

MINUTES...

62nd NATIONAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Speaking for Scotland's Buildings

27th October 2018, 14.00, Mackintosh at the Willow, Glasgow

Present: Iain Wotherspoon, Simon Green, Helen Cargill-Thompson, Mabel Muir, Anne Tracy, Phil Tracy, Caroline Roussot, Emmanuel Roussot, Fiona Boyd, John Wright, David Anderson, Seonaidh Anderson, Mike Harrison, Michael Rooney, Suzanne Rooney, Robert Robertson, Charles Gore, James Macaulay, Ian Low, Mary Curtis, Hamish McPherson, Ann McPherson, Hamish Macbeth, Kristeen Holmes, Audrey Shirra, Jocelyn Cunliffe, Michael Cunliffe, Adam Gillingham, Anina Hutton, Martin Robertson, Abigail Daly, Neil Hooper, Rosie Hooper, David Bisset, Jean Bisset, Peter Ranson, John Gerrard, Morag Pettigrew, Peter Robinson, Charles McFarlane, Caroline McFarlane, David Booth, Franziska Booth, Ann Laird, Kelvin Tyler, Peter Drummond.

Lena Sideri taking minutes.

1. Apologies

Apologies received from Adam Swan, Kathleen Dalyell, Yvonne P Hillyard, Michael Atkinson, Lady Jennifer Bute, Richard Austin, Morag Austin, Andy McNab, Margaret Gilfillan, Brian Young and John Beaton.

2. Approval of Minutes of the 61st AGM, held at The Engine Shed, at Stirling, on Saturday 28th October 2017 at 12.00pm

Accepted as a true record of the meeting.

Proposed: Hamish McPherson

Seconded: Iain Wotherspoon

3. President's Address

Simon Green (SG), President of the AHSS, welcomed everyone to the former Willow Tearooms, now renamed Mackintosh at the Willow.

SG praised the AHSS magazine and its mastermind, our Editor Abigail Daly, and highlighted that it is admirable what the Society is accomplishing with the limited resources available: from the activities organised by our Regional groups (Study Tour, lectures, talks) to our casework, our commitment (and consistency) in holding the planners accountable is exemplary.

SG expressed gratitude for everyone's hard work during the Former Royal High School Inquiry and spoke highly of the immense amount of time and work invested by the members of the Society during that process, noting that even though this particular battle is drawing to a close another one may be due to begin, as the application for the new Concert Hall behind Dundas House, the RBS building on St Andrew's Square in Edinburgh has now been submitted.

SG pointed out that conservation battles are important battles, as a voice of Heritage, the AHSS continues to fight for Scotland's built environment. We are among the leading campaigning bodies in the country and, the Society is changing and growing: a room full for the AGM is indeed a testament of commitment but, we do need to expand.

SG referred to the activities of the regional groups, in particular, Dumfries and Galloway, Forth and Borders and Strathclyde which are continuing their good work and emphasised that our strength lies in the cooperative nature of our Society. SG praised our Editor, Abigail Daly; our magazine is a great vehicle for the celebration of our work as it shows what a dynamic Society we have.

4. Approval of the Trustees' Report for the year ended 31st March 2018

Item 4 was dealt in conjunction with item 5.

5. Approval of the Independently Examined Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2018

HMcb reported that the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2018 present no significant differences to those of the previous year and talked through the accounts (pp.13-16). At 31 March 2017, the Society had net assets of 236.016k, and at 31 March 2018 net assets were 242.540k.

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HMcb noted that the major difference compared to last year was the timing of Royal High School fundraising income and campaign expenditure. In the year to 31 March 2017, we incurred expenditure in advance of our fundraising efforts; in the year to 31 March 2018 we raised more funds than were spent; and in the current year we still strive to raise significant further funds having just expended significant amounts on legal costs for the hearing that has just finished. Overall, the accounts point to a positive outcome, despite the loss of a significant amount of funding from HES, the Society has been successful in continuing without this.

The overall aim is to keep the expenditure within our means and to secure our position; we only need 300 new members! We have taken decisive action towards the latter, the membership offer is going well, and he invited each member to introduce one new member to the AHSS.

Questions on investments:

John Gerrard (JG) requested information of Brewin Dolphin's influence on our investment decisions. HMcb responded that the Society aims to have our funds invested and managed professionally and that our current investment portfolio has been producing good income. There have been changes in the legislation, and we have not yet stipulated any changes that we will make. There has been a meeting with Brewin Dolphin and, we will have another one to set new parameters.

Franziska Booth (FB) proposed changing the investment funds to a more ethical stance. HMcb responded that we need to review our investments in the light of several viewpoints, however, the market at the moment is uncertain and change is not recommended at present.

Proposer: Robert Robertson

Seconded: Jocelyn Cunliffe

6. Appointment of the Independent Examiners for 2018-2019

Henderson Loggie were appointed by general approval

7. Office Bearers

Hamish McPherson and Caroline McFarlane stepped down from Council. Jocelyn Cunliffe and John Beaton were appointed as Directors of the AHSS.

HMcb requested the Council for a Vote of Thanks to Hamish Macbeth and Caroline Roussot for their work on the Annual accounts.

SG extended thanks and appreciation to the Treasurer and the Assistant Treasurer for their hard work and dedication to the Society, adding that the Society has a rhythm which is maintained by the time and energy of all those involved, from the Chairman, Martin Robertson, to the rest of the organisation. We are grateful to all our members and volunteers for the enormous time and effort they put in.

- a) Hamish McPherson has been a valuable member of the Society and has played a significant role as leader of the Development Committee, the Finance and Management Committee in the past and, the Strathclyde Group. Caroline McFarlane has been heavily involved in the Finance and Management Committee and is a key player in the Royal High School battle (or was it a war?). Their contribution has been enormous and was celebrated with a round of applause.
- b) New appointments: SG welcomed Jocelyn Cunliffe, who has been a long-standing member of the Society and was very involved in the Royal High School campaign and, John Beaton.

Proposer: Caroline McFarlane

Seconded: Peter Drummond

8. Account of the Public Inquiry into the Former Royal High School by Peter Drummond

PD commented that the Former Royal High School Public Inquiry had been a war (not merely a battle) as it involved many people: from the witnesses to those who photocopied documents, 18 individuals in total have

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MINUTES...

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invested their time and energy during that process. PD noted that we were fighting two different schemes and that the relevant documentation amounted to 24 binders; these had to be reviewed and filtered out.

The six-week inquiry has been one of the longest heritage inquiries; the Society was the only one in the list of representations that was a national body, and the AHSS team distinguished itself.

The Inquiry, on behalf of the appellants, Duddingston House Properties lasted for three weeks – the appellant's witnesses presented unconvincing evidence and considered to have done poorly. The other representatives witnesses performed well with Adam Wilkinson of EWH having the most difficult time leading to his apology for issuing a misleading pictorial representation of the proposed hotel. AHSS had hardly any questions in cross-examination; this was due to our preparation and airtight presentation. John Lowrey's presentation focused on the historical significance of the site and Peter Drummond's on the architectural significance. The applicants also focused strongly on the economic value. Even though the appellants tried to defame us in the press, they had to apologise. The Inquiry finished last Tuesday 23rd October, and the reporters will be expected to produce their report sometime in the middle of 2019.

PD stated that the Former Royal High School was a battle that we needed to fight; this was a case of significance. It is the biggest challenge that we have seen and, we are now waiting for results.

Caroline McFarlane (CMcF) thanked Peter Drummond and John Lowrey, for their many hours of professional time donated to that cause and, requested for an Honorary Fellowship to be awarded to John Lowrey; PD concurred, adding that not only that nobody has a better knowledge of the Hamilton Building than John but also that his donated labour to the Society amounts to several thousands of pounds for which the Society is most grateful. SG thanked PD for his role in this important challenge.

9. Group Reports – Please see the Autumn 2018 Magazine for full reports

Strathclyde: Iain Wotherspoon (IW), Chairman of the Strathclyde Group circulated the group's annual report.

No other reports had been received.

10. AOCB

A question was asked regarding offering to the Winter Lectures Series speakers a membership subscription to the Society. SG responded that this is a possibility that the Society is currently exploring. Another question raised was whether the AHSS would be keen on attracting members from England or overseas. SG responded that we do have members outside Scotland.

IW noted that Strathclyde's lectures attendees had mentioned that they had discovered our informative Winter Lectures Series via social media channels and invited all members to share information about our events via social media.

Abigail Daly (AD) expressed that she has enjoyed immensely working on the AHSS magazine and thanked all the local groups who had been submitting on time for the magazine deadline.

HMcB commented on the challenge of student membership renewals; thanked AD for her work on the membership leaflet and noted that we have to encourage new members to join our Society. We will soon update our payment options, and, the standing order will be soon replaced with direct debit.

SG reiterated thanks to everybody who contributed to the Former Royal High School Public Inquiry; this has been our most important battle to date but, other battles are looming.

The meeting closed at 14.45.