

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Renewable Heritage Trust held on 13 April 2019 at Howsham Mill

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

1. Apologies Will Brown, Adrian Koster, Gary Thompson.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last AGM held on 3 February 2018 were accepted.

3. Matters arising not covered in the agenda

The question of the time of year to hold the AGM was discussed again. The change to April had not attracted more people to attend.

4. Trustees' annual report

Mel Fox welcomed everyone to the AGM. The year being reported runs from 1 August 2017 to 31 July 2018. She explained that the purpose of RHT is to restore suitable buildings with the potential for renewable energy generation. For now and the immediate future, Howsham Mill is the only site. Restoration of the building and the swing bridge is now complete. During the period screw 1 and the waterwheel were repaired and maintained as necessary. Installation of screw 2 was completed and it was commissioned in May 2018. Since then it has been working satisfactorily.

Problems over H&S at the site expressed by NYCC were resolved with the help of a consultant in preparing a comprehensive H&S management system. This allowed more school visits to resume and during the period about 450 primary school pupils and 120 college and university students came to the island on organised trips. It has proved to be an attractive and interesting site for schools, with good feedback from teachers and pupils. We can provide set curricula, e.g. processing grain and bread-making, and cover particular requirements. Events were also put on during the school holidays.

There were Cine North screenings during the spring and summer, though attendance was patchy. The HandleBards returned for another sell-out performance. The mill has provided volunteering opportunities and Mel thanked those volunteers present.

The Heritage Open Day was well supported by people who would not usually come to the mill. Some venues that open normally charge for admission, but on HOD offer free entry. As the mill is free to visit, we have put on different activities on HOD.

The slalom was again a successful event and it has been gratifying to see the improvement in the standard over the years, with a few participants going on to join the national team. It is an example of how the mill is not just a building.

During the year, about 215,000 kWh of electricity were generated just from the power of the river, about one third more than the previous year. The relatively low river level for much of the year was good for generation, though with climate change happening, future conditions are uncertain.

For the future, educational activities will remain central. The angle of screw 2 is not correct and it had been hoped to correct it when the EA was installing a fish pass in the weir. This has now been cancelled, though an alternative has been proposed. Repaying the loans for screw 2 is the financial priority which will then allow more expenditure on activities. It can be slow getting things done, such as the stone sundial we hope to get carved. RHT continues to seek new trustees and new skills. Recruiting Will Brown as a young trustee has been a good addition to the team. It is a small, practical and informal group.

Martin summarised the financial position. It was an even better year than last for electricity sales due to the favourable river level and the contribution from screw 2. The gross surplus was £32,600. Some of this money was transferred to RHT but most went towards paying off the loans for the second screw. The expenditure by RHT was £22,700. The main costs were the education visits, book-keeping, insurance, and professional fees for the H&S management system.

There was a question about vandalism and anti-social behaviour. There have been no serious incidents in recent years, though anti-social behaviour, in particular littering, was common during the summer months. Helen now puts up signs saying the island is closed to the public when school groups are present.

5. Election of trustees

There were no new nominations, though RHT would welcome new trustees coming forward. Sarah Moore, who has not been active recently, stood down as trustee. No other trustee has completed their current three year term.

6. Any other business

There was no other business.

7. Date of next meeting

The next AGM will be held on Sunday 5 April 2020 at the mill.

Dave Mann then gave a summary of the hydro systems and their recent performance. Helen Spring gave a short presentation about her activities with school groups.