frank for chairing that Subcommittee for these last nine years. His appointed successor will be Martin Thompson, an existing Subcommittee member who has been attending meetings of the General Committee during this year as an observer.

And may I urge you to support our nomination of Gordon Maclean as a vice president of the Society. This is in recognition of his long and distinguished service on the Planning Subcommittee. Gordon still scrutinises and comments on most of the planning applications in the relevant conservation areas, and we are greatly indebted to him for his continuing work on this.

May I also urge you to support the election of our new Secretary Evelyn Ellis, who has kindly put herself forward in succession to Nigel Steward, who is stepping down after three years in that role. I'm very grateful to Nigel for all the support he's given me during my coextensive three-year term as chair.

As you will be hearing from our Treasurer, the Society's membership and finances are in a healthy state, and this is so because of the support which the trustees and the subcommittee members get from all of you, the membership as a whole. So our heartfelt thanks for that. And my personal thanks to the committee members for all the work they have done this year.