

Friends of Exeter Ship Canal - Committee Meeting

24th January 2017

Committee Meeting Minutes

18:30 – 24th January 2017, Custom House, Exeter Quay

Committee members present:

Ray Alexander (RA), Stewart Barr (SB), Meg Compton (MC), Mike Grayshan (MG), Peter Kelly (PK), Peter Nickol (PN), Jack Nott (JN), Mary Tempest (MT), John Monks (JM), Nick Hawker (NH)

Apologies received from Committee members:

Bernard Frowd, Simon Goddard

Friends of Exeter Ship Canal – non-committee members:

Jane Evans (JE), Paul Gibbons (PG), Jean Hall (JH),

Apologies received from non-committee members:

Peter Grainger, Lyn Wetenhall

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair, JM, welcomed committee and non-committee members to the meeting. He explained that whilst there were formal issues to attend to, the intention thereafter was for the meeting to be a 'listening exercise' in terms of what members' expectations were regarding the *Friends* activities during 2017. JM reminded those not on the Committee that they would not be allowed to vote on the formal issues but that resolutions would be avoided thereafter.

2. Apologies

The Secretary, NH, reported that he had received two apologies from Committee members and two from non-committee members, as detailed above.

3. To receive and approve minutes of the previous meeting

Proposal: That the minutes received are accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting held on 16th December 2016.

Proposed by: Stewart Barr

Seconded by: Ray Alexander

Carried Unanimously

4. Matters arising from the previous meeting

None.

5. To receive a report on membership matters

SB reported the following membership details:

Total number of paid-up members: 35

Total number of individual memberships: 21 (@ £8 per individual)

Total number of family memberships: 7 (@ £15 per family)

Importantly, SB reported that the membership numbers and resulting income had been reconciled with the financial records held by Simon Goddard.

It was reported that some members had completed joining forms but had not paid the subsequent fee – all had been written in respect of this.

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RA asked what action the Committee should take with Committee members who had not paid. JM responded that this matter would be deferred until the Annual General Meeting.

JE reminded the Committee that individual e-mail addresses should not be visible on group mail-outs.

6. To receive a report on financial matters

JM reported that Simon Goddard was unavailable (as per the apologies) but that he had reported that the bank account was in good order. All expenditure had been budgeted for and since the last meeting payments had been made in respect of renewing the Public Liability insurance, plus the cost of tools, hi-vis jackets and a pub-lunch for volunteers, all of which was in relation to the Friends first work party that had taken place on Saturday 21st January 2017.

Proposal: That a payment of £54 should be made to the Inland Waterways Authority (IWA) to renew the *Friends* corporate membership.

Proposed by: Jack Nott

Seconded by: John Monks

Carried unanimously

7. To receive an update on the volunteer work party (21/01/2017)

MG reported on the excellent efforts of the volunteer group, including a number of Sea Cadets, who cleared a 100 metre stretch of the canal bank of unwanted vegetation, predominantly willow saplings. Most volunteers expressed a desire to assist again.

As various tools had been purchased for these efforts it was suggested that, rather than a shed, a storage box could easily keep this equipment safe. RA commented however, that in the course of time additional equipment would be acquired and to not underestimate the storage requirements. JN noted that the Friends might use the council's shed at Double Locks.

RN commented that he had received good feedback from canal staff. It was noted that the Express & Echo carried reports and photographs in two editions and on-line.

JM reported that the magazine '*Waterways World*' (Andrew Denny) planned to feature the canal in a future edition and suggested the 3rd - 5th February as possible days for a visit.

RA to liaise with the IWA in respect of getting the *Friends* activities included in their newsletters.

The local '*Execite*' magazine had requested editorial on the activity and JM had sent them the press release and photographs.

JM requested that someone write an article on the volunteer working party for the Exe Estuary Partnership magazine, '*Exe Press*' magazine. PN volunteered to produce this.

In terms of promotion internally JM asked how frequently a *Friends* Newsletter should be produced. It was agreed that quarterly was most appropriate – making the next one due in April.

Actions: PN to write an article on the volunteer party for the '*Exe Press*' magazine.

RA to liaise with the IWA in order to promote the Friends activities in their newsletter.

JM and MG to agree the date of the next work party.

(JE left the meeting at this point but wanted the Friends to note that: the excavations around the Northbrook Leat were worth viewing; that she currently held the minutes from the previous AGM; and that Haven Banks were soon to do boat hire.)

8. To consider summer events on the Exeter Quay

MT advised the meeting of planned dates for events on the Quay during 2017. These would present an opportunity for the *Friends* to promote themselves and attract new members. The *Friends* had a stand at numerous events in 2016. In addition, it was reported that there was now agreement (from Dave Adcock) to locate a permanent leaflet display at the Custom House to promote the *Friends*.

MC noted that, this year, the *Friends* should have some tangible benefits to promote aside from the obvious 'good intentions' – e.g. the recent work-party.

MT advised that the events were best attended when they coincided with other celebrations such as '*Fathers' Day*'.

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MT asked if it would be possible for the *Friends* to obtain material that highlighted the stand – e.g. a banner or velcro boards to display notices. JM noted that there was a budget available for this type of thing and that the initiative would be pursued.

Dates of Craft Markets:

2nd April; 16th April; 7th May; 21st May; 4th June; 18th June; 2nd July; 16th July; 5th August;
3rd September; 17th September; 1st October; 16th October

NB all dates fall on a Sunday.

MT asked for volunteers to man a stand/stall on behalf of the *Friends* at these events.

9. Interpretation & Leaflets

JN reminded the meeting of leaflets and information boards that had been previously installed around the quay/canal. These had now disappeared and it appeared as though the City Council have either no time or money to maintain these. Perhaps this was something the *Friends* could take on.

MT said that, in fact, this issue was being looked at and that there may be a renewed initiative to reproduce these by the Council. They were still available on-line.

JM noted that the interpretation boards and leaflets were something that could be taken on by the *Friend* but it was important to understand first, what the Council's plans were.

Action: MT to discover what the Council intends.

NH to include the matter on the next meeting agenda.

10. To consider arrangements for the Annual General Meeting and activities for the coming year

JM advised that the *Friends* Annual General Meeting (AGM) would be due in April and asked for suggestions in respect of this.

RA commented that the right venue was essential whilst MT noted that rooms in the Custom House would be made available if required. This included the impressive upstairs rooms with their decorated ceilings.

SB reminded the meeting that, before setting a date, Simon Goddard would need to be advised in relation to compiling the year end accounts, which would take an amount of time after the actual year end date.

To attract as many people as possible, suggestions to make the AGM interesting included:

- A tie in with the Quay side events;
- Expert talks and/or presentations;
- A boat trip along the canal to the Double Locks (might also include a talk/presentation). JN noted that this might prove expensive if held over a weekend.

JM noted that arrangements would be discussed between Simon Goddard, NH and himself.

Action: NH, JM and Simon Goddard to make appropriate arrangements.

11. The future of Exeter Ship Canal: to note recent developments

JM noted that this would be a key discussion point at the next committee meeting and he wished just to flag up at this stage. He referred to new proposals on the management of the canal contained in the council's 'Management of Exeter's Waterways' plan currently going through committee. Of particular concern was the degree of consultation the council plans to undertake. The proposed plan can be seen in the papers for the Scrutiny Committee on 12th January 2017 on the City Council's website. RA asked if a Councillor should attend the AGM?

JH noted that the *Friends* appeared to have no relationship with the Grand Western Canal, which might prove beneficial in this instance as that is run by a local authority.

Action: JM to send the proposal link to JN

Action: NH to include the matter on the next meeting agenda

12. To consider comments on the Friends website and use of social media

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NH advised that the *Friends* should try and combine the resource of website and social media into a single effort, linking tweets, FACEBOOK posts and website articles to maximise coverage across organisation who monitor such activity, and to reach as broad an audience possible. It was important that the *Friends* are clear about their message – e.g. self-promotion or membership.

RA commented that the needs of existing members should be serviced first with the recruitment of new members a secondary matter.

NH noted that the GOOGLE Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) score was low for the *Friends*. If searching for 'Exeter Canal' the *Friends* website appears on the 3rd page of results (2nd page in GOOGLE Chrome) – the results will vary according to the browser used.

JM asked for 'quick fixes' to three current issues:

- The website responsiveness – on a tablet the text at the beginning and start of each line ran over the screen;
- The sourcing of technology to produce regular newsletters;
- The improvement of the website SEO.

NH said that he would pursue these issues.

Actions: NH to resolve website responsiveness; e-mail design and despatch technology for newsletters; the website SEO.

13. Any other business

PG noted that many of the old boats, previously held at the old Maritime Museum on Exeter Quay, were now to be found in Eyemouth in Scotland!

14. To determine the priorities and date of the next meeting

The Friends' of Exeter Ship Canal's next committee meeting would be held on:

Thursday 2nd March, 2017 at the Custom House from 18:30.

The meeting concluded at 20:35.