

Minutes of Directors Meeting

Ref No:		Distribution: Directors: Nigel Evans, Wendy Foster, Margaret Gruber, Philip Hawtin, Tony Simmons, Peter Trowles, Richard Stone. Noticeboard, Website Members' page
Date of Meeting:	23rd May 2024	
Time of Meeting:	19.00	
Place of Meeting:	ZOOM	
Purpose of Meeting:	Scheduled Board Meeting of Combe Mill Society	

Present

Directors: Wendy Foster, Nigel Evans, Philip Hawtin, Margaret Gruber, Tony Simmons, Peter Trowles, Richard Stone.

Members: Lorna Gale (minutes)

1 Apologies

Ref	Comment	Action
1.1	None	

2 Minutes of previous meetings

Ref	Comment	Action
2.1	The minutes of the meeting held on the 11th April 2024 were confirmed as a correct record of the meeting. The meeting approved the Trustees Report to the Charity Commission for the financial year 2023-24.	

3 Matters arising from the previous minutes

Ref	Comment	Action
3.a	Museum status PT has written to Sarah Menary seeking her availability for a meeting to further the accreditation plans for museum status.	PT
3.b	Role of HTAs PH notes on information gained from April 2024 survey. Attached to these minutes. Plan to get HTAs meeting organised (no date given)	WF/PH
3.c	Role of the Board NE re-submitted a document previously sent out in April. The document was produced to encourage members to join the Board. Members of the Board are trying to do too much individually and need more members to take on specific aspects to running the Mill. The document looks specifically at Governance, Strategy and Operational elements. The Strategic forward plan has been ongoing for 2 years but still isn't in place. The strategic part is what we should be doing, not what we are doing. TS - not only should the plan look to the future but also at how we are going to maintain what we have. PT the Charity Commission also requires policy and procedure documents demonstrating 'best practice'. WF - agrees we need a separate meeting about strategy planning.	All

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	PT - we should aim to adopt the document proposing that any additions or alterations are submitted to NE before next meeting.	
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4 Safety matters

Ref	Comment	Action
4.1	Fire alarm sensors - CB has a provisional quote but awaiting information on how to reach the sensors in the loft space. Requires a 5m tower. RS has offered a scaffold tower 1.8m x 1.2m. RS and NE to discuss this week. PT to look at potential grant towards cost.	NE/RS PT

5 Treasurer's Update

Ref	Comment	Action
5.1	Thanks to Richard Stone for taking on this role. Significant forthcoming expenditure - fire alarms and marquee.	

6 Pumps and barn engines area

Ref	Comment	Action
6.1	DG had written to the Board offering to take up the role of HTA for the pumps and barn engines area and made several observations on what he would do. PH stated there are a number of people currently working on the barn engines and the engines are in a condition where they are nearly working. Until they are working it seems the wrong time to get someone else involved. Once the pumps are working the offer will be reconsidered. WF to respond to DG	WF

7 Foreman's Office

Ref	Comment	Action
7.1	Proposal from RR re furniture for Foreman's office. We may be getting some furniture from Gosford School but will not know until the end of term. Need to know RR plan for use of Foreman's Office - will need to liaise with both Richard Newman as Bookings Manager and Clive Stayt. PT will talk to RR re face to face presentation with more details.	PT

8 Events

Ref	Comment	Action
8.1	5 bay marquee Meeting between PH/MG/CM - Ray Pitts marquee not available. NE has investigated type of marquee required for March - December season. Needs to be a 4 season professional marquee. The choice is down to cost. NE to get back to House of Tents to confirm weight of covers and storage dimensions. Witney Model Club selling 2 x tables and can lend gazebos.	

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9 Any other business

Ref	Comment	Action
9.1	Data Security Where is all the data kept? Need proper server with offsite storage, currently on TS hard drive. PT keeping eye on all internet accounts.	
9.2	Heritage Advisory Committee need to remind people you must not move things around the Mill without recording it. Convene meeting of Heritage Advisory Committee.	WF
9.3	Fathers Day vouchers Vouchers will be available at June Steaming event for Father's with a family to have free cream tea or slice of cake.	
9.4	Blacksmith's costings sales of 'make your own poker' on steaming days are down, likely because of cost. Agreed to reduce price to £15 for adult, £7 for child	
9.5	Tea Room Tea room will stay open until 4pm on Wednesdays during the open season, website amended. Solicitors offices to be reminded that lunches are available on Wednesdays. Leaflet drop.	WF
9.6	Harry Foley from Blenheim Estates He will chase up the lights, grit bin and path to Blacksmith's forge. He will also look at permissions for semi-permanent buildings.	
9.7	New road signs Edges are being rounded off as are sharp. Accept teething problems from first use. PT has responded to Councillors email. RR has made carrying bags for the signs. Thank you.	
9.8	Telephone now has ringer turned on in Tea Room and can be answered if no-one is in the Foreman's Office.	

10 Next meetings

Strategic Planning Meeting - tbc

Directors' Board Meeting - tbc

Members' End of Season BBQ - 17th August 2024

Approval

These minutes were approved by the Chairman for display on the Society's website.

Lorna Gale
Minutes Sec.

Method Statements and Risk Assessments

Notes on Information gained from the April 2024 Survey

- 1 I recently completed a review of RAs and MSs. It was based on a Questionnaire and a request for a written or oral response. I had**
 - a No written responses**
 - b Delegates replied orally**
 - c Most HTAs did not respond and had to be interviewed**
- 2 OBSERVATIONS ON RESPONSES**
 - a The Good, the bad and the indifferent**
 - b Most HTAs had Risk Assessments (RAs) dating from the previous 12 months**
 - c All believed that their RAs were OK**
 - ◇ Many were wrong
 - ◇ Few had any understanding of the potential effect of their misunderstanding on the well being of the Mill.
- 3 PARTICULAR EXAMPLES**
 - a The Barn Engines & Associated Water Pumps and their immediate environment has NO Risk Assessment (RA) or Method Statement (MS).**
 - b The Beam Engine is undergoing a major programme of training and operational experience.**
 - ◇ So far this has yielded several new Competent Persons
 - ◇ The aim is to have additional Proficient Persons in place by the end of the Steaming Season.
 - c In the Blacksmithing Area neither the RA nor the MS was at the time fit for purpose because of a failure to mention the welding operation.**
 - ◇ This finding received a powerful response from the blacksmiths: A draft version of the RA was updated within days.
 - ◇ Their exercise found an Angle Grinder with no RA. An appropriate simple machine based RA was produced.
 - d External Display and Picnic Area: A comprehensive overall RA has been produced. There is no MS or listing of the garden machinery possessed.**
 - ◇ Present members involved all appear to believe that this whole RA business is a load of tosh.
 - ◇ The urgent need is to develop a plausible management structure and to prepare a suitable MS.
 - e The Metal Working Workshop was seriously over crowded when the HTA was visited. He responded by moving out a large inanimate object and parking it in the main walkway**
 - ◇ The object is I believe an old treadle lathe. It cannot be stored where it is. it is partially blocking the walk way
 - ◇ A MS should be produced to facilitate training and future transfer of responsibility.

Method Statements and Risk Assessments

Notes on Information gained from the April 2024 Survey

- f Small Engines:** it was pleasing to note that the TA members themselves have identified a number of small changes that they are proposing to carry out.
 - ◇ Such initiative is to be applauded.
- g Waterwheel Complex:** Whilst the RA is up to date, the MS is very dated and would benefit from a rewrite. While the need is not urgent, an up to date MS would facilitate training and ensure that changes are not lost when personnel leave.

INFORMATON GAINED LATER

Since the above survey was carried out further breaches of safety requirements have come to the fore. Here are 4 examples

- 1 Before making the first changes to the layout of the Foreman's Office nobody spoke with me as DRS.**
 - a This could have had unfortunate side effects on the safety of the building because the Office is also a fire escape route.**
 - b Happily the matter is to be discussed at the Board so no harm was done**
- 2 I have already drawn attention to the parking of a large object obstructing the walk way. Its appearance has coincided with the re obstruction of access to the emergency equipment.**
 - ◇ Such obstruction is an offence and I must insist that the obstructions are removed immediately.
 - ◇ Should such an obstruction occur a third time I will feel obliged to ask the board to shorten the display area and reroute the boundary rope.
- 3 On my latest pre Steaming Inspection I noted a pair of steps. They were new and bore no label. I accordingly asked whose steps they were and was told that they were the Mill's.**
 - a They had been purchased but not registered.**
 - b Under the Working at Height Regulations all our ladders and steps must be registered and regularly inspected and if appropriate maintained. Terry Bailey is the man who undertakes this task.**
 - c A breach of these regulations constitutes an offence for which the Mill could be prosecuted.**
 - d A final example: PAT testing. If you or I bought a kettle when we received it we take it out of the box and, if it looked alright, plug it in and switch it on.**
 - ◇ Not at the Mill. Here it is test before use and again at the require intervals.

In conclusion I argue that our understanding and application of the rules (those we put on ourselves and those imposed on us by others) has not kept pace with improvements in our safety documentation.

Philip Hawtin