

OXFORDSHIRE HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST

Minutes of the Third Annual Meeting of General Members of the Trust held at the Warwick Hall, St John the Baptist, Burford at 4pm on Wednesday 24 July 2019

The President opened the meeting by warmly welcoming some forty-five general members of the Trust alongside officers and trustees. The Bishop commented on the continuing work of the Trust and especially the very positive recent publicity for Ride and Stride with a number of intrepid clergy riding penny farthing bikes through Summertown. Particular thanks were due to Hilary Cakebread Hall for this success. The Bishop noted that the so-called 'seed corn' function of OHCT grants continued to be particularly important in attracting further grants. There was much parallel activity re the Diocese's heritage with a pilgrimage route being developed from Birmingham to Oxford to mark the canonisation of Cardinal Newman.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from eight general members of the Trust.

2. Minutes of the Annual Meeting of General Members of the Trust held on 28 July 2018

These were approved without amendment. In response to a question arising from the minutes in connection with the impact of the Taylor Report, the Chair reported some mixed views relating to the pilot projects in Manchester and Suffolk. Those appointed for the pilots included a fabric advisory officer and someone to work specifically with local communities. All those appointed were experiencing considerable overload of work and were therefore focusing on 20 churches across each pilot area. It was noted that more information would be provided at the forthcoming Dorchester Abbey forum.

3. Chair's Report.

The President invited Dr Goss to present his chair's report. Reiterating his thanks to the officers, to Area Reps and to volunteers, he noted the reputation for efficient working they ensured for the Trust and pointed to the very positive aspects of the year revealed in the annual report and accounts. One disappointment was the reduction in Ride and Stride income largely following a problem with the online-giving arrangements provided by the firm then employed (improved arrangements had been put in place for September 2019). Other aspects of Ride and Stride had worked well with new sponsorship and improved publicity. The Chair thanked all donors to the Trust, individuals and other charitable trusts.

Two continuing developments to report were, first, the roof alarm grant scheme which had used all the initial funding but had now been supplemented by a grant from the Allchurches Trust. Its continuing importance needed no elaboration. Second, OHCR roadshows had been pioneered. Dealing primarily with the management and funding of major works in churches, they already showed promise as a means of supporting churches whose representatives had little experience in this area. Thanks for these Roadshows were recorded to the organiser, Basil

Eastwood, and to his presenters. In addition, there had also been a forum in Dorchester Abbey, with support from the Diocese and the Abbey, to explore aspects of the sustainability of buildings as places of worship and community foci: this was well attended from across the whole county and Diocese.

The usual annual programme of church tours and lectures was in train and particular thanks were due to all the organisers.

Turning to Personnel matters, the Chair stressed the Trust's enormous indebtedness to the outgoing Secretary Jonathan Scheele who had made very significant contributions to the governance and administration of the Trust. He also thanked another Trustee, Gillian Argyle, for her contributions: in particular, her wealth of experience and personal contacts had been invaluable. While both would retire as Trustees in 2020, it was hoped to lure them back to Council in continuing but different roles. Richard Hughes, who had recently retired as a Senior Assistant Registrar for the University, was welcomed to the Secretary's role. In addition, the Chair thanked Martin Trowell, Angus Sear, and Julia Twynam, who had stood down having made long-standing contributions to the work of the Trust.

4. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer drew attention to a number of points highlighted in the annual review, including the smooth working of the newly introduced online system for purchasing tickets for events and the improved paper-free system for managing grant payments. Both changes had reduced the Trust's banking fees, and a further saving on costs had been achieved through renegotiating our insurance. The members of the Finance Committee were thanked for their work during the year. After a review of the management of the Trust's investments it had been decided that these should continue to be looked after in house by the Finance Committee. In the Budget for the coming year up to £200K had been earmarked for awarding grants.

The Report and Accounts were received with thanks to the Treasurer for his tireless work.

5. Ride and Stride

In presenting the report on Ride and Stride, the Vice-Chair reiterated the success of the recent publicity via the clerical penny farthing bikers. For the first, time a national launch had been undertaken and ten counties had contributed to the exercise which had paid for itself many times over in media coverage generated. It was important to recognise the need for new audiences in relation to Ride and Stride, especially families. The project undertaken with Charlbury schools was one outstanding example as was the 'Curiouser and Curiouser' initiative with new sponsorship from Town and Country. The Taylor Trophy initiative aimed at company social responsibility programmes was being heavily promoted. The latter initiatives would it was hoped continue to grow and develop.

6. Development matters

Referring to the Development Programme, the Development Officer particularly highlighted the continuing importance of bequests and donations in relation to the Heritage Fund and the Trust's capacity to support churches and chapels faced with increasingly demanding objectives and priorities.

7. Election of the President

The Lord Lieutenant taking the Chair, the Bishop of Dorchester was enthusiastically and unanimously re-elected as President for the forthcoming year.

8. Close of the meeting

All attendees were thanked for their close and regular interest in the Trust's work, and the importance of alerting new incumbents and other incoming ministers to the importance of that work was stressed.

The meeting closed at 3.55 pm.