

Draft/ THE HEATH & HAMPSTEAD SOCIETY
Minutes of the 123rd Annual General Meeting held at
St. Stephen's, Rosslyn Hill, Hampstead on Wednesday 21 July 2021 at 7.30pm

Members of General Committee present: Lord Hoffmann (President), Marc Hutchinson (Chair), Maureen Clark-Darby (Treasurer), Evelyn Ellis (Secretary), John Beyer, David Castle and Andrew Haslam-Jones (Vice-Chairs), Latoya Austin, Tony Ghilchik, Robert Linger, Thomas Radice and Jeff Waage (Members of General Committee)

Apologies were received from Martin Humphery (Vice-President), Frank Harding, Dafydd James-Williams, Jessica Learmond-Criqui, Peter Tausig and John Weston.

President's Welcome

The President welcomed members to the 123rd Annual General Meeting and noted that, owing to the inability to hold the annual general meeting in 2020 because of lockdowns, this meeting would deal with business left over from last year.

1. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes of the 122nd Annual General Meeting of the Society held on 19 June 2019 were tabled for approval.

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

2. Chair's Report

The President invited the Chair of the Society to present his Report for 2019-2021.

The text of the Chair's Report is appended to these minutes.

3. Treasurer's Report

The President invited the Treasurer to present the Society's Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2019 and 2020, which had been examined by Fisher Phillips LLP, Chartered Accountants, and which were then tabled.

The Treasurer delivered the following report to members.

This year members were being asked to approve the adoption of two sets of financial statements, the first of which the Society has already had to file with the Charity Commission.

Rather than deliver the usual full report, it would make more sense just to highlight the important numbers, and any significant changes or trends since 2019.

The Chair has already commented on the closure of our PO Box, the effect of which seriously disrupted and delayed our seasonal membership renewals for 2020.

Turning then to the key numbers:

Membership has been sustainable year on year, standing at 2,053 at the end of 2020, of which 526 were life memberships. Membership subscriptions, including the related Gift Aid, were down by 7% in

2019 but up by 8% in 2020. These percentage differences are due to timing differences in subscription receipts from annual members and, in both years, an increase in life memberships, including some members switching from annual to life membership.

Donations to the Society were up in 2019, including £49,500 principally made to cover the legal costs of the Society's engagement of an expert witness and successful legal representation, with the Vale of Health Society and the City, at the two inspectors' hearings in relation to the two fairground sites at the Vale of Health.

In 2020, the Society received donations from interested parties of £28,374 to fund legal representation and expert witnesses for the inspector's hearing of the Abacus School appeal.

Most of these donations were Gift-aided, and the Society has recovered the Gift-aid element, and, as you will know, the Society's position was upheld in all those hearings.

The Society running costs remain generally consistent, although they were reduced in 2020 by reason of the cost-saving from the decision to produce only two newsletters rather than three.

The Society's exceptional costs of £67,472 for 2019 represent the legal and expert witness costs of the fairground cases, of which £26,667 was for the South Fairground and £12,420 for the North Fairground, the Society contributing £15,000 from its own reserves.

In 2020, the exceptional costs of £31,374 represent the legal and expert witness costs for the Abacus School hearing; and the exceptional costs of £6,000, from the Society's own reserves, represent the cost of the seasonal biodiversity display boards erected to mark the 150th anniversary of the Act of Parliament that saved the Heath.

The Trustees have reviewed the Society's accounting policies and decided no changes to these policies are required.

At 31 December 2020, the Society's capital and reserves were in a satisfactory position, standing at £47,793; £20,613 was held in unrestricted funds and £27,180 in restricted funds.

The subscription rates and free membership cap proposed by the Trustees as recommended by me for 2021 remain the same as those for 2020 and 2019. In other words, no increase.

RESOLVED that the Reports and Accounts for the years ended 31 December 2019 and 2020 be adopted.

4. Appointment of Auditors

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

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

5. Subscription Rates

The President noted that the Trustees were not proposing any increase in the subscription rates for the next financial year and no change to the present limit on free membership. He invited members to resolve to accept that recommendation.

RESOLVED that there should be no increase in the Society's membership subscription rates for 2021, and no change to the present limit on free membership.

6. Amendment of the Constitution

The President explained that the Trustees, with the support of the Charity Commission, proposed to put beyond legal doubt the ability of the Society and its committees to meet by audio, or audio-visual, means. There was no proposal to move generally to this mode of meeting but it was important to have the flexibility in case of the impracticability of meeting in person.

In response to a question from the floor, the President said the Chair would report at the 2022 AGM on the practical experience of the Society in holding virtual meetings in 2021-2022.

RESOLVED: that the proposed new Rule 27A, as set out in the Notice of Meeting, be adopted.

7. Ratification of continuation in office of elected General Committee Members

The President explained that, whereas those General Committee Officers who are elected annually had, under the express terms of the Constitution, remained in office until this meeting, those members serving three-years terms were limited to their term. Since it had been impossible to hold the AGM in 2020, the Trustees and those elected members had collectively agreed that the latter should simply serve an extra year. The members of the Society were now asked to ratify this arrangement with retrospective effect.

RESOLVED: that the elected members of the General Committee should, notwithstanding the terms of the Constitution, be treated as validly serving an additional year as part of their nominal 'three-year' term.

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

Officers

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

Martin Humphery – Vice-President
Marc Hutchinson – Chair
Maureen Clark-Darby – Treasurer
Evelyn Ellis – Secretary

General Committee Members

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

For a first term of three years:

Latoya Austin

Dafydd James-Williams

Jessica Learmond-Criqui

Maddy Raman

Professor Jeff Waage OBE

For a second term of three years:

Frank Harding

Robert Linger

Tony Ghilchik and Vicki Harding continue the terms for which they were elected. The Chairs of the three Sub-Committees are trustees and members of the General Committee, but they are appointed from time to time by the General Committee and not elected.

It was the Trustees' intention to appoint Thomas Radice and John Weston to vacancies on the General Committee under Rule 21(2). Thomas Radice was stepping down in September 2021 from his position as the Society's representative on the City's Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee; he would be replaced by Professor Jeff Waage.

9. Any other business

Members raised the following:

- Gratitude was due to Heath Hands and the daily volunteers who helped restore the Heath after its degradation through heavy footfall
- Camden Council was to be congratulated on its use of water bags to help the growth of newly-planted street trees
- There was a problem with the use of overly-white pavement grouting in conservation areas – it was confirmed that the Town Sub-Committee would look into this
- The Society should oppose the high-rise buildings proposed in the Murphy's Yard development at Gospel Oak – it was confirmed the Society actively opposes these
- The trees at Parliament Hill were now blocking the view of London and needed to be crowned and pruned – it was confirmed that lockdowns had delayed this work in 2020 and the work would proceed in the winter of 2021
- The recent Heath floods appeared to justify the Dams Project on the Heath – it was confirmed that indeed no dams had collapsed but that the recent storms were not the 1-in-400,000-year event modelled for in the construction.

10. Retirement of Lord Hoffmann and the election of Lord Mance as the Society's new President

Tony Hillier, the former Chair of the Society, and Marc Hutchinson delivered tributes to Lord Hoffmann. Lord Hoffmann replied and proposed the election of Lord Mance as his successor as President.

RESOLVED: that Lord Mance be elected as President of the Society.

Lord Mance then addressed the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 8.50pm.

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Chair

Date:

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