

Draft/ THE HEATH & HAMPSTEAD SOCIETY
Minutes of the 124th Annual General Meeting held at
St. Stephen's, Rosslyn Hill, Hampstead on Wednesday 15 June 2022 at 7.30pm

Members of General Committee present: Marc Hutchinson (Chair), Maureen Clark-Darby (Treasurer), Evelyn Ellis (Secretary), John Beyer, David Castle and Andrew Haslam-Jones (Vice-Chairs), Latoya Austin, Tony Ghilchik, Frank Harding, Vicki Harding, Thomas Radice and John Weston (Members of General Committee)

In the absence of Lord Mance (President), the Chair welcomed members to the 124th Annual General Meeting and explained why the President was unable to attend. As President of the Common Law Court of Kazakhstan, Lord Mance was detained abroad owing to the timetable of court sittings and sent his apologies. In accordance with the Society's constitution, he had appointed the Chair to preside at the AGM in his place.

1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the 123rd Annual General Meeting of the Society held on 21 July 2021 were tabled for approval.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved and signed by the Chair.

2. Election of Lord Mance as President

RESOLVED that Lord Mance be duly re-elected President for a further term of one year.

3. Chair's Report

The Chair of the Society presented his report for 2021-2022. The text of the report is appended to these minutes.

4. Treasurer's Report

The Chair invited the Treasurer to present the Society's Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2021, which had been examined by Fisher Phillips LLP, Chartered Accountants, and which were then tabled.

The Treasurer delivered the following report to members.

The major items of difference between the Society's 2020 Financial Statements and those for 2021 are that legacies and donations to unrestricted funds in 2021 increased by just under 67%. These items can be seen on the face of the Statement of Financial Activity.

Turning then to the key numbers:

Membership had been sustainable year on year, standing at 2,015 at the end of 2021, of which 535 were life memberships. Membership subscriptions, including the related Gift Aid, were down by 5% in 2021. This percentage decrease was due to the closure of the Society's PO Box, the effect of which seriously disrupted and delayed seasonal membership renewals for 2021. These membership numbers recovered in 2022.

Donations to the Society's restricted funds were down in 2021. In 2020, the Society received donations from interested parties of £28,374, and in 2021 £4,176, to fund legal representation and expert witnesses for the inspector's hearing of the Abacus School appeal. The principal donations and legacies received to unrestricted funds during 2021 were £17,656: £10,000 from Hunter Davies, the celebrated author; £1,000 from Society member Todd Berman: website cost donations of just under £3,000: and a £500 plaque donation.

Most of these donations were Gift aided and the Society would be recovering the Gift aid element.

The Society running costs remained generally consistent, although there were proportionately increased costs for the Newsletter in 2021 by reason of the decision to produce only two newsletters in 2020. In 2021, the exceptional costs of £4,176 represented the legal and expert witness costs for the Abacus School hearing.

Owing to the exceptional donation income to unrestricted funds, as stated above, the Society made a gain for the year of £10,567 increased by the paper gain on its investment of £550, which gave a total gain for the year of £11,117. The unrestricted funds had a gain in the year of £13,667 while the restricted funds had a deficit of £2,550.

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

At 31 December 2021, the Society's capital and reserves were in a satisfactory position, standing at £58,910; of which £34,280 was held in unrestricted funds and £24,630 in restricted funds.

The subscription rates and free membership cap proposed by the Trustees as recommended by the Treasurer for 2023 remain the same as those for 2022. In other words, no increase.

RESOLVED that the Reports and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2021 be adopted.

5. Appointment of Auditors

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

6. Subscription Rates

The Chair 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 2023, and no change to the present limit on free membership.

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

Officers

Following receipt of nominations, John Beyer proposed the re-election of Marc Hutchinson and the Chair proposed the re-election of Maureen Clark-Darby and Evelyn Ellis, each of whom was re-elected to the following offices:

Marc Hutchinson – Chair
Maureen Clark-Darby – Treasurer
Evelyn Ellis – Secretary

General Committee Members

Following receipt of nominations, the Chair proposed the election of the following, each of whom was elected for a first term of three years:

Thomas Radice
John Weston

The Chair noted the other members of the General Committee who were in the middle of their elected terms and would therefore continue to serve as trustees for the coming year: Latoya Austin, Frank Harding, Jessica Learmond-Criqui, Robert Linger and Madhavan Raman.

The Chairs of the three Sub-Committees were trustees and members of the General Committee, but they were appointed from time to time by the General Committee, not elected. Professor Jeff Waage was also appointed, not elected, as a trustee and member of the General Committee in his capacity as the Society's representative on the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee. It was the intention of the General Committee to appoint Dr Vicki Harding (currently an elected member serving a second three-year term) to the General Committee as an appointed member for the year 2022-2023.

8. Any other business

Members raised the following:

- Linda Chung raised Murphy's Yard and O2 Centre developments, and made a plea to Camden to re-organise and improve the appearance and amenities for the Finchley Road area
- Concern at the removal of the 24 bus as an essential amenity to the Heath and an historic feature of the Heath and South End Green area
- That the problem of fast-food delivery vehicles cluttering the High Street had still not been resolved
- It had been promised that the size of supermarket delivery vehicles to Tesco in Heath Street would be reduced to avoid traffic jams, but that promise had not been kept
- The enforcement of dog-walking licences which came into force in May of this year
- What would become of the former police station building on Haverstock Hill since the inspector's rejection of the Abacus School development plan.

The Chair promised to look into all these matters.

There followed a round of applause for the Chair of the Society

The meeting concluded at 8.45pm.

After a short break, the newly appointed Superintendent of Hampstead Heath, Stefania Horne, delivered an illustrated talk on the protection of migratory birds of prey across the Straits of Messina, a project she had led when studying at the University of Rome.

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Chair

Date:

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The Heath & Hampstead Society

Chair's report to members at the 2022 Annual General Meeting

Since my report to you at last year's AGM, I am delighted to say that "normal service", in every aspect of the Society's activities, has been resumed, if not expanded.

Most notably, we are seeking to publicise the Heath, its unique value, and the work of the Heath staff, Heath Hands and the Society's Heath Subcommittee and volunteers, in constantly protecting it in the face of, among other things, a huge increase in human and canine footfall.

What may appear to be mere entertainments, such as the Kite Day, the Natural Aspect Concert and the outdoor film night, are in fact linked to a conservation theme, which is also the purpose of the seasonally changing biodiversity boards we have erected on the Heath, for the second year running, and which now have QR code links to ecological information sites.

It has to be said also that the Kite Day, Concert and film night, which began as sesquicentennial celebrations, are being repeated this year in response to popular demand.

I need to update you on four particular Heath matters.

First - dog walking

Since April, the City have issued licences to selected commercial dog walkers. The licence allows them to walk four dogs at any one time on designated areas of the Heath. The Society, which has been involved in the formulation and implementation of the licensing scheme, is pleased that the limit is four dogs rather than the mooted six, and that commercial dog-walking is effectively prohibited on

those areas of the Heath which would particularly suffer from canine activity.

However, commercial dog walking is not the only problem. It is reckoned that Covid lockdowns have resulted in an 80% increase in dog ownership in London, which is why you will have noticed the large increase of family dog walking on the Heath. The sheer numbers of dogs and the inevitable damage they do to sensitive wildlife and floral habitats mean the City and the Society are going to have to look at new ways of protecting these habitats. As the Society, we are generally opposed to more fencing on Heath - we believe it is contrary to the spirit and the letter of the 1871 Act, which our charity is pledged to uphold - but temporary fencing of certain areas, or designation of dog-free areas, or dog-on-lead areas, may have to be part of the solution. This is a difficult and emotional issue for dog owners and non-dog owners alike, and will need to be addressed sensitively and thoughtfully.

Secondly - Murphy's Yard

The Society was in the vanguard of the well-organised objections to this proposal from Folgate to develop - we said "overdevelop" - the large old builder's yard of Murphy's in Gospel Oak. The objections ranged over many issues but our objections had to be confined to our charitable remit which is to protect the Heath and its fringes, including the famous views. So we objected specifically to the destruction, caused by the proposed clusters of 19 story tower blocks, of the historic views from Parliament Hill and Parliament Hill Fields to the Square Mile, to the guaranteed increase in huge footfall on those areas resulting from the developer's decision to omit any green open space from the development site, and the worsening of the traffic jams along Gordon House Road resulting from the site's main entrance being located by the railway bridges there at the narrowest section of the road.

We know that many of our members individually wrote forceful objections to the scheme, and we thank them for that. Of course, a new and modified application will be made, but we stand ready to deal with that.

Thirdly - Jack Straw's Castle

As I reported last year, we were surprised and disappointed that the planning appeal inspector, contrary to the decisions of two previous inspectors on the development of that site, authorised the construction of two tiny mock-Georgian townhouses in the residents' car park. The developer recently sought planning permission for underground garages and car stackers on the site which we expect Camden will refuse but, more gratifyingly, it turns out - and this did not come to light until after the inspector's decision - that the structural plan for the house involves underground encroachment onto the Heath. Since the City will not permit this encroachment – indeed it is legally bound to prevent it - the approved plans are going to have to be altered and, we insist, resubmitted for a new planning approval. So, some 18 months after the inspector's decision, the development has still not begun. We will keep you updated in the newsletter.

Fourthly - 55 Fitzroy Park

This large site abuts Millfield Lane by the Highgate bathing ponds. For seven years now the developer has been seeking planning permission to erect five new houses on the site of the existing dwelling. In April, Camden threw out the application, including on the grounds that the existing garden is protected as Private Open Space under Camden's Local Plan. Camden's decision to protect the fringes of the Heath and Millfield Lane itself is very welcome, but it is to us surprising that the pre-application went on for so long, only to lead to a refusal; the wasted professional and council costs must be

enormous. The Fitzroy Park Residents' Association led the successful fight with our and the City's support.

The Heath is, I am sure you will agree, looking its best and is visually recovered from the many visits it had during the pandemic. We congratulate the Superintendent and her hard-working staff on that achievement.

Now to the Town.

One of the unwelcome consequences of the demise of the Hampstead Business Improvement District has been the lack of any single voice to represent the businesses of Hampstead. No organisation has yet, even tentatively, emerged to take over the BID's functions, although Councillor Stephen Stark with the support of the Society and several local businesses was able to fund and organise the Christmas lights and tree. We thank him and the contributors to that project for, without it, the High Street would have had an untypically forlorn appearance at Christmas time.

In another ad hoc development earlier this year, Camden held a borough-wide Camden Community Conversation on various issues to be addressed in future local policies. Trees, pollution, traffic and rubbish were some of the matters discussed.

We co-hosted with Camden one of these Conversations, chaired by one of our trustees Maddy Raman, which was attended also by representatives of Fitzjohn's and RedFrog, to discuss a range of local concerns direct with councillors and officers.

Everyone at the meeting felt it a worthwhile event to be repeated - and so Camden has agreed that we should host another such meeting in September 2022. We will produce the agenda in consultation with Camden and, in the spring of 2023, the outcome of that meeting will be shared and consolidated with the outcomes of similar meetings to be held elsewhere in Camden, with a view to

producing reformed policies. So, in this way, part of the work of the old BID will be carried on. We have yet to settle the agenda for the September meeting which will probably be at Burgh House, but I suspect we will wish to focus on rubbish and its collection; the challenge of this topic lies in the fact that we have several distinct local rubbish-related problems with different causes, which require specific, individual and bespoke remedies. If rubbish is to be the chosen topic, we hope that Veolia will also attend the meeting.

You have read in the newsletter about the work of the Town Sub-Committee. Its achievements, although never complete, include, first, to decrease the illegal parking by fast food delivery mopeds at the top of Heath Street and, secondly, by objecting to and appearing at licensing hearings, to hold Hampstead's new alcohol outlets to the so-called permitted Framework Hours, something which all the licensing applications try to escape when they are first submitted.

Zoom meetings. At last year's AGM a member asked what percentage of our meetings we would continue to hold on Zoom. As I said then, I favour face-to-face meetings where possible but sometimes it is more efficient and secures a higher attendance if the meeting is held on Zoom. I said I would report back on this at today's meeting. Bearing in mind that the committees meet every two months, the number of Zoom meetings over the year to date has been as follows:

General Committee: one

Heath Sub-Committee: one

Planning Sub-Committee: three

Town Sub-Committee: three.

The success of our Society depends on the work of its members, committee members and patrons. I am very grateful to patrons Melvyn Bragg and Simon Jenkins, both of whom delivered lectures to

help us fund-raise during the year. I also wish publicly to thank long-time Society member Hunter Davies, who has donated to the Society all the revenues from his new book on Hampstead Heath - a most generous gift and the largest lifetime gift the Society ever received, in return for which he has accepted honorary membership of the Society.

Finally, I wish to pay tribute to two of our long serving trustees who have retired this year.

Martin Humphery

We received the resignation of our Vice-President, Martin Humphery, with effect from 1 January this year. Martin's past involvement as an officer of the Society, in so many different roles, is exceptional.

Martin became a member and the Chairman of the Town Sub-Committee, and a Vice-Chairman of the Society, in 1995. His c.v. in the May 1995 Newsletter stated:

"Martin Humphery is a retired businessman and has lived in Hampstead for 40 years. He walks on the Heath every day and has a strong interest in its conservation. He is also deeply concerned at the declining condition of Hampstead's Townscape and this year joined the Society's Town Sub-Committee as co-opted member. He has been investigating the reasons for the poor state of rubbish collection and road cleansing by Camden Council for the Sub-Committee."

He continued as Chairman of the Town Sub-Committee until 2004 and, at the same time, became Chairman of the Society in succession to Helen Marcus in 1998, a position in which he served until 2003 when he was succeeded by Tony Hillier and became a Vice-President of the Society. In 2004 he stepped down as Chairman of the Town Sub-committee but remained a member of it, leaving it eventually to

join the newly formed Planning Sub-Committee in 2008 on which he served as a member until 2014.

We are deeply grateful and indebted to Martin for his untiring work for the Society over nearly 30 years. The General Committee will be hosting an event soon to mark his retirement and we send him and his wife Angela our best wishes for their future. We shall enjoy sitting in seeing them as usual at our lectures and social events.

Tony Ghilchik

Tony has served on the Heath Sub-Committee since 2001. He has been a trustee of the Society since 2002 when he also became Chairman of that Sub-Committee, a position he held until 2015 when he was succeeded by John Beyer. In that capacity as Chairman he also served on the City's Hampstead Heath Management Committee, the statutory committee which takes the formal decisions on general management of the Heath. He has contributed a great deal to the protection of the Heath, which he has known and loved all his life, and to the broad success of the Society, and we are deeply grateful and indebted to Tony for his long service. He steps down from the General Committee today and has decided not to seek re-election. However, he will remain a member of the Heath Sub-Committee until at least the end of this year.

To conclude - the Society's membership is up again, and our finances are in good shape. We continue to have excellent relations with the City, Camden and the Heath staff.

May I thank the Society's committee members and you, the members, for your continuing support.

Thank you.

Are there any questions?