

The City of Durham Trust
(Registered charity number 502132)

MINUTES of the 82nd Annual General Meeting of the Trust in Elvet Riverside ER140, New Elvet on
Thursday 6 June 2024 commencing at 19.00.

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

John Lowe (Chair) welcomed attendees (in person and via Zoom) to the Trust's 2024 AGM, confirmed that the meeting is being recorded, and introduced Sue Childs (Vice-Chair) who is standing in for the Honorary Treasurer in his absence. Apologies were received from Dr Anne Allen, Roger Cornwell, Kevin Cummings, Michael Hurlow, Matthew Phillips, Francis Pritchard (Hon. Treasurer & Hon. Secretary), Dr Malcolm Reed and Jim O'Boyle.

2. MINUTES OF THE 81st AGM (31 October 2023)

The Minutes, previously approved by Trustees and printed in the *Annual Review 2023-24*, were noted.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the floor. From item 4, the Chair explained that that the original intention to move the Trust's Virgin Money savings account funds to the Newcastle Building Society was thwarted as a charity/club account is not currently offered either there or at the Nationwide Building Society. However, as Nationwide are likely to be acquiring Virgin Money, we hope that they will retain the charity accounts. So, although there is some uncertainty at present, our money is safe.

4. PRESENTATION OF THE ACCOUNTS for the period ended 7 April 2024

On behalf of the Honorary Treasurer, Sue Childs (Vice-Chair) presented the Trust's accounts. She explained that the draft accounts printed in the *Annual Review 2023-24* have since been revised and approved by Trustees. The accounts had been set out in the format required by the Charity Commission but, on reflection, Trustees decided to use the simpler format displayed on the screen (also available on our website). This gives a clear comparison with the previous accounting year and shows a healthy position with a closing balance of around £17.5k. The Trust is just over £1.6k better off than last year, largely due to the receipt of an insurance pay-out (£1,870) for water-damaged publications stored at Alington House. Another notable item is the payment out ("*Subscriptions & Grants*") of more than £1.1k to support the printing of the Durham City Seven Hills Trail and Heritage Trail leaflets, which have proved to be very popular. There were no questions on the accounts. The Chair thanked Sue.

5. HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT

Also, on behalf of the Honorary Treasurer, the Vice-Chair reported that membership numbers are: Honorary 8; Life members 40; Individual/Single 150; and Joint 95 (x2) which gives a total of 388 members. She said the new online subscription system appears to be working well but any comments on it would be welcome. There were no questions on the membership and the Chair asked attendees to try to recruit extra members.

6. APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES

The Chair paid tribute to the magnificent team of Trustees with the skills and dedication that they bring to the Trust. He thanked Jan Hutchinson for her excellent notetaking and monthly summary documents. He explained that the Trust's Constitution requires one third of Trustees to retire in rotation each year but they are eligible for re-election. The retiring Trustees - Richard Hird, John Lowe, Matthew Phillips and Francis Pritchard - all willing to stand again, were proposed by the Vice-Chair and re-elected by consensus. The Chair introduced Allan Gemmill who has been co-opted as a new Trustee to strengthen the team even more. He has been working, alongside others, in a local sub-group on HMO issues and the Chair said, with his tenacity and eye for detail, he will be an enormous asset to our team. Allan was formally welcomed by attendees. There were no new nominations from the floor. The Chair reminded attendees that the Constitution allows up to 20 Trustees and there are currently 12 so, if anyone is interested, they can get in touch with him via chair@durhamcity.org.

7. APPOINTMENT OF THE HONORARY OFFICERS

Only two officers are appointed at the AGM - Treasurer and Secretary, with Francis Pritchard currently fulfilling both (combined) roles very well and willing to continue. The Chair asked if there were any other nominations or volunteers to take a deputy role to help with the responsibility and said he can be contacted on chair@durhamcity.org. For now, the Chair proposed Francis to be re-elected to both roles and the motion was carried by acclaim.

8. DURHAM MUSEUM

The Chair introduced Trustee Dr Adrian Green to speak on an important current issue in the city. Adrian explained that the Bow Trust was formed in the 1970s to maintain the redundant St Mary-le-Bow church on North Bailey as a centre for exhibitions, but increasing maintenance costs have led the Trustees to conclude that the museum cannot generate enough money, so it is now closed. They are looking at options for different parts of the museum collections, with Durham Town Hall suggested as a good place for the social history collections to be displayed. Regarding the building, stabilisation work has already been done on the roofs, with some on-going work, but the chancel roof will need replacing in five years' time (amongst other tasks). Trustees (Bow Trust) are exploring ideas for the building use (performance space, etc). Adrian said the City of Durham Trust has always been involved with the Bow Trust so he is grateful for the time to speak tonight. Following questions from the floor, Adrian said that the existing lease from the diocese is a full repairing lease so the responsibility falls on the Bow Trust and fundraising will be needed. He also confirmed that, once discussions on the lease and proposed plans become clearer, there will be a public consultation meeting. The Chair thanked Adrian.

9. CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Chair said that looking back at last year's AGM Minutes he felt déjà vu ... plus ça change! One issue which has taken a lot of time and effort was the Sniperley Park public inquiry (see the summary in the *Annual Review 2023-24*, plus a report in the previous *Bulletin No. 98* or posts on our website). He said he and John Ashby spent almost three weeks attending, along with Matthew Phillips (whose expertise on transport issues is unsurpassed) and the Trust were allowed a lot of time by the inspector with the Trust's inputs being mentioned five times in the barristers' summing up. The inspector makes a recommendation to the Secretary of State but of course this will no longer be Michael Gove!

As the County Durham Plan will be due a review soon, Trustees have been involved in assessing how CDP Policy 16 can be adjusted to work more effectively, particularly for outer areas of the city where HMOs are spreading out. There are a lot of developments going on in our small city having a major effect (see the article in the *Annual Review 2023-24*) especially at Milburngate where we are being kept in the dark about the situation. Another major proposal is Prince Bishops Place, where the retail centre is not doing well so the new owners want to use the upper storeys for student accommodation and position a hotel above Boots (but vehicle/delivery access is problematic). There are also design issues with the proposal regarding the WHS views.

The Leazes Road footbridge is causing concern and confusion over whether it is repairable, whilst works have already started at the traffic lights for a new pedestrian crossing. A sad loss in the city is the closure of Shakespeare Hall on North Road, so Alington House is the last remaining community facility. DCC is putting Hopper House and Metcalfe House (next to the bus station) up for sale, and the Claypath / Millenium Place development site is another significant vacancy awaiting adoption.

The Chair pointed out the Trust's success in building partnerships, particularly with the Parish Council on planning responses and the WHS Committee who are currently working on the new WHS Management Plan. In parallel, DCC's Design & Conservation team are drafting the Conservation Area Management Plan and have sent the first draft of the Crossgate Area Character Appraisal (160 pages) to the Trust for comments. Another major development (opening on 14 June) is The Story at Mount Oswald and the Chair said he has been invited to some events there so hopes to develop further partnerships.

On the Trust's Architectural Award, he reminded attendees that we gave the 2022 award to 173 Gilesgate for their modern extension and workshop but there are no strong contenders for a 2023 award. Any ideas for a contender for a meritable development completed in 2023 please send to chair@durhamcity.org. Trustees have started a discussion on an Environmental Commendation to highlight activity that responds to the climate crisis and are developing links with the University biodiversity and sustainability champions to work out potential types of candidates. Following a recent legacy from former Trustee Paul Beard's estate, Trustees would like to use this new award to commemorate Paul's environmental work.

Responses to DCC and national consultations are an increasing part of the Trustees' work and over the last year we have responded to 9 Supplementary Planning Documents, DCC's Housing Strategy, the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 4 and others (see our website for details). Currently, Trustees are assessing the revised Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) for Durham City.

Scrutiny of DCC's weekly planning lists is still our main activity. Over the last year we have considered 331 applications, submitted 76 objections (a lot of work!), 12 letters of support and 15 letters of comments/concerns. Outcome figures don't match exactly due to the time lag in decisions being made, but out of 50 applications we objected to in the last year, 20 were approved, 20 were refused and 10 withdrawn - so a good result. We are dealing with a delicate situation at St Leonard's as there is an urgent need for rebuilding, but we have decided (with reluctance) to object in the hope of

improving the design for the future. There is a lot of controversy particularly on the pre-emptive tree felling and transport issues.

The Chair stressed the importance of having a democratic voice in the planning process, especially as the main political parties are considering planning reforms to speed up developments, so it is key for the Trust to continue to promote the public voice as emphasised by Thomas Sharp. He reminded attendees of the quote from the back cover of *Cathedral City* headed "A Note to the Man in the Street" which concludes: *"The thing we all have to realise is that planning in a democracy must either be something in the nature of a national pursuit, or nothing at all. For in a democracy, government and local authorities can make the really important moves only under the pressure of public opinion."*

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business. The Chair thanked all attendees for listening and drew the AGM business to a close at 19.55.

After the formal agenda, the Chair welcomed and introduced Prof. Robin Coningham who, as well as being UNESCO's Chair on Archaeological Ethics and Practice in Cultural Heritage, has a number of responsibilities within the University's Dept of Archaeology and Institute of Medieval and Early Modern Studies. Robin presented an interesting illustrated talk on the eve of the ratification of the 2003 Convention by the UK Government. The superb talk *"What Will the UK'S Ratification of UNESCO'S 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Mean for the City and County of Durham?"* was very well received. Following some questions from the floor, a vote of thanks was given by Trustee John Ashby and Robin was gifted a book by Caroline Lucas *Another ENGLAND: How to Reclaim our National Story*.