

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Renewable Heritage Trust held on 4 February 2017 at Howsham Mill

Present: Trustees Mel Fox (c), Dave Mann, Val Hood, Martin Phillips, Amy Beer, Paul Lister, John Renel, education officer Helen Spring and nine friends.

1. Apologies Sarah Moore

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last AGM held on 6 February 2016 were accepted.

3. Matters arising not covered in the agenda

None

4. Trustees' annual report

Mel Fox welcomed everyone to the AGM. The year being reported on runs from 1 August 2015 to 31 July 2016. This included the last six months of the HLF grant. This was delivered in budget and on time and recognised by HLF as being well managed. It included the installation of a new swing bridge, based on drawings of a similar 19th century bridge over the Kennet and Avon canal, though it has been built to take heavier traffic. Amy Beer commended Mel for her efforts in getting planning permission for the bridge. Also included in the grant was the shed to store equipment that has tidied up the island.

There have been ongoing issues with the hydro systems. Where possible, the systems have been upgraded rather than just repaired. The floods in late December reduced electricity output and consequently income. After protracted discussions with the Charity Bank for a loan for a second screw, the bank decided it could not make RHT a loan offer. Subsequently a Polish company, Hydromew, provided a very competitive quote to make the screw and do all the civil works and installation. Private loans have been secured to fund this.

Planning permission was secured for hire for corporate events. Craft course have been offered at the mill over many years. We are moving to an arrangement where organisations or individual course providers use the mill as a venue and they make all the arrangements and get the participants. This is a model we would like to adopt for other types of events. The canoe slalom was again well attended.

A particular success this year has been theatrical events. Field Trip Arts put on Escape from Derwent Island in February and Flour Power at the Heritage Open day in September. Dominic Somers from the group said that they had enjoyed working on the island and praised the community spirit. In July the HandleBards, a four man Shakespearean troupe who travel by bicycle, put on Much Ado About Nothing, which was also very well received.

There was a smaller Christmas event featuring a storyteller from the Malton Dickens Society.

Helen Spring joined us in September 2015 and organises all the school education visits. She is a qualified teacher and forest school teacher. She has developed good links with local schools and other groups like beavers and scouts, and had about 600 pupils on visits over the last year. Welburn school pupils and parents came for a much enjoyed evening visit. Helen then gave a presentation of her activities. She highlighted the bug hotel built by pupils from three schools with help from local volunteers. An outdoor maths day when about 70 pupils from several schools learnt maths in activities around the island. Foston and Terrington schools have made six visits. The island is an ideal place for forest school activities, where pupils benefit from repeat visits. Both local schools and those further afield have come to the mill. In addition a group of primary age and a group of secondary age home schooled children have made several visits. A very successful series of outdoor events was offered during the school summer holidays. Both children and their parents enjoyed them.

Mel thanked Helen for her work, also our volunteer guides and general volunteers and Tracey Fletch for book-keeping.

Martin summarised the financial results. Income was up compared to the previous year due to the expenditure on the swing bridge, shed and other items, such that virtually all the £643,000 HLF grant was spent. However due to 30% less electricity being generated, sales income was down. Repair and replacement cost for a new gearbox and overhauled generator reduced the profit from electricity generation. The surplus in HPC at the end of the year of £13,000 was used for the first payment for the second screw, rather than transferring it to RHT. Of the total cost of the second screw of about £140,000, £96,000 will be loans and the balance from income.

5. Presentation on hydropower

Dave Man gave an illustrated presentation about how hydro schemes work and a description of some of the 70 operating schemes installed by his company since 2004.

6. Election of trustees

Mel thanked Amy Beer for her contribution over the last three years as she is standing down as a trustee. Will Brown, who has been coming to the mill since he was a child, has agreed to stand, though could not be at the meeting. He was proposed by Mel, seconded by Paul and elected unanimously. Three trustees, Dave Mann, Val Hood and John Renel, have completed three years' service and put themselves forward for re-election. All were re-elected.

7. Suggestions for future uses and Cine North

Films have been shown at the mill over a number of years, starting with outdoor performances. For the past two years the mill has been a Cine North venue. To show a film takes some organisation and the numbers attending has varied, making the effort and cost per person rather high. We would like more commitment to attending to justify the effort involved. Ideas suggested included an outdoor show, themed films, or films related to other events going on. Local flavour films could prove attractive; films by Ken Loach can be shown with support from the producers. Grants for equipment may be available through the BFI.

Dominic said that Field Trip Arts are seeking funding for three ideas that could involve the mill, around children and adults, in particular children challenging adult ideas. He also suggested an outdoor family disco with different types of music. He suggested that wood working courses could prove popular. These have been held at the mill before.

8. Any other business

Bruce Skinner asked if there was any progress on the stone sundial. Helen replied that it is included in the draft HLF grant application, but no organisation has committed to making one.

9. Dates for the diary

All events are listed on the website.

10. Date of next meeting

The next AGM will be held on Saturday 3 February 2018 at the mill. A suggestion of changing the financial year so that the AGM occurred in summer and might attract more people will be considered.