

Minutes of Directors Board Meeting

Date of Meeting: 18th June 2026

Time of Meeting: 1.30pm

Place of Meeting: Foreman's Office, Combe Mill

Purpose of Meeting: Scheduled Board meeting of Combe Mill Society

Distribution: Directors, Noticeboard, Website Members' page

Present : Nigel Evans, Tony Simmons, Rose Ralphs, Richard Stone, Margaret Gruber, Bob Wheeler, Stuart Bridger, Peter Trowles
Lorna Gale (minutes)

1 Apologies

None

Welcome to Stuart Bridger as new member to the Directors' Board

2 Minutes of previous meetings

Amended minutes of the last meeting held on 16th April 2026 were confirmed as a true record and can go on the website.

3 Matters arising from previous minutes

3.1 PT has provided more text for Frank Collingwood at the Oxford Bus Museum.

3.2 PT will circulate by email wording for the memorial plaque in the wheel room.

Action PT

3.3 Nigel has devised a safeguarding policy but need to discuss with Linda (BBQ)

Action NE

3.4 RW still to edit interview with Jeff Broxholme

Action RW

3.5 The Mill has been promised some display material from Tony Thurlby's family but they are still sorting out the house. Likewise any of Ron Winfield's collection.

3.6 The wording submitted to the Charity Commission for a change to the Society's Articles of Association was not approved by them and they offered some wording which they would approve. Sarah Menary agreed with this but it was rejected by Phillip Claris who provided different wording. Since this needs to comply with a specific Act of Parliament PT suggest we press on with the Charity Commission wording.

There is a meeting with Sarah Menary on 15th July 2026.

4 Correspondence

PT had received an email from Companies House. There is to be a change in the way companies report finance and accounts from 2028. Small companies will be required to submit a profit and loss report.

5 Acknowledge reports of Head of Operations, DRS and Treasurer

Mill Operations report

NE Operational Report included in appendices.

Items discussed alongside the report – the Society is responsible for the fabric of the building but maybe Blenheim could be approached for a grant.

RS has addressed windows in the wheel room and by the big lathe.

Guttering needs assessing as to whether it just needs cleaning or repair. RS to investigate hire of a 'cherry picker' **Action RS**

There is a need to make a list of capital projects to drive grant applications.

Safety Report

Safety report is included in appendices

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer's report included in appendices

TS to check annual accounts are on the webpage **Action TS**

Review of all subscriptions – agree to drop BAFM (British Association of Friends of Museums) saving £60 pa. Check the cost of subscription to Midland Mills Group (the £98 we pay is just for an advert).

Agree to monitor access to Mill without paying admission fee (this was in response to potential use of wrist bands). Ensure red and white fence is up Wednesdays and Sundays and promote use of entrance flag.

6 Actions arising from reports

All in progress

7 Review of progress on strategic issues

Museum accreditation meeting 15th July 2026 with Sarah Menary, Pre meet 24th June.

Barry Horne has completed the downstairs inventory with the fuel store next.

8 Review of governance issues

NE submitted a number of proposals to the Board to ensure that the documentation that supports the Society's operation as a company and a charity are available for members to consult on site. These governance and operational arrangements will be maintained to a professional standard.

Proposal 1 – documents 1-8 Articles of association, plans, policies and procedures will be printed and placed in a folder in the Foreman's Office. Any document that hasn't been reviewed in the last 12 months needs to be updated and presented to the Board for approval at the next Board meeting.

Timescale – folder in place by end of June 2026, review of all documents by the end of August 2026

Proposal 2-Similar folder with training schedule templates for each operational area together with summary sheets showing which members are trained to operate in each area.

Timescale- folder in place by end of June 2026, completion of training schedule templates by end of September 2026

Proposal 3 – Safety Group to print and file all Risk Assessments following review together with associated Method Statements

Timescale – folder to be in place by end of July 2026, review all risk assessments by end of September 2026

These folders will be for reference only and not to be removed from the Foreman's office. Master copies will be on the website.

The Board is in favour of having manuals in printed form – approved.

Whoever is responsible for editing a document is also responsible for making sure it goes on the website (via TS) and a printed copy is replaced in the folder.

9 Review any major operational issues

The Directors' liability insurance has been renewed, premium similar to last year.

10 AOB

Forward plan should be discussed at every Board meeting – make it a standing item on the agenda to review one of the 5 aims on the forward plan and allocate responsibilities.

Awaiting approval for a Google non-profits account

Collate a calendar for maintenance insurance etc.

Next meeting: 20th August 2026 1.30pm

Minutes Secretary
Lorna Gale

Appendices

Operations and Safety Report for the Board Meeting **on 18 June 2026**

1) Mill Operations

Recruitment

Despite holding three evening recruitment sessions (two in May and one in June), only 1 married couple attended. Posting on social media sites during May for potential new volunteers to visit on Wednesdays have only encouraged 2 people from the local population. This is a significant concern. If the Society does not recruit and train additional members within the next two years, the Mill's ability to continue operating will be at risk.

Experiences

Woodturning experiences, which had been suspended due to ill health, have now resumed following Richard Edwards' recovery. Mark is currently undertaking training; however, this will take time, and we remain short of experienced woodturners able to lead these sessions.

With the exception of the July steaming session, all Beam Engine experiences for the remainder of the 2026 season have been filled.

Forge experiences continue to prove popular and, to date, there are ** bookings confirmed.

Building

The windows on the headrace side of the building tend to be more exposed to the weather and there are areas of wet rot in the lower part affecting the windowsills. Over the last couple of months a couple of members have been addressing this issue. To date repairs to three windows on the headrace side and 2 to the tailrace side have been addressed, with further work to more windows on going. An assessment of the condition of all the windows is being prepared so that a costed rectification plan can be developed. The assessment will be ready for the next scheduled board meeting

Training

Training for members across all areas has never been formally structured, and we currently hold no comprehensive record of the instruction members have received to achieve competent or proficient status. Since 2024, training schedules have been developed for four areas only—Boiler, Small Steam Engines, Beam Engine and Clocks—and these are now being followed, (the Lineshafting schedule has been devised but not yet operational). Over the coming weeks, I will work with Heads of Area to develop further training schedules, initially focusing on Models, Waterwheel, Woodworking and Forge.

These training schedules are currently being used to support new members, including Dave Sullivan in the Beam Engine area, Steve Mullenger in Small Steam

Engines, and Rose in Clocks. Instruction is also being provided to Carol in the Models area and to Mark in Woodturning.

Duke of Edinburgh's Award

Roman, a pupil from Woodstock School, has been volunteering since March and has become a valuable asset, particularly on Steaming Sundays. He has started training in the Historic Clocks area, where I hope he will progress to Competent, and potentially Proficient level. Although modest in scale, this is an encouraging opportunity to engage younger people in helping to keep the Mill operational.

2) Safety report

Safety group

The safety group, which normally meets once a month, has been strengthened by the addition of Steve Mullenger, another IOSH-certified member. The minutes/notes of the May meeting were circulated to the Board prior to this board meeting. A programme of risk assessment reviews is now under way, and the COSHH register has also been updated. The Safety Group recognises that there are several matters requiring attention including the need for additional fire wardens, PPE and PAT testing. These issues and others are not sufficiently robust enough but will be prioritised for fixing in the coming months.

Fire alarm

The new fire alarm system has been fully operational since the end of January 2026. A service visit by ARTSS is due in mid-year, during which all sensors will undergo smoke testing. Weekly routine checks, carried out between 8.30 am and 9.30 am, have now covered every call point at least once in order to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. These weekly checks continue.

Health and Safety of volunteers

Although CMS volunteers do not have to strictly comply with H&S at Work Act 1974 (we do not have any employees), we do have a duty of care to ourselves and to each other. There are a number of practices occurring i.e. climbing on chairs, tables, not wearing recommended PPE, not wearing harnesses in high risk locations etc. Ladders, PPE and harnesses are available to anyone who needs them and a reminder will be circulated to all.

Health of River Evenlode at the Mill

CMS pumps river water through the waterwheel, the outside pumps and the beam engine and steam engines. The water quality of the River Evenlode is monitored by an outside voluntary service. We have some access to this information, i.e. E coli, phosphate and nitrate levels and what it means to volunteers and visitors. This information in the form of a simple chart will be made available in the ticket office and regularly updated.

Nigel Evans 09/06/2026

Treasurer's Report for Meeting on 18 June 2026

I have been through the red folder in the Foreman's Office to generate a list in Excel of people who have made a Gift Aid declaration. The Gift Aid application to HMRC uses Excel. The Gift Aid claim was submitted on 17 May and should result in a payment of about £1250. The Final Accounts have been received from Andrew Adams. There were some differences compared with the accounts presented at the AGM as these did not take into account changes in our assets, and there were also differences in expenditure assigned to charitable activities.

Steaming Day Income for 2026:

Date	March	April	May	Totals
Ticket Sales	1050.00	1939.50	880.50	3870.00
Approx #	152	323	136	611
Tea Room Sales	416.00	816.00	495.70	1727.70
Forge Sales	180.00	107.00	107.00	394.00
Donations				0.00
Publications				0.00
Market Stalls		30	10	40.00
Retails sales	136.60	167.50	154.45	458.55
BBQ	384.00	675	386	1445.00
Tombola	70.00			70.00
Raffle		25.00		25.00
Total	2236.60	3760.00	2033.65	8030.25

At the last meeting there was a question about subscriptions to other bodies. These amount to £465 as follows in the 2025-26 financial year:

06/10/2025	Newcomen Society	55.00
04/12/2025	Oxfordshire Museums Council Subscription	100.00
05/12/2025	IA Review Taylor & Francis	49.00
02/01/2026	APT	20.00
12/01/2026	Rural Museums Network	10.00
14/01/2026	Assoc Industrial Museums	73.00
19/03/2026	BAFM	60.00
12/01/2026	Midland Mills Group	98.00

Tony also identified:

- ORCC (Oxfordshire Rural Communities Council) to benefit from their oil buying scheme
- OCVA (Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action group) ?£35?
- NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) free

At the AGM it was suggested that admissions stickers would be useful, but there were concerns raised about durability on one hand and adhesive damaging visitors clothing on the other. An alternative of wristbands was thought to be too expensive if we bought 1000, then coloured paper would cost 4p each https://www.labelyourself.co.uk/paper_wristbands or coloured plastic 7p each <https://www.gowristbands.co.uk/custom-tyvek-wristbands>

