

Minutes of Directors Board Meeting

Date of Meeting: 10th July 2025

Time of Meeting: 2pm

Place of Meeting: Tea Room, Combe Mill

Purpose of Meeting: Scheduled Board meeting of Combe Mill Society

Distribution: Directors, Noticeboard, Website Members' page

Present

Directors: Nigel Evans, Tony Simmons, Bob Wheeler, Margaret Gruber, Peter Trowels, Rose Ralphs

Members: Lorna Gale (minutes)

1 Apologies

Richard Stone

2 Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the Directors' Board meeting on 12th May 2025 were confirmed as a true record of the meeting.

The minutes of the extraordinary Directors meeting held in the Foreman's office will be sent with these minutes.

ACTION PT

3 Matters arising from previous minutes

3.1 NE has produced a volunteering poster, TS will add picture of the Mill and send to MG for Social Media inclusion, and posters for lamp posts.

ACTION TS

3.2 Steaming dates to Blenheim

ACTION PT

3.3 Forward planning presentation complete.

3.4 Fallen trees in the river – nothing has happened despite PT contacting Blenheim.

3.5 Museum status – separate group meeting planned.

3.6 'What's On' sign for 'meet and greet' gazebo.

3.7 BW will contact Henry Cole re patronage.

ACTION BW

3.8 Compost heap AKA reptile refuge has been constructed.

4 Correspondence

4.1 PT called Harry Foley (Blenheim) re smell from Klargestor which has been damaged during the winter floods and needs repair, no response as yet, PT will remind again before next steaming day. **ACTION PT**

4.2 PT has written to Callum Miller (local MP) to inform him that our Evenlode Catchment Area Partnership funding has been withdrawn due to river pollution. No response.

4.3 We have been notified that Ron Rutherford does not live at the address we have for him, removed from mailing list.

4.4 New requirement from Companies House that all Directors need to validate their existence. Also, Companies House are changing the way which accounts are uploaded. They now need to be done online with a software package.

5 Acknowledge reports of DRS, Treasurer, Head of Operations and Activities

5.1 Safety Group – has met once. See appended report.

5.2 Treasurer's report – see attachment

5.3 Head of Operations report – see appended report

6 Actions arising from reports

6.1 Richard E is back so wood turning experiences can restart.

6.2 PT to write to Blenheim Estates re erosion of the riverbank and subsequent repair. **ACTION PT**

6.3 Acknowledge Stuart Bridger's work on installing security cameras, essentially to allow monitoring of river levels.

6.4 Explore installation of dust extractor fan for woodworking area. Richard E. has been asked to look. This will also be required as part of our insurance agreement to remove all waste.

7 Review of progress on strategic issues

7.1 Forward Plan has been presented. PT to send link for website inclusion. **ACTION PT**

7.2 Museum status sub-group (NE, PT, TS, RR) meeting 24th July 2025

8 Review of governance issues

8.1 Finance – delay finance meeting until RS back from hols.

Agree menu price increases from 17th July 2025

Approve £60 donation to Owls for Wildlife Steaming

8.2 Fire risk assessment has been reviewed by Steve Wain. Approval to pay his fees agreed by Board.

There is a 30th September deadline for installing new category L4/M alarm system which is unachievable. NE to discuss with Steve Wain. **ACTION NE**

The powder fire extinguisher in the forge needs to be replaced with water fire extinguisher. Derek to be asked to organise a fire drill. **ACTION NE**

9 Review any major operational issues

No issues

10 AOB

10.1 Approval given to purchase waterproof, lockable noticeboard for outside tea room.

10.2 A second Chromebox has been donated by DR under Gift Aid, TS sought approval to purchase 2 more to replace the wooden boards in the waterwheel room and the beam engine. Approval given.

10.3 Summer BBQ – 13th August 2025 Bob will cook. Members to bring salad and puddings.

Next meeting: 11th September 2025 2pm

Minutes Secretary
Lorna Gale

Appendices

Operations Report for the Board Meeting on the 10th July 2025

The **pumps and barn engines area** is now nearing completion and has been a good conservation project run by a number of members, and especially Derek Goddard. The area has attracted a number of visitors who enjoy learning about the conservation project. Displaying conservation projects is just as important as the finished operational piece.

The **tearoom's** tri-annual assessment was completed in April and sent to for approval, and as yet there has been no response regarding any decision for an inspection from WODC. Our contact cleaner resigned in May, and it is important to have someone properly cleaning in order to preserve the integrity of the tearoom and adjacent WCs. A CM member had offered to take over the position of cleaning of the tearoom & WCs and the venue is now being cleaned every Thursday .

Members and jobs. We have a maximum of 33 regular attending members attending on Wednesdays and Sundays, but we require 37 members to properly operate all areas in the Mill on Sundays. I propose to run bi-weekly recruitment 1-hour sessions on Tuesday and/or Thursday evenings to encourage more people to volunteer. I will also be sending out

letters/emails to all the Heads of Areas to be ready to formally train new members and also to help compile a list of small to medium scale jobs that need doing in and around the Mill.

Footfall. Almost all of our visitors are extremely complementary after visiting the Mill, especially the enthusiasm of the members. However, our footfall is not increasing which is a major concern, and we need to rectify this. Maeve Bruce, the Marketing Manager for the Wychwood Fair has accepted an invitation to visit on 16th July in the morning and has offered to give us some free advice on that day on marketing of Combe Mill. (Thanks to Stuart B for arranging this visit). Anyone who wants to join us in the meeting on the 16th is very welcome.

Fi Mercer, the Gift Shop manager from **Kelmscott Manor** was invited to visit CM on steaming Sunday in June and as a result is most keen to display some of our blacksmith's items for sale in the Kelmscott Gift Shop. The items to be displayed and sold at Kelmscott will be exclusive and will not be offered for sale at Combe Mill. A reciprocal visit for Bob K and I has been offered but has yet to be arranged. Bob K had already been in to see the gift shop in May and has since Fi's visit agreed to be the regular contact between the Mill and the Manor. As a consequence, there will be a drive to recruit more blacksmiths.

Wood Turning Experiences. We are very vulnerable at the moment with providing 'Experiences' as Tony T is the only certified person available till the end July. This is another area which needs additional certified members so recruiting new members in this area is critical.

Advanced Warning We have a major project looming regarding the erosion of the riverbank between the footbridge and the tearoom and especially surrounding the river pump location. Without some proper shoring work in the next few months the riverbank could be at the fence line within the next 18 months.

Nigel Evans 03/07/2025

Safety Group - Interim report for the Board Meeting on the 10th July 2025

The Safety Group comprising Les Allen, Clive Stayt and Nigel Evans has met very briefly but will start soon when personal commitments allow. It has been agreed to meet initially every month, alternately on a Wednesday and then on another day at the Mill.

Les has already started reviewing our Risk Assessments and updating them in line with the Health and Safety Executive Guidelines. Tony S has forwarded all H&S documents to Clive. There is a clear understanding that the Safety Group will not be 'starting again' but will be enhancing what is already in place.

The agenda for the Safety Group has yet to be agreed but will include:-

- **Review of Safety Performance:** Accident/Incidents/Near Misses, Workplace Inspections.
- **Safety Initiatives :** Training Programs, Equipment Safety, Emergency Procedures, Culture.
- **Risk Assessments:** Review of existing R.A.s, Review of Method Statements.

Nigel Evans 03/07/2025