

MINUTES OF THE CONSERVATION AREAS WIRRAL (CAW) 2019 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held on 4 April 2019 at The Lyceum, Port Sunlight

PRESENT: Alan Chape (Chairman), John Pyke (Treasurer), Peter Bolt, Kay Crook, Chris Moore, Gillian Bolt, Lizzie Heywood (Port Sunlight, David Allan, John Cocker, Graham Arnold, A P Wilson (Magazines), Lucy Barrow (Wirral Council), Lorna Tyson (Mere Brook House), Eileen Wilshaw (Wirral Council), Robert Dolphin (Friends of Flaybrick), Steve Anderson (Heswall), Stephen Ross (Heswall), Diane Moore (Wirral Libraries), Jane Murphy (Bromborough Pool), Richard Fassam (Hamilton Square), Felicity Povoas (Frankby), Malcolm Pembrige (Frankby), Margaret Grundy (Clifton Park), Maureen More (Clifton Park), Glynn Parry (Bromborough Pool), Steve Weber (Oxton), Gary Prance (Barnston), David Lawrence (Caldy), Joy Hockey (Wellington Road), Hugh Batterbury (Wellington Road), David Ball (Wirral Council)

1 Alan Chape welcomed everyone to the meeting. He also thanked Port Sunlight Trust for allowing us to use the Lyceum for the meeting.

2 Apologies

Dennis Clegg, Heather Alcock, Rhiannon Evans, Geoff Willis, Elizabeth Davey, Marla Johnson, Paul Harris, Lix Mawdsley, Jill Kirkbridge-Wright, Mary Brown, Roger Merry, Nigel Hayward, Vicki Hall, Philip Barton, John Moffat

3 Chairman's Report.

This had been circulated in advance of the meeting but Alan Chape presented it in Powerpoint form. *(Printed copies had been sent out in advance to all members and were available in the hall.)*

A pdf of the Chairman's report is attached to these Minutes.

Following his report, Alan Chape introduced CAW's first Award for Services to Conservation on the Wirral to Joy Hockey OBE. David Allan read out the citation and Joy was then presented with a framed certificate and flowers. In her response Joy thanked the Committee but was surprised to be honoured in this fashion although she has had a lifetime of service to Wirral's heritage through her work as an architect as well as a member of many Conservation and Heritage committees.

4 Treasurer's Report

A full financial report is attached to these Minutes in .pdf form.

John Pyke had circulated copies of the Accounts at the meeting and thanked the societies that had donated last year to the CAW funds. He also thanked the Port Sunlight Trust for giving us "benefit in kind". JP also made the point that although the funds look reasonably healthy, if we needed to seek professional guidance it would use up our reserves very quickly. JP will therefore be approaching societies regarding a donation for this year and he quoted the example of the Heswall Society who had recently sought professional guidance/advice regarding listing of the Police Station in Heswall. The cost of the advice was £2500. .

JP also thanked the auditors for their time in verifying the Accounts.

It was proposed that the Accounts be approved, seconded by Chris Moore and unanimously agreed by the meeting.

5 Blue Plaques

Peter Bolt reported that David Ball had initially approved four plaques per year. Then other groups had come forward who were willing to pay themselves so over the last 2 years, 16 Blue Plaques have been installed. Peter thanked Lucy Barrow for asking him to continue with the programme for another year and there will be three further unveilings during the summer:

William Olaf Stapeldon	This plaque will be unveiled on Friday, 10 May at Simon's Bridge on the Wirral Way. A film has been commissioned and the first showing will be in America.
Thomas Brassey	Undoubtedly the greatest railway builder of the 19 th Century. The unveiling will be down outside the old Canada Works on Friday, 21 June, in Beaufort Road, Birkenhead. Peter is giving a talk about Thomas Brassey at the Birkenhead Library on Saturday 27 April.
Malcolm Lowry	Author of "Under the Volcano", the unveiling will be on Saturday, 27 July 2019 on the sea wall, adjacent to the Light Cinema in New Brighton. Various other events are being planned to celebrate the man and his work.

6 Open Forum

i) **Chris Moore (Hoylake & Kings Gap)** raised the problem of enforcement and the policy which is currently being adopted to "clear the backlog". This is creating a situation where important issues are being overlooked and he feels that the newer issues should be considered first. KC supported this idea. David Ball said that he would comment on Chris's idea during his talk to the meeting.

ii) **Lorna Tyson, Merebrook House:** Lorna commented on the amount of interest that her Blue Plaque for Ann Davison had generated, along with the photographs that they keep in the lounge. As many of her visitors are not local, the Blue Plaque has done a very good job in promoting Wirral and our heritage along with the impressive people who had lived here. She thanked CAW for undertaking the project.

iii) **Maureen More (Clifton Park)** said they still had problems with unauthorised work going on within the Park.

iv) **Gillian Bolt** outlined the success of the Open Day at the Masonic Hall in Clifton Park during the Heritage Open Day programme last September. The Woodlands school had done an amazing job and we are currently working on getting two interpretation panels about the history of Clifton Park created and installed. One will reflect the work done by the children.

v) **Green Conservation Area** signage is starting to go up in some of the CA's and Gillian Bolt has the contact details at the Council for those groups who would like to commission them. So far Clifton Park, Saughall Massie, Heswall & Gayton have had them put up.

vi) **Hamilton Square** – Alan Chape talked about the proposed plan to move the Council meetings from Seacombe back to the Council Chambers in Hamilton Square which could only be good for the area.

7 Committee Members

The current committee is 9 people which includes 2 co-opted members. Two members are up for re-election: Kay Crook and John Pyke. They were proposed by Graham Arnold and seconded by Chris Moore. Unanimously approved.

8 Alan Chape closed the formal AGM meeting and introduced David Ball who spoke about the preparation of the Local Plan and its likely impact upon heritage and Conservation Areas.

Talk by David Ball, Assistant Director Major Growth Projects and Housing Delivery , Wirral Council

- i) DB outlined the background of the National Planning Policy Framework and the amendments in February 2019. The Planning system needs to be Plan led. The Policies for the local area must be set out. It needs to be short, clear and concise. It should be reviewed every five years.
- ii) Wirral's Plan will stretch from 2021 – 2035/6.
It will guide all the decision making for land use in the Borough.
It must contain strategic policies ie conservation of the built and historic environment.
It must recognise the significance and importance of heritage assets which need to be conserved and managed.
However, they are also living areas so must be managed in that way but must be conserved for future generations.
- iii) There will be a chapter in the Local Plan about the policies and there will be a discussion about the Development Management Policy. Therefore, there will be a strong emphasis on heritage and Conservation. But not in isolation: it links with culture, tourism and the economy.
- iv) We have not made progress on the Local Plan over the last few years. Tomorrow (5 April) WBC submit an action plan to the Secretary of State. A revised timetable for submission of the Plan in November 2020. This means that all the work done so far needs to be revised and updated. The Council have put additional resources into the production of the Local Plan and monthly monitoring meetings are held with the Ministry. DB's objective is to make sure the Local Plan is progressed as soon as possible.
- v) Existing Plan policies are still in force and they have not lost any green belt as the policies are holding up.
- vi) With regard to Hamilton Square, he is seeking to get a Management Plan whilst also looking at the situation regarding the satellite dishes. The Council has recently signed up with the Growth Company to look at various opportunities and work is now looking at the Town Centre and linking it with Argyle Street and down to Hamilton Square. Hopefully over the next few months, they will be able to see further work done on these plans.
- vii) They are still experiencing severe issues with the Budget. He can report that the planning functions which have been under-resourced for some time have had additional resources put in, especially into the enforcement team. They are in the process of revising the Enforcement Policy and dealing with the most serious first. They are trying to clear the back log as soon as possible but will deal with priorities and current cases as well (*in answer to Chris Moore's question.*)

viii) There are various challenges: Rock Park has been at risk for some time. However, it is important to work co-operatively together. They are not going to be able to do everything at the same time but need to identify priorities and then take action. He can look at Brimstage being created a CA and also Article 4 directions and may be able to progress some of these after the Election. DB believes that we should continue to try and work together to develop the policies and then apply them.

Questions:

1 Alan Chape: The NPPF talks about the need to focus on the quality of design of new builds. CAW are worried about the quality of planning applications and the Heritage Statements – or lack of them. Has DB thought of Design panels?

DB: Agreed that there were issues about the quality of Heritage Statements and trying to give advice. He also suggested that the quality of design is important so they are looking at a) Design Guides and b) Working with organisations like “Places Matter” to see if they can improve the quality of design. They have recently had a couple of planning applications in sensitive areas which could be refused on design grounds. They are also looking to get a high quality of design across everything that they do. They are also working with RIBA to try and help because they have key waterfront locations.

2 Chris Moore (Hoylake & Kings Gap): Chris asked about the effectiveness or otherwise of the Neighbourhood Plan.

DB: He believed that the Plan helped the area but the Plan Policies need to be in line with the National Policies. He felt the Plans were helpful for the local area to feel involved but they have only added to the planning process in a limited way. DB does not feel they really fit into the urban area and can only make a limited contribution.

CM: The Neighbourhood Plan perhaps gives the local people the idea that they have more control of their area. However, CM felt that comments put forward by the group did not receive feedback from the Planning Department which resulted in feelings of frustration.

DB: The Planning Department receive thousands of comments re planning applications. It is not possible to respond to all of them. They are going through a modernisation of the planning system which will enable them to be more responsive around some of these matters.

DB: Regarding enforcement: They are going to try and get the enforcement system digitised so people can self-search for the information and see whether things are happening. Basically they are trying to improve communications.

3 Hugh Batterbury (Wellington Road): Does the Local Plan replace the UDP?

DB: Yes. It will mirror some of the Policies but as they were written in 2000, they will need to be updated. There will be a strong emphasis on protecting Conservation Areas and Heritage Assets.

HB: He has been told that the Heritage Statement would not be given specific consideration?

DB: It concerns him if colleagues are saying that the Heritage Statements are not important or taken into account. They are very important but we are not where we should be regarding the quality of them. A number of new officers have joined the Council and a series of briefing sessions will be done on key issues and the first will be Heritage and Conservation Areas.

DB: He was not aware of any planning application for Marine Park in New Brighton

4 Kay Crook (Mountwood) recounted a case where the Heritage Statement had not been done, the planning officer did not think it was necessary but KC assured them it was. The one that had then been prepared was inadequate. DB asked for further details separately.

5 Steve Anderson (Heswall): Asked if they plan to publish the analysis of the responses to the consultation. DB replied that the Council will not be publishing for the moment.

6 Kay Crook mentioned Wirral's arboreal heritage and asked whether it would be possible for Erik Bowman to have some support.

DB: They proposed to get a "Tree Module" on the computer system. A lot of the TPO's need to be reviewed as they have been in place for many years.

7 John Pyke (Heswall): he suggested that there ought to be some sort of system in place when someone buys a house which is then demolished and replaced by another. Frequently all the trees are felled at the same time to clear the site.

DB: He thought this would be difficult to enforce unless there were actual TPO's on the trees. Where conditions are attached to the planning application, they have to rely on people adhering to those conditions. They cannot check every site to ensure this is happening.

CM: commented that he did not see conditions being adhered to.

DB: The problem is that there are so many applications across Wirral.

CM: Suggested that CA members should advise where conditions are not being adhered to.

8 David Allan (Eastham) suggested that CA's could have blanket TPO's.

DB: He would be happy to talk about that.

Alan Chape then closed the meeting and thanked David Ball for his time and everyone for attending.

The meeting closed.

Gillian Bolt

15 April 2019

