

The Wey & Arun Canal Trust Limited
Minutes of the 44th Annual General Meeting
Held at Cranleigh Village Hall
on Saturday 29th April 2017

DRAFT

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:

Nick and Margaret Houston, Dave King, Tony Coles, Peter Hyem, Vanessa and Richard Lamey, Martin Thompson, Peter and Ann Brown, Peter Foulger, Chris Tavener, John Smith, Mary Thornton, Jackie Blizzard, Kevin Taylor and Martin Foster.

At this point the Chairman asked for a moments reflection in remembrance of those members who had been active volunteers for the Trust who were no longer with us namely, John Taylor-Cram, Geoff Perks and Dave Kersley.

Minutes of the 43rd AGM 2016 held at Billingshurst Village Hall.

The Minutes were distributed at the meeting. There being no questions their adoption was proposed by David Probett and seconded by James Field. **AGREED without dissent** and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2. Chairman's Report: This year the report was attached to the meeting notes and is added to these minutes as an appendix. She did though wish to comment on the following points:-

- The completion of Compasses bridge in what must be record time.
- The Opening of Compasses Bridge and the 200th Anniversary celebrations.
- The three site strategy that was likely to become seven sites.
- That the Trust is now a landowner in several strategic sites.

Taking questions from the floor Kevin Bentley asked which sites had been acquired? The Chairman explained that these were the Hunt Nature Park in the North, sections of Gosden Meadow and most of the aqueduct with high hopes that all this area would be soon acquired. The Whitley railway crossing, south of Run Common, (Alan Johnson noted that there would be information boards here by the end of the Autumn), and finally a large section in the Alfold / Loxwood area. There was also the possibility of further acquisitions over the coming year.

There were no further questions.

3. Accounts and Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 December 2016

Once again Julian Morgan reported on the Trust's financial position. Noting that, like 2015, if we were a trading company a deficit of £197k would appear to make a gloomy report but in the Trust's case it was good news as it was an indication of what was being spent on restoration. Income was £450k and expenditure was £647k. Major expenditure was once again on Compasses and Gennets Bridge Lock but also on the essential studies for the Bramley Link. He noted that there had now been two consecutive big spend years and that reserves were decreasing. With several new projects in the offing replenishing of funds would be required.

He reported that whilst the Trust's bank balance was reasonably healthy and the Trust was solvent much of this money is ring-fenced for specific projects.

2016 has been a better year for the finance team. He reported that the book-keeping was now in good shape and formal accounts were submitted on time. In fact our independent examiner reduced his fees since they were so well presented.

These were presented and were asked to be adopted. They were proposed by Julian Morgan and seconded by Mark Thruscutt. They were adopted unanimously.

4. Appointment of Independent Examiner

It was proposed that BD&M Ltd should be appointed as Independent examiners for a further year and that the CoM should be authorised to fix their remuneration.

This was agreed without dissent.

5. Election of Directors

Four members were standing for the four places, all were for re-election, namely:-

- John Talbot,
- Margaret Darvill,

- Alan Johnson,
- Tony Ford.

All were individually elected without dissent.

6. WAEEL Report.

The report was given by James Field, Chairman WAEEL Enterprises Ltd.

He reported that turnover for 2016 was £115,324 – once again an increase over the previous year. Once again though he warned that although each year the increase may seem to be almost automatic, expectations must be tempered for the future in two areas: With a dry summer, which we have not had for some time, it could adversely affect the number of trips we can put on and secondly, WAEEL has a finite number of volunteers to crew the boats, so there is a need to get more to join us as crew. He did though give special mention to Sandy Henney who joined WAEEL board last year and had recently generated the best number of volunteer enquiries for some years.

Gross profit was 80.1% of turnover at £92,265.

WAEEL contributed £58,366 to the Trust, a 14% increase over the previous year.

He thanked all those who had given of their time to ensure the successful running of all cruises.

A member requested that WAEEL accounts be presented as a paper at the WACT AGM. James pointed out that the WAEEL accounts were consolidated into the WACT accounts.

7. Jack King Cup and John East Trophy

The Jack King cup was presented to the Compasses team and was accepted on their behalf by Tony Ford.

The John East Trophy was presented to Derek Wright who had initiated the on-line booking system.

8. Any Other Business

There being no further business, The Chairman proposed that the meeting be closed. The date and venue for the 2018 AGM was to be decided.

Attendance was approximately 170 and meeting closed at 3.10pm.

Appendix 1 Chairman's report.

**The Wey & Arun Canal Trust AGM 2017
Chairman's Annual report**

By anyone's standards, I believe we have had a remarkable year. We continue to make good progress with our 3-site strategy as well as making significant progress on planning future projects.

Not only have we been able to complete (on time and on budget) the construction and opening of Compasses Bridge in Alfold, Surrey but our volunteers have made excellent progress with Gennets Bridge Lock construction. Plans for the Bramley Link project are continuing as we start the public consultation process prior to planning and fund raising.

Alongside our achievements in canal restoration, we can celebrate a huge breakthrough in the first part of 2017. For the first time, the Trust now owns significant sections of land on and near the canal route. After a very long legal process, we finally signed the documents to acquire the Hunt Nature Park site in Shalford from Surrey County Council. Thanks to another generous transfer from a local landowner, we also own most of Gosden Aqueduct between Shalford and Bramley. Waverley Borough Council has transferred ownership of Whiplely Manor Railway Bridge, near Cranleigh, to us and our latest acquisition, again thanks to extremely generous landowners, is a significant section of canal in the Alfold and Ifold area. We have acquired all these sections at either no cost or a nominal price, although we have had to pay legal fees. Owning sections of the canal in strategic areas is a massive benefit for us; for the first time we can talk to other landowners as neighbours with a long-term interest in the area, rather than as tenants or outsiders. We have other negotiations in progress that could expand our holdings further. Land ownership of course comes with responsibilities as well as rights, but we believe we are right to seize these opportunities when they become available.

Our big event for 2016 was our bicentennial weekend during 1st-2nd October when we celebrated the 200th anniversary of the opening of the Wey & Arun Junction Canal and the official opening of the new Compasses Bridge. During the weekend, the Bicentennial "Baton" made its way up the canal route from south to north. The excitement of the weekend gained us some fabulous publicity.

On Saturday 1 October, the focus of the celebrations was at Loxwood, with boat trips and a variety of costumes on display. On Sunday 2nd October, we welcomed Dame Penelope Keith to formally open Compasses Bridge. The finale of the weekend was a celebration tea at Dapdune Wharf in Guildford with the naming of member Paul Barfield's boat by the Mayor of Guildford.

I will now describe in more detail the progress with the 3-site strategy referred to at the start of this report:

Looking at our three key sites, and starting from the north, the Bramley Link team has made solid progress on planning the first section of restored canal, from the River Wey to Gosden Aqueduct. Progress has been slower than we would have liked, mainly thanks to very poor performance from the consultants that we employed for the Civil Engineering Study. But we have made significant steps towards submitting a planning application during 2017; the plans are on the walls of the Northern Office in Shalford and we have shown them to some of the key decision makers. We also hope to start soon on creating a useable canal channel around Gun's Mouth Island and building a small Hunt Park Visitor Centre very near to the A281 in Shalford.

If you attended the official opening of Compasses Bridge, you will have noticed that, although small boats were able to go under the bridge, work on the site as a whole was far from finished. Now, though, thanks to further intensive work by volunteers, the training walls are finished and the landscaping work will soon be complete. As Tony Ford announced at the opening, we hope that the next major project in the area will be a new canal crossing at Tickner's Heath. If all goes well, work on the ground could start early in 2018. Also scheduled for early 2018 is the opening of the Sydney Thriscutt Slipway, roughly halfway between Compasses and Tickner's. Construction of the slipway is more than half finished, but planning conditions restrict the amount of work we can do during the Summer period.

By the end of 2017, we hope that construction of Gennets Bridge Lock, including the arched brick bridge, will be largely complete. This has been an exceptional effort by the volunteers, led by Eric Walker. Unfortunately, in July 2016 work had to stop temporarily because one of our volunteers, Brian Dunman, from the Thursday and Sunday Group (TSG), was injured in a fall at the site on 14 July. We are pleased to say that Brian has made a good recovery, but the incident alerted us to the need to upgrade all our Health & Safety arrangements and a thorough review took place. My thanks to Dennis Gillen at Gennets and our Health & Safety Director John Talbot for all their hard work on this important task.

Clearly our first priority is that our frontline volunteers are able to work safely. Volunteers are so important to us that we need to look after them, not only protecting them from injury, but making sure they have clean working conditions, the right training and the right tools and equipment. We now have hot water and toilets at our two construction sites; for work in the Summit area we have purchased a second-hand toilet block. We have also invested in training and tools during the year. A programme of training for our regular working party members has included hedge cutting, chainsaws, brushcutters and dumper trucks. Our insurers are increasingly insisting on formal certification for everyone using power tools.

It is important for us to maintain and improve the sections of canal we have restored. Thanks to volunteer project manager Brian King and a generous grant from British Canoeing, we now have two canoe landing stages at Loxwood. We are always keen to encourage responsible canoeists on the Loxwood section and their numbers continue to increase. Brian King also supervised replacement of the beams at Baldwin's Knob Lock. Inspections showed that the beams (secondhand when they came to us) were likely to fail over the next year or two, so we decided to renew them completely. Over the Winter we invested in a programme of tree management for the Loxwood section.

In 2016 the Trust used nearly £200,000 from its reserves, mainly for Compasses Bridge. The Trust's ambitious plans for 2017 and beyond will need us to step up our fundraising. We are very grateful to our Boat Group who had another excellent year and contributed over £58,000 to our income. We are also grateful to everyone who supported the '*Localgiving matchfunding*' campaigns and to all who bought tickets in the Christmas Raffle which raised nearly £5000. Our annual sponsored walk (the Puddle) brought in around £10,000 with 157 walkers taking part. Last year the walk took in the major restoration sites at Gennets Bridge and Compasses. We are grateful to organiser Margaret Davill and her team for all the hard work they put into the event. We are pleased to report that we have boosted our regular income, thanks to a long overdue rise in subscriptions and increased support from our Milestone Club. Thanks go to Membership Secretary Alan Dyer for his hard work.

Our management and administration teams have seen few changes during the year. At the 2016 Annual Meeting, Peter Foulger retired as a Director and we were delighted when Peter agreed to become one of our Vice-Presidents. Peter has made an immense contribution to the restoration of the canal. He served as Chairman between 1997 and 2009, a period that culminated with the opening of the Loxwood High Street Crossing. During 2016, Roger Penny joined our part-time staff as an Accounts Assistant, making a total of three staff working primarily on our charity activities and a further three on Boat Group sales and administration. Our routine financial administration is now running much more smoothly; during 2017 we hope to introduce another Assistant in this area so that precious volunteer time can be used more efficiently. In October 2016 we mourned the loss of our immensely valuable volunteers John Taylor-Cram, Geoff Perks and Dave Kersley.

Our Publicity team has had a successful year. We had an exceptional turnout for our River Arun Small Boat Rally. We welcomed the BBC who filmed an episode of "Escape to the Country" at Loxwood and we now appear in Nicholson's Guide (River Thames & the Southern Waterways) for the first time. We welcomed corporate volunteers to work on the canal, including a large party of engineers from consultancy WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff.

A big thanks go to all those involved in fundraising by running boat trips at Loxwood, and for the contribution of funds these activities go towards the project, and to all our volunteers on working parties, administration and publicity who continue to support the Trust. I continue to appreciate the support and assistance given to me and the Trust by the Directors and to all those who support our work by membership and donations.

Sally Schupke
Chairman
20th April 2017