

Minutes of the Fortieth Committee Meeting held at County Hall Preston on the 5th February 2011

Present: Peter Colley (Chairman), David Brown, Kate Cartmel, Adrian Dunning, Kathy Fishwick, Roger Frankland, Iain Gerrard, Brian Gilbert, John Kershaw, Susan Spibey, Nick Thompson (Regional Director of CPRE), Paul Thornhill & Tom Webster.

Apologies: Terry Edgar.

40.1 Minutes of the previous meeting:

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted unanimously as a true record.

40.2 Matters arising:

Peter referred to his action list which he had circulated with an email in December and said he would like to go through it before starting on agenda items.

1. *Lytham Hall event:* Arrangements were going forward.
2. *Booking for future meetings:* Kathy reported that she had not yet found out what charges might be levied if meetings were to continue at County Hall. It was mentioned that Ian Harvey had offered meeting facilities at the Tea Factory in Liverpool where he was based. It was however felt that the ease of access provided by the Preston site was preferable.
3. *Heritage Trust for the North West:* Peter said he had been somewhat disappointed that a formal arrangement with this body had not progressed any further.
4. *Insurance with the Heritage Trust for the North West:* Progress of this was similarly in abeyance.
5. *CPRE:* At this point Peter introduced Nick Thompson who was present as part of a reciprocal arrangement where there could be attendance at our meetings by a representative of CPRE. Both he and Nick were keen to improve links between the two bodies.
6. *English Heritage:* Peter said he had also met English Heritage at a poorly-attended meeting of the Historic Environment Forum. He had been told that English Heritage would not be supporting voluntary organisations any more because the Government wanted the Heritage Lottery Fund to take over this function; there had been a representative present from the Fund and she had indicated that there would actually be more money available in the coming year than previously.
Kathy said that she understood from a meeting she had attended in London that the Heritage Lottery Fund was working out how and which voluntary organisations they might fund. She said she had taken the opportunity to point out that in addition to Civic Voice there were still the regional associations in existence.

8. *Civic Voice*: Peter, having already spoken to Freddy Gick of Civic Voice and got his tentative agreement that there should be recognition and closer working ties between Civic Voice and the regional associations, was intending to set up a meeting comprising the regional chairmen of those regions which were still operating. Following a query from John as to which regions were still alive and well, Peter reported that the North East, Yorkshire & Humberside, the London Forum, West Midlands, the 'outer' South West and the North West were still operating. He added that the South East, East Midlands & the East of England had folded.
- 9 *Draft Letters to LEPS on LAs*: Peter had sent his letter, as circulated to committee members in draft form), to the Local Enterprise Partnerships and had had two replies, one from Cumbria and one from Cheshire.
- His letter to Local Authorities, also circulated to committee members, was ready to go but he required the email addresses of the Chief Executive for each one; Iain said he would try to get these if he could.
- Adrian suggested that some of this information might be gleaned from the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities.
- Tom interjected to say that we should produce a statement explaining what we are, who we are and what we have achieved to date. Peter suggested that this be discussed under item 6 of the agenda.
- Iain agreed to contact each of the societies registered with NWActs to find out which Local Authority each dealt with.

40.3. Financial Report:

Brian reported that the total cash in hand was £1776.19. The only expenditure since the last report was £128.04 for the website and domain name which covered the next two years.

40.4 Association Membership:

Four membership renewals had been received to date out of 20 registered societies.

It was suggested that the website should show the names of societies registered with NWActs but this was thought to be inadvisable for the moment. There remained however the dilemma that the website still listed every society in the northwest, registered or not, and whether we should do so in the future.

Contact with non-registered societies was discussed and Iain suggested that as email contact cost us nothing this could be maintained. Susan disagreed saying it was not fair to give non-members the same service as members and a majority agreed with this point.

Peter said that events such as Lytham should be cheaper for members. John suggested that if information was sent to more than one email address for each society (where these are available) this would reduce the suspected problem that the normal recipient simply didn't pass on to his or her committee what had been sent to them.

It was requested that Peter send a copy of the letter to be sent out in

which societies were asked if they would wish to join NWActs.

40.5. Promoting the Association:

Iain said that the blanket membership fee of £40 should be looked at again as smaller societies, the ones which probably had the most to gain from being members, appeared to have decided that they couldn't afford to join.

Peter said that the membership of each society needed to be known before the fees could be varied. Roger said he felt that this wouldn't prove to be a great difficulty.

Peter said we needed to look for funding in order to host workshops which would train members of societies in relevant subjects; and that this idea had been considered suitable for HLF funding. He then referred to Tom's suggestion earlier of the need to produce a promotion leaflet and agreed that this should be proceeded with as quickly as possible.

40.6. Affiliation with the Heritage Trust for the North West:

Referred to above in Matters Arising, Peter said he would continue to try to create a link with this organisation despite his disappointment at the lack of any reply from John Miller.

40.7. CPRE:

Brian asked Nick Thompson at this point if he felt that his presence had been beneficial. Nick replied that while he and Peter wished to continue and reinforce a connection between CPRE and NWActs he wasn't sure if staying for the full meeting was necessary. Susan suggested that if he came just to take part in any discussions of mutual interest, which could be arranged at the beginning of an agenda, and then left that this might be a more reasonable arrangement.

During this discussion Brian said that in relating this to a society's membership of the Association, in some instances, the overlap of interest between ourselves and the individual societies had become almost minimal, with their concerns about planning legislation and regulations not high on the agenda, and with the greater part of their annual activities based on visits to buildings of architectural interest, or talks and lectures on people and places of historical significance; more akin to a Social Club than a Civic Society.

Iain queried whether CPRE communicated by email from the national or the regional centres; Nick said these came from the national centre.

40.8. New Logo:

Peter circulated a new logo design for NWActs which he had had professionally designed. This was a pentagon in two-tone green with the name in the centre and the sub-regions named along each of the five sides. With the provisos that it should be upended to give a flat base and the regions be repositioned to relate to each other as they

did geographically this was accepted. Peter said he would have the changes made and would then send the logo to Iain for incorporation into any letterheads and to go onto the website.

40.9 Insurance:

Peter said he had tried to get details of the insurance offered by the Heritage Trust of the North West but had only received details the day before. He said he was unhappy with the set-up as offered as it appeared that individual groups would be unable to make separate decisions and would be regarded as sub-groups to the Heritage Trust. Premiums quoted were £536 for personal liability, and this would require individual names of volunteers being provided along with a risk assessment for each event, and £2162 for employers' liability. Both Brian and Kathy said that Towergate offered a better deal. Peter pointed out that they had offered individual societies cover for £150 so a group deal would have to be cheaper to be attractive. It was agreed that Peter, Brian and Kate continue to investigate more possibilities and, at Susan's suggestion, try to circulate at least three proposals before the 5th March meeting.

40.10 Events:

Peter reported that he had received some promotional information for the Lytham Hall event from John Miller only the day before. He had produced a draft invitation letter and attendance form which he circulated. The suggested cost per attendee was £12.50 with non-members being charged £15.00.

This information would be circulated to all those on the database whether registered with NWActs or not; Iain and Brian would proceed with this as soon as possible.

Iain said he felt it would be difficult to send out the appeal information for the Hall in electronic form as the size of the leaflet was greater than A4. Susan asked if it was not available in .pdf format: Kate agreed to find this out and if it existed to arrange for it to be sent to Iain.

Peter invited suggestions for a suitable building which could form the basis for a similar event in 2012.

He also asked for ideas for a subject which might form the core of an Autumn Event, such as the Localism Bill.

40.11 Communications:

Peter reported that the Royal Town Planning Institute had withdrawn funding for Planning Aid. He suggested that help for local communities might come from within NWActs and that this could lead to the formation of new societies where none existed.

Susan said she felt the website was underused and could benefit from a revamp. Adrian suggested a sub-committee be formed to discuss this and other methods of communication. It was agreed that an informal group comprising Susan, Adrian and Iain initially be agreed upon.

40.12 Any Other Business:

Peter said that the subscription to the Heritage Alliance (£100) was due. The benefits from joining were questioned and Iain suggested that our membership be allowed to lapse; this was agreed.

David said as a matter of information that British Waterways was to become a charity in 2012 and intended to set up local boards which would invite civic societies onto them.

The meeting closed at 3.32 pm