

WCS

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 8th June 2021

Present: Graham Barrow, Clare Blackmore, Patrick Brown, Rosemary Evans, Jon Jefferies, Ian Robinson, Hilary Waters, Philip Welch and Chris Winter

Apologies: Andrew Fawcett, John Rackham and Doug Robinson

1. Welcome & thanks

CW thanked Rosemary for her hospitality and all those who had remained engaged and helped to keep the society ticking over during the pandemic.

2. Minutes of the last meeting (10 November)

CW apologised for circulating the February 2020 minutes instead of those for November. (Attached herewith) IR referred to his copy and gave an oral résumé. **Agreed.**

3. Matters arising not covered on the agenda

JJ referred to previous discussions regarding signage around the city, which had not been addressed further. It was agreed that in many cases the signs were either unsightly or unnecessary – or both, and detracted from the attractiveness of the city.

As the signs could be the responsibility of either Somerset CC, Mendip DC or Wells CC it was suggested that CW should write to the leaders of each to express our concern and to suggest that this might be addressed, but PW suggested that a presentation could be made to the next City Council meeting, at which representatives of MDC and SCC were also likely to be present, as would Andy Vallis from Wells Voice.

JJ & CW **agreed** to prepare a presentation and ask to speak at the meeting on 24th June.¹

4. Committee roles and responsibilities

Having canvassed committee members' views on the future of the Society, CW stressed that future plans and activities must be based on our ability to resource them – ie: people willing to carry out the necessary tasks involved in the activities, not continuing to rely on a small number of people.

Discussion about the future included:

- The importance of regular – or at least *frequent* – events for members.
- Events could be varied and not always be 'just' a talk.
- Covid restrictions are likely to be in place for some time yet and these could limit the number of people that may gather together and restrict offering refreshments.
- Some members are not as likely to engage electronically and like to meet in person, socially.
- It is likely that some members may not be inclined or not able to return to events as presented pre-covid.
- There is no-one currently to organise a programme of events. Talks etc have been organised by the Chair and Membership Secretary for the last few years.
- One-off events, held frequently but not regularly, could be considered, as long as someone is willing to organise these.
- We need to engage a wider, new audience, and potential new members. PB suggested talks *in series* might encourage this.
- A range of different, well publicised, events might interest a wider public.
- CW is meeting with two members who responded to the recent e-newsletter saying they would like to get more involved.

¹ The Town Clerk was contacted and has added this to the agenda for the full council meeting on 24th June.

- Combining with another organisation (eg: U3A) was also discussed; which has its pros and cons.

CW suggested that in the current covid-uncertain times, we need a short, medium and long-term plan. **It was agreed** to:

- Make the most of opportunities offered through our involvement in activities and events already planned for this summer / autumn (6. below)
- Aim to present a plan, with a committed committee, to the AGM in November for the year ahead - 2022
- Re-assess the situation in the light of these experiences and consider all options for the future – including combining with A N Other.

5. Role of President

Sadly, our President, Bishop Peter Hancock, has taken early retirement due to ill health and CW received a letter confirming that he would therefore no longer be able to fulfil this role. CW proposed that we either: a) wait for the appointment of a new Bishop of Bath & Wells and invite him or her to become our President – in the long-standing tradition; or b) invite Bishop Ruth to take up the role in the interim.

It was agreed unanimously that we should wait and approach the newly appointed Bishop when appropriate.

6. Events for 2021:

- Community Day 24th July:** A stand has been booked in the Cathedral and it is important that the Civic Society should be represented and maintain a good profile locally CW asked for volunteers to help on the day. GB & RE offered to support this. As well as stalls and displays in the Cathedral there would be a 'Big Picnic' on Cathedral Green and activities at the Bishop's Palace.
- Monmouth Pageant:** JJ explained his proposal for a short piece of street theatre which could take place at various forth-coming events. After an enthusiastic response from Richard Wright, former chair of the Little Theatre, unfortunately other members did not show an interest in becoming involved. However, with support from IR and GB, it could be possible to put it on as a solely WCS enterprise. CB suggested a costume supplier in Frome. JJ to take this forward with a view to a debut performance on 24th July.
- Summer Social:** CW said that she had been hopeful that this could go ahead in the Museum Gardens, but it was agreed that a decision should be delayed until there is greater certainty about covid restrictions. It would also be weather dependent, as it is very unlikely that it could be held inside.
- Heritage Open Days 10 – 19th September:** Julia Wood asked CW to coordinate HOD in Wells this year. She has already had meetings with representatives from the Bishop's Palace, the Cathedral, the Almshouses and St Cuthbert's regarding their plans for events around the food theme. The Town Hall has indicated that unfortunately the council will not be able to participate. CW aims to encourage restaurant and café owners in historic buildings to take part too. Antonia Gwynne is helping to create a flier for distribution, and an article will appear in Wells Voice next month. A programme of events will be produced for residents and visitors, and these will also appear on the national HOD website. www.heritageopendays.org.uk

- e. **AGM – 10th November:** WCS is obliged by the Charity Commission to hold this meeting, and it will hopefully be face-to-face this year. As 4. above, we should aim to present a sustainable plan to members, for the following year, at this meeting.

7. **Plaques Trail leaflet:** CW & JJ have been progressing the idea for a combined WCS leaflet and Plaques Trail leaflet. St Andrews Press has quoted £416 for 7000 A4 trifold leaflet, plus design work, in order to produce high quality promotional material. This could be widely distributed to residents and visitors to encourage exploration of the city and its history, as well as promoting the Society.
PW added that Project Factory is planning to produce a local information booklet, and the Plaques Trail might be included in this.

8. Reports from committee members:

- a. **Finance** – IR reported that the situation was stable as there had been no outgoings, apart from recent renewal of the web-server (£205.50).
b. **Membership** – CB reported membership at c140; renewals are due in October and January.
c. **Planning, Neighbourhood Plan, Local Listing** – AIA submitted a written report recently for the e-news:

“Last month a Planning Inspector held a hearing to consider the refusal of a proposal to build 148 housing units west of Underwood Quarry (2019/1883). His decision may also influence the future of two recent refusals - 90 units west of Bovis Homes on Wookey Hole Road (2020/0484) and 68 units north of Elm Close (2020/2217). We wait with baited breath!

“The Wells Neighbourhood Plan is wending its way and, following consultation, hopefully will be made at the end of this year.”

- d. **Trees & environment** – RE reported:
- that the dead tree by the moat should be removed / replaced soon
- one of the sequoia trees on Palace Fields has probably died
- the play area is generally clean and tidy.
- e. **Plaques** – PW suggested that the next two plaques should be placed on
i) Chamberlain Street (Arnold Wills the owner of the building on the corner of this and Sadler Street should be contacted) and
ii) the former workhouse – now the Health Centre.
He would pass information to JJ to continue this project, which CB agreed to support with research and PB with architectural drawings etc.

- f. **Website / facebook** – DR’s written report stated:

“... attracting younger people to the society via the website, it does need to be aimed at viewing using a mobile rather than with a desktop computer, which is what my experience has been related to. Also, while I could maintain the existing style of the WCS website, anything planned in the onwards view requiring more regular modification of the site I would find time-wise quite a task.”

CW suggested that someone who could take this forward was needed if the Society was to attract new members.

9. AOB

PB reminded members there would be a public meeting about the future of the Bishops Barn on 9th June, which he would be unable to attend. CW said she would attend.

10. **Date of next meeting:** Tuesday 13th July (**NOT 8TH!**) at 2pm – venue tbc

WCS

Minutes of the meeting held

at 2pm on 13th July 2021

Present:

Graham Barrow, Rosemary Evans, Adrian l'Anson, Jon Jefferies, Ian Robinson & Chris Winter

1. **Apologies:** Clare Blackmore, Patrick Brown, Doug Robinson, Hilary Waters and Philip Welch
Andrew Fawcett has indicated that he is unable to continue to serve on the committee
John Rackham has not replied to any emails nor has his membership been renewed for 2020/21.

2. **Minutes of the last meeting (8th June 2021)** Agreed

3. **Matters arising** None, not covered by the agenda.

4. Officers' reports

- i. Chair: CW had included comments with the circulated agenda.
- ii. Treasurer: IR had circulated an up-to-date spreadsheet. He added that a Public Liability insurance policy has been set up with Zurich at a cost of £96 pa.
- iii. Trees and environment: RE had reported a number of issues to Bo Walsh (Tree Officer for MDC) and had hoped to speak to him at the Wells City Council meeting on 15th July, but AIA advised that he is unable to attend but it is hoped that he will on 29th July. Evidently the dead tree along Moat Walk is the responsibility of the Church Commission and AIA would provide RE with contact details for the agent (Savills). He also recommended that she contact Simon Nash regarding unkept footpaths. The incursion of "Serious Stage" onto the East Mendip Way footpath at Tor Woods is being addressed by AIA via MDC.

5. Plaques Trail leaflet update

Images and text had been sent to St Andrews Press, who will be working on the design this week, with a view to preparing the leaflets for distribution by 24th July at the Community Day event. It was agreed that the expenditure was worthwhile. The leaflets would also be made available at various outlets in the city, for visitors and residents.¹

6. Signage – update

CW's presentation to the City Council on 24th June was well received and councillors from all three councils agreed to progress a survey of signage. AIA agreed to remind them and help to take this forward.

7. Next edition of e-news

CW asked for contributions to the next e-newsletter for members, which she hoped would maintain interest even though dates / events could not yet be confirmed for future meetings. GB said that when delivering some copies of the last e-news by hand he was able to get a few more email addresses. This means that a large majority of members have now provided these.

8. Future Events

i. Community Day 24th July

CW said she is preparing an exhibition for the stand in the Cathedral and will ensure that leaflets and membership forms are available. Any help on the day would be appreciated.

¹ CW will also ask DRG to make the leaflet available to download from the website if possible.

ii. **Monmouth Pageant 24th July**

JJ reported that rehearsals were going well with six players involved, who will be giving three performances during the day. He felt that this part of history should be better known in Wells, and CW suggested that the performance might be repeated on other occasions at other venues. AIA suggested that not everyone agreed that it was part of Wells' history that should be dwelt upon, as it was particularly barbaric.

iii. **Summer Social – When? Where?**

There was lengthy discussion about the pros and cons of organising an event, as the covid situation was likely to remain unclear for sometime and members are likely to be cautious about meeting in large groups.

However, it was agreed that CW would talk to the Museum about possible dates in early September for an event in the garden, but to make a final decision next month. She also agreed to check the diary of city events to avoid clashes and / or combine with another event.

JJ suggested that members might be invited to bring a guest(s) with a view to increasing membership; which all agreed was a good idea.

iv. **Heritage Open Days 10th – 19th September**

CW reported that she is working with Antonia Gwynn to prepare leaflets, and co-ordinating events with the city's heritage destinations, as well as planning to invite café and restaurant owners in historic buildings to take part. It was suggested that Patrick might have old photos of some of these buildings, so might Clare.

CW would be approaching the City Council to see if they might help with printing or printing costs as there is no budget for the event and the Council is not able to participate as usual this year.

v. **Talks:**

As iii. above: until we are sure that we can expect an audience, we might look for potential speakers and plan occasional events / talks but not commit to a regular monthly programme.

9. AGM / committee

New blood is needed and this needs to be resolved by November, in particular to meet the legal requirements of the Charities Commission.

CW will include an appeal to members in the e-newsletter.

She has already met with Pam Crummay and Tara Roberts who have expressed an interest in supporting activities, but have not committed to join the committee.

RE suggested talking to members of other organisations who might be interested (eg: U3A / Gardening Club).

10. AOB

a) AIA reported:

- i. He and Cllr Rust will be working with SCC on the *Bus Back Better* initiative; they are in the process of carrying out a survey at the bus station.
- ii. He is part of the Cathedral "Common Good" group working with Julia Wood (Archivist), Rob James (Chancellor) and David Thomas (theological academic).
- iii. The Gormley statue, due to be installed at the West Front at the end of August, is causing some controversy, but is also an opportunity. Richard Long, (a sculptor who lives and works in Bristol) has links with Gormley and together with those in ii. above might be asked to give talks to members.
- iv. Portway Annexe: the *pre-submission application* to the Minister (for the loan to buy the building) has been agreed. There will be a consultation both online and by leafleting and an open day is being planned for 31st July from 10am – 4pm.

- v. The Old Deanery has been withdrawn from the market and the Diocesan office is considering its future. The recently appointed Diocesan Secretary has resigned and a consultant has been appointed.
 - vi. The City Council is working to identify 'gaps' in terms of its acquisitions strategy, as it is also managing the transfer of ownership of the Bishops Barn and the Recreation Ground from MDC to the City.
- b) **IR suggested** that the Society might take a more active role in *Wells in Bloom* to which we have recently made our annual donation of £245; there was a suggestion that more insect-friendly plants might be used. Planting is currently managed by the City Council Open Spaces team, and RE suggested that they were doing a very good job and it was agreed, after discussion, that it was not appropriate to encroach on this matter.

11. Date of the next meeting: 10th August (tbc)

CW thanked RE for hosting the meeting and providing refreshments.

Ends 4pm

Wells Civic Society
Committee Meeting Minutes
of the meeting held on
10th August 2021

Present: Graham Barrow, Patrick Brown, Rosemary Evans, Jon Jefferies, Ian Robinson, Philip Welch & Chris Winter

- 1. Apologies** for absence: Clare Blackmore, Adrian l'Anson, Doug Robinson & Hilary Waters,
- 2. Minutes** of the last meeting (13th July) - Agreed
- 3. Matters arising** (not covered on the agenda) – None
- 4. Chair's report**

- i. Community Day – well attended (under Covid circumstances)

including Monmouth Pageant: this was very well received and helped communicate the significance of Wells during the rebellion of 1685. Thanks to Wells Little Theatre for the loan of costumes. We have been requested to perform again at St Cuthbert's Community Day on Sunday Sept 12.

- ii. Plaques, Trail leaflet & criteria

JJ reported that the request to mount a plaque or plaques on the old Workhouse was favourably received and William Newey (Facilities Officer of NHS Somerset Foundation Trust) is checking the listed building status and will report back to us.

Plaque Trails Leaflet: JJ recorded congratulations to CW for getting the leaflets printed for the Community Day, and she thanked him for this help. Leaflets are now available at The White Hart, The Swan, The TIC, The Town Hall, The Bishop's Palace, The Cathedral and the Museum.

Terracotta plaques: Philip reported that Black Dog have a number of spare plaques. We should acquire these asap and make an appropriate donation. CW will arrange to pick these up from Philippa Threlfall.

It was agreed that the criteria, as drafted by JJ should be used for future plaques.

- iii. Heritage Open Days 10-19th September

CW is working with Antonia Gwynn (at St Cuthbert's) on fliers to alert the general public and the owners of businesses in historic buildings in and around the Market Place, High Street and streets off, to encourage participation in events, as well as those already taking part – the Bishops Palace, the Museum, the Cathedral and St Cuthbert's church.

- iv. Friends of Wells Cathedral organ appeal

The appeal will be launched at an event to be held on 30th September¹, and CW had been asked for committee members' contact details for invitations; all present agreed to this.

The appeal is for funds to repair and renovate the Cathedral organ.

5. Membership

Several new members have joined recently and CW has circulated a newsletter by email, and GB will deliver paper copies to members who do not use email. ²

¹ This has been moved back to a date in November tbc

² DR has also added this to the website

6. Financial report

IR reported a positive balance sheet with few outgoings apart from Liability Insurance and the plaques trail leaflet.³

7. Trees and environment

RE has recently contacted Bo Walsh from MDC and Simon Nash, but has been unable to make much progress.

8. Planning

- i. AIA: *"Nothing to report on planning although Bo Walsh (MDC) is, hopefully, coming to our WCC Planning Committee meeting on the 2nd of September."*

- ii. Portway Annexe update:

PW reported that the Secretary of State had given a 'yes, in principle' response to the loan application, and that the head teachers at local schools and colleges (ie: Strode) are "on board".

IR (who is a member of the Portway Annex Project Team) reported that the Open Day on 31st July was well attended and many expressed support for a 'community hub'. Extensive surveying of residents is taking place, together with the development of a business plan, criteria for usage and a management plan.

- iii. Signage:

In response to the presentation CW gave to the City Council, AIA said: *"I promise to work with you and Cllr Jenny Rust (WCC) and, I hope Cllr Tessa Munt (SCC), re signage but we should wait until September."*

9. Events

- i. Wells in Mosaic: CW, PW & IR were presented with the blue lias stone carved with "Wells Civic Society" on 13th August in recognition of the contribution by the Society to the project; this was reported in Wells Voice.
- ii. Summer social: several options were discussed, including alternative venues. CW, CB, JJ and RE agreed to take this forward.
- iii. Talks: it is too early to resume regular events (due to the ongoing Covid situation) but for the future these would be considered: Gormley installation / cathedral renovation; St Cuthbert's church including Tower Tour; St Thomas history etc.

10. AOB

PB expressed disappointment with the state of the Market Place – in particular the use of the unsightly barriers. PW responded that the City Council were working on this but vehicular access to the Bishops Palace had to be maintained at all time.

11. Date of next meeting: 14th September tbc

³ Zurich Insurance £9.60 per month
St Andrews Press £354.20 design & print 1000; £255 print further 2000 copies.