

Minutes of Directors Board Meeting

Date of Meeting: 20th August 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, Margaret Gruber, Bob Wheeler, Richard Stone, Rose Ralphs, Peter Trowles, Stuart Bridger
Lorna Gale (mins)

1 Apologies

No apologies

2 Minutes of previous meetings

Minutes of the meeting held on 18th June 2026 were confirmed as a true record and can go on the website.

3 Matters arising from previous minutes

3.1 Awaiting wording for memorial plaque in the wheel room. **Action PT**

3.2 NE has amended the Safeguarding Policy which has been approved and is now available on the website.

3.3 The Jeff Broxholme interview has been approved by his daughter. BW to put on MP4 and give to the Mill for use either as audio-visual or add to collections. **Action BW**

3.4 TB to be asked to assess clearing guttering.

Approach Blenheim Estates to do a tree survey on the picnic area as they are already coming to look at an overhanging willow branch. NE completes a visual tree inspection every Wednesday and steaming Sunday.

3.5 Confirmed that the accounts are on the website.

3.6 Google rejected application for Google Workspace for Nonprofits cloud storage. PT to reapply. **Action PT**

4 Correspondence

4.1 From Jeff Broxholme's daughter Ginny Crosskey regarding Jeff's generous bequest. Formal thank you required. **Action PT**

4.2 A written complaint about the comments to a female visitor made by a member at the steaming event have been resolved satisfactorily both to the visitor and CMS. A meeting of all members will be arranged in September to highlight our safeguarding and equality policies

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

Safety Report

Risk Assessments

All risk assessments have been converted to the health and safety format. They will be printed and presented to each HTA at the end of August for agreement on the same day. They will then be sent electronically to TS for upload to the website, with paper copies placed in the document holders and the foreman's office file. The assessments will be dated March 2026 and reviewed in February 2027 in readiness for next season.

Water Quality

The water quality of the systems in the foreman's office and tearoom has not been assessed for some time. Further investigation is under way to determine how these checks should be carried out and who should undertake them. Water temperatures from the hot and cold outlets can be checked in-house and will be monitored monthly from September.

Health and Safety Policy

Our current Health and Safety Policy contains some anomalies now, and is in the process of being reviewed and amended. This is planned to be ready at the next board meeting for board approval.

Head of Operations Report

Condition of Areas of the Mill

From a visitor perspective, all areas of the mill are currently presented to a very high standard, reflecting the hard work and continued commitment of many regular volunteers. However, several outstanding maintenance issues remain, including the leaking river pump, the lift awaiting repair, wet rot in a number of window frames, and the need to stabilise the waterwheel. These matters are being progressed and are expected to require some maintenance expenditure. The lift remains the most significant concern, both in terms of potential cost and ongoing reliability.

Regular Membership

Maximum number of regular members attending on a Wednesday: 33

Maximum number of regular members attending on a Sunday: 33

Minimum number of members required to staff all areas on a Sunday: 31

Number of members present at the last two steaming Sundays: 27

Despite three dedicated recruitment sessions this year, together with ongoing poster

and website promotion, only one new member has joined. The increasing frailty and poor health of several existing members remain significant concerns.

Training

Steve Mullenger is now competent on the small engines.

Dave Sullivan, Rose Ralphs and Carol Hicks are now working towards competency on the beam engine, clocks and model engines respectively.

Training schedules for the boiler and steam engine, beam engine and clocks are being followed effectively. HTAs in all other areas still need to devise training schedules.

Pressure on the limited expertise available on the first floor remains a concern, following the loss of three committed members who have not yet been replaced.

River Evenlode

The river is becoming increasingly clogged with reeds, and we should be prepared for further flooding events in the coming months. Terry and the team have installed scaffolding boards to reduce the impact of soil erosion in the picnic area, and Andy has constructed two open-weave fences to help prevent the public from falling into the river.

Post meeting note -

Lift out of order – awaiting date for repair (TB organising).

Note to review Service Level Agreement at next due date (April 2027)

One new volunteer starting next week and one possibility.

Treasurer's Report

The financial performance in the first 4 months is essentially the same as last year.

Expenditure this year has been £17,553 (£17,871 last year) and the income £21,650 is essentially the same after allowing for exceptionals, namely the bequest of £5000 and the absence so far of the gift aid recovery. Accounts for the first 4 months are in a separate pdf as an attachment.

Somewhat reluctantly we have extended the contract with SmartestEnergy for 12 months – the rates are competitive. However, we had little choice as we had not been sent a bill since March and the electricity meter stopped communicating its readings and reset itself. We have plenty of historic data and photographs of meter readings since it reset, so we have plenty of evidence of our likely consumption.

A formal complaint was made on 22nd July 2026 and this has resulted in a statement issued on 11th August 2026 that shows about double the consumption I would expect. The same day I emailed back with some data to dispute this bill. SmartestEnergy claim now to have meter readings but there is no evidence that this is the case.

6 Actions arising from reports

Reports approved.

7 Review of progress on strategic issues

Museum Status.

The application has been started on the Arts Council online system.

TS has submitted a list of accreditation documents for Board approval.

List of accreditation documents for board approval 20 August 2026

1. Organisational Overview - Vers 1 (being updated by Nigel)
2. Forward Plan - Vers 2 – subject to inclusion of third objective and cash flow
3. Risk Assessment – Vers 2
4. Emergency Plan – Vers 2
5. Collections Management Framework – Vers 2 – needs objectives updating
 - (Including Collections Development Policy; Documentation Policy; Care and Conservation Policy; Collections Access Policy)
6. Documentation Procedure – Vers 2 (needs locations and collection prefixes adding)
7. Care and Conservation Plan – Vers 2
8. Access Plan – Vers 2
9. Documentation Plan – Vers 1 (unchanged)
10. Audience Development Plan – Vers 2
11. Volunteer Agreement and Manual – Vers 10
12. Maintenance Plan – Vers 1 (unchanged)

The sub-committee recommend Board approval of the revised policies circulated by TS on 18/08/2026. The Board accepted this recommendation and approved the revised policies.

The change to the Society's Articles of Association submitted to the Charity Commission requires an Extraordinary General Meeting and will be combined with a Members' meeting to present the Safeguarding Policy. Date 16th September 2026 at 11.00 **Action PT**

SB has summarised the plans for extension of ticket office and retail. This will help with getting financial figures together but before we get to that point the Society needs to increase the membership. This needs to be a priority otherwise some areas will not be able to operate on a Steaming Day. We need to look out for volunteer recruitment fairs and need to 'think outside the box' for our recruitment strategy. SB to discuss social prescribing with local GP practices and also Bridewell Gardens.

8 Review of governance issues

NE has written a Board Members Handbook for discussion. It sets out how the Board members govern, make decisions, manage risks and oversee the safe and sustainable operation of Combe Mill.

The Board has adopted this manual and has a week to indicate on a grid which areas of responsibility they will take on. Gaps can then be identified and potential people be approached to fill the missing roles.

9 Review any major operational issues

September Steaming – Steam Punk attending. Paying full admission charge, 1 free drink and cupcake if dressed up.

October Steaming – contact David Knight

No pumpkin carving this October half term

Christmas Fayre – no Father Christmas

- Free entry

- Buckets for donations

- Decoration of each area

- ?? reindeer trail or something similar for children

Formally agree 3rd Sunday of the month for 2027 Steaming Events, no opening for National Mills weekend.

Printer – accept offer from WF to buy used Samsung Colour Laserjet printer.

- Keep Brother inkjet printer

- Dispose of HP black and white Laserjet and Canon inkjet

10 AOB

None declared

Next meeting: October 8th 1.30pm Foreman's Office

Minutes Secretary
Lorna Gale

