

## **Kew Bridge Engines Trust and Water Supply Museum Ltd**

### **Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting, held on**

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023, at the Museum**

#### **Members present:**

Margaret Porter, Bill Godwin, Richard Smith, Anne Cotgreave, Marie Gumur-Pierre, Oliver Pearcey, Elizabeth Pearcey, Martin Wicks, Stephen Fielding, Claire Grist Taylor, Stephen Cole, Martin Bonham, Richard Albanese, Andrew Pierre, Bryan Betts, John Everard, Rob Casey, Ron Plaster, George Houstoun, John Stone, Ian Cottrell, John Johnson, Freddie Hollom, Ben Russell, Georgie Salzedo, Tom O'Leary, Nigel Barnes

**In attendance:** Hannah Harte (Museum Director), Karen Adams (Our Barn, LMWS partnership), Jason Butler (Our Barn, LMWS partnership)

#### **1. Apologies for absence:**

Apologies had been received from:

Alyx Jenkins, Alain Foote, Jean Benn, Mark Brooker, Jerry Scholefield, Tim Goodwin, Richard Broughton, William Morton, Mayling Hargreaves, Sam Burgess OAM

#### **2. Minutes of the 2021 AGM, held on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at the Museum**

Members were satisfied that the minutes were a fair reflection of the 2020 AGM and approved them unanimously.

#### **3. 2022 annual report and accounts**

The Chair of the Trustees - Tom O'Leary (TOL) and Museum Director - Hannah Harte (HH) provided a report on 2022.

Late 2022 saw the transition of from Claire Grist Taylor to Heather Thomas and Tom O'Leary as (joint) Chair of the Trustees and also the resignation of Liz Power as museum director.

During 2022 an operational loss of £51k was incurred due to lower than anticipated visitor income and higher costs, which reduced the museum's reserves.

Questions on the Annual Accounts:

Martin Bonham (MB) asked about the "subsidiary" that is mentioned as generating a loss.

FH explained that this subsidiary was the trading arm of the museum.

Andy Pierre (AP) asked whether admission numbers included schools – HH confirmed it did not.

AP asked about the "reopening costs" – Ben Russell explained that these related to post-pandemic costs, such as additional cleaning to remove significant mold growth in the buildings that had accumulated during lock-down.

AP asked what contributed to the “cost of gate” – HH explained this was the cost of the sales desk, eg paper for the till, card reader etc. It was exceptionally large cost in 2022 due to new covid restrictions, signage etc that had to be implemented before the Museum could open to the public.

John Johnson asked about the fall in donations and grants in 2022 relative to 2021 – FH explained that this was partly due to a legacy received in 2021 but also due to no longer receiving funding provided by Government during lockdown. Claire Grist Taylor (CGT) confirmed this.

#### **4. Approval of 2022 Accounts.**

A motion to approve the 2022 accounts was proposed by Bryan Betts and seconded by Claire Grist Taylor. The motion was approved unanimously by a show of hands.

#### **5. Appointment of Auditors**

The Board proposed that Collards should be reappointed as our auditors for the 2023 financial year. FH commented that we continue to receive good service from Collards and their fees had risen below inflation.

The motion to reappoint Collards as Auditors was proposed by Oliver Pearcey, seconded by Andy Pierre. The motion was approved unanimously by a show of hands.

#### **6. Sum up of 2022 Director’s reporting by the Museum Director**

Visitor numbers in 2022 were 18379, but only 5855 were paid entrance (children and return visitors were free). There were 45 school visits (~ 52% of capacity) and 3681 hrs of volunteer time were contributed. Social Media engagement increased by 14%.

TOL explained that the low “yield” on visitors was a significant contributor to the museum’s operating losses.

#### **7. Presentation of the 2024 Vision and forward plan by the Museum Director**

HH introduced herself to members, having joined as Museum Director in June 2023, following the resignation Liz Power (with Melissa Maynard acting as interim MD during the first half of 2023).

HH described her vision for the museum where our core values of *collaboration*, *inclusion* and *fun* needed to be supported by greater *ambition* and *entrepreneurship*. Steam represents the Museum’s “unique selling proposition” and there is a plan to bring steam back to the museum early in 2024. Another important theme will be linking the history of London’s water supply with the “Future of Water” and the wider “blue” agenda.

Slides will be distributed with these minutes

Question to the MD:

John Everard asked how the objective to “exceed visitor expectations” would be met: HH explained that a process of establishing current expectations was in progress using consultancy provided by Museum Development London. But a good example goal could be for the LMWS to be shortlisted for Museum of the Year.

Elizabeth Oliver asked how the trustees could better utilise the members’ experience in various fields. TOL responded that this was something to be addressed once the immediate financial challenges were addressed.

Richard Albanese (RA) asked whether previous discussions about a fundraising committee should be revisited. TOL answered that many charities have a “Development Committee” and that this

would be considered as part of a review of the current committee structure. HH explained that this was also part of the rationale to grow entrepreneurship within the core team.

MB observed that many of the aspirations were predicated on the operation of the Lancashire Boiler. HH explained that the work on the boiler was now funded and that the repair work was being contracted, with an ambition to start the work this month.

Oliver Pearcey (OP) made the request that this not be considered a single “return to steam” as there had been several cycles, and that the reasons for not steaming be understood and used to foster a “can do” attitude. HH responded that ingenuity was a core part of the culture the museum aims to develop.

JE asked about the intentions for “Future of Water”. HH explained that this was still being developed but could include exploring the emerging technologies that will be needed to secure the water supply that we currently take for granted, and the parallels with the past.

MB asked if the opening of the Thames Tideway next year could provide opportunity to promote the “future” story. HH agreed it could.

OP cautioned that our story was not about sewage but about promoting understanding of the water supply. HH agreed and that putting the museum collection in that context was an important part of her plan. RA reminded the meeting that an explanatory guide book for the museum had been created. HH agreed, and that this needed to be promoted to visitors.

TOL provided an update on the museum’s current financial situation, and that the trends seen in 2022 had continued (and worsened) into 2023 meaning the museum was in danger of running out of operating budget (the funds available to run the museum rather than those allocated to specific projects).

TOL explained that in the past a £50k budget allocation had been referred to as both a “reserve” and a “shutdown fund”. The museum is very close to needing to use some of this reserve. However, a review of the forecast costs for “mothballing” (closing to the public and relying on rental income to maintain the site) had re-estimated these to be £20K, so use of the reserve would not trigger mothballing unless the reserves fell to £20K. A path to making the museum financially sustainable in 2024 is the fundamental objective and whilst there has been much progress in developing a plan, it continues to be the focus of the trustees, and avoiding mothballing cannot be ruled out.

As part of achieving a balanced budget, HH presented proposed changes to the admissions and membership charges which included:

- A day ticket - already introduced and is proving popular
- Charging for children 5-16 (something that has been done previously, some time ago)
- An increase to the membership category charges and the closure of the annual ticket
- A premium charge for steaming days
- A patron’s programme.

In addition, an urgent appeal for donations to help bridge the transition period was launched in October’s Kew News.

## Questions

Bryan Betts (BB) asked what the average number of returns were on the current annual ticket. HH said there wasn’t currently a way of tracing.

MB asking if there would be stage payments for membership on Direct Debit. HH confirmed there would be.

BB asked if there would be discounts for certain communities (eg local residents). HH explained that more data was needed to understand the impact.

JE asked what benefits a patron might receive. HH said the programme was still being developed but there would likely be a social component as well as closer engagement with certain projects.

JJ asked if corporate patrons might be included. HH confirmed this, and that the engagement for corporate volunteer programme's would be a more general focus.

BB asked about the pricing for car parking. HH explained that at current levels, it risks displacing visitors without significant financial benefit.

RA asked about venue hire. HH explained the intention to reinvigorate this and that the current commercial arrangement with a 3<sup>rd</sup> party events organisation may not be advantageous.

OP asked if there were different GiftAid implications for annual tickets vs annual memberships. HH to confirm.

OP asked if incentives for "green" travel would be factored in pricing. HH respond that this would be considered in the medium term.

## **8. Re-election of Trustees**

The Board proposed that Freddie Hollom and Ben Russell be re-appointed as trustees following the completion of their initial 4 year terms (their biographies had been previously supplied to members).

The motion was proposed by RA and seconded by JE and passed unanimously by a show of hands.

## **9. Any Other Business**

BB asked about the plans for the Splash Zone, which seems broken. HH explained it has received attention from the "Thursday Team" but that a solution to prevent gravel being put into the area was needed.

RA gave a brief (day 2) update on the NLHF project.

HH premiered the "teaser" video for the New Year Steam Up, which would be released on social media.

The meeting closed at 7:50 pm