

# MINUTES OF THE 2015 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BAXTER'S FIELD COMPANY

Saturday 13th June 2015 at Christ Church Hall, Fitzjohn Road, Lewes at 2PM

Charlotte Skeet, Director/Trustee (CS) agreed to chair the meeting. The focus of today's meeting is to review the position between April 2014 and March 2015. The meeting was declared quorate.

## ATTENDANCE:

**Directors/Trustees** :- Stone Adams, Peter Calliafas, Sheila Kent, Liz Thomas, Ceri Williams and Fran Whittle

**Members Present** :- David Authers, Jan Authers, Mary Beattie, Keith Dance, Mike Ellicock, David James, Jenny James, K. Jolley, Stephen Kelly, Marjam Kelly, Diana Rogers, Jennifer Shelley, Chris Slack, Caroline Slack, Peter Stimpson, Jackie Stimpson, Adrian Thomas, Christopher Thomas, Helen Ward, Susan Weeks, Catherine Wood, Elizabeth Wood

**Visitors**:- Veronica Aisher, Ronald Dam, Anne Lutrario,

## 1. APOLOGIES

J. Bishop, G. Blaker, M. Cotgrove, O. Darlington, H. Ellicock, S. Fasquelle, B. Grillo, M. Lowerson, I. Morgan, M. Percy, J. Phillips, S. Rutherford, I. Wells, B. Wells, L. Whitehead, N. Whitehead, S. Wood.

## 2. MINUTES OF THE 2014 AGM (circulated)

The minutes of the previous AGM were accepted as a true record of the meeting. Proposed by David Authers and seconded by Jenny James.

## 3. RESIGNATION AND ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

Under the Articles of Association, one third of the Directors (those who have been longest in office) shall retire. Fran Whittle, Stone Adams and Sheila Kent shall retire. All three have indicated their willingness to stand for election again.

The re-election of Fran Whittle was proposed by Chris Slack, seconded by Stephen Kelly and confirmed. The re-election of Stone Adams was proposed by Peter Stimpson, seconded by Sue Weeks and confirmed. The re-election of Sheila Kent was proposed by Carol Morgan, seconded by Helen Ward and confirmed.

Nominations for new directors can be received at any time by writing to the company office and completing the nomination papers.

## 4. ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2015

Fran Whittle (FW) confirmed that the company remained solvent with an end of year balance of £3810. We continue to receive the majority of our income from donations and individual contributions - all donors were thanked for their continued support. We would not be able to run the field without this support. There are two particular areas worthy of further note:

1. Fencing costs for the Western and Northern Boundaries
2. Solicitors Fees around on-going boundary dispute

In both cases, the vast majority of these costs have been met through specific donations or from non-standard income (e.g. crane license).

The acceptance of the Financial Accounts was proposed by David Authers, seconded by Stephen Kelly and were accepted unanimously.

## 5. CONFIRMATION OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Linda Fisher has confirmed that she is willing to continue for a further year as our independent examiner. The Chair extended her thanks to Linda for her long-term support in providing this voluntary service on behalf of the Company.

## 6. THE ANNUAL REPORT

a. Peter Calliafas (PC) introduced the Annual Report and highlighted the following areas of interest in the report:

### General Matters Arising:

- **Membership:** Our membership continues to increase and at the 31st March 2015, stood at 238 registered members. Thanks were given to Carol Morgan, our membership secretary for maintaining our list of current members and for sending out new membership application forms/welcoming letters. The membership was thanked for their support during the year.
- **Reserves Policy:** The Directors are able to gauge the ongoing running costs in maintaining Baxter's Field for a full twelve months. The present Reserves Policy is to keep sufficient funds aside to meet these running costs.
- **Risk Management:** The Directors regularly walk the Field to identify risks and appropriate measures/actions are taken to address these. A risk register is maintained which is regularly reviewed. Insurance cover is held. This also covers our volunteers who help out on the monthly maintenance days.

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- **Boundary Matters:** An update was provided on the status of the various boundary positions.

Western Boundary (by old tennis court) – the work was completed last year and mentioned in our November 2014 newsletter. It was completed on time and to budget.

Eastern Boundary (Wycherley's Field) – In December 2014, we received confirmation from the Veolia Environmental Trust that our funding application for the full cost of the replacement fencing had been approved.

Northern Boundary – PC referred to the Q&A's that had been published previously for the backdrop to this boundary dispute. He went onto explain a) what a right of way was and b) the issues and the consequences that would arise from this. PC then explained the Land Registry process, what was involved and why the Company had to respond in the way it did. He also highlighted a few examples that the Directors had to contend with during the last twelve months, including the threat of an injunction and the threat of a complaint to the Charities Commission.

**b. Maintenance Report.** Liz Thomas (Director) spoke about our on-going maintenance works. Last year included a very wet spell but as ever, although the ground was saturated, there was no flooding in the Field. However water poured in from Paddock Lane and from the bottom of Bradford Road. We regularly ask for all the feeder drains to be cleared but the drainage system in the area was overwhelmed. There is a solution to the Paddock Lane incursion but it involves ESCC clearing the brick gutters alongside the flint wall, that used to be visible but are now buried in tarmac. In the meantime we ask that everyone takes extra care when entering the main gates when it is wet. When funds allow, we hope to resurface the entrance path to make it less slippery. At least the hazels are doing their intended job of consolidating the entrance bank which no longer develops erosion channels when it pours.

The planting on the Bradford Road access bank is doing well in parts although some of the beech plants were strimmed by mistake. If any one has any seedling beeches in their gardens that they don't need, please get in touch because it needs reinforcing. The hazels and hawthorns have fared better although a couple were strimmed out and will be replaced. The primroses have fared much better and we hope to increase them on both the main entrance and on the new entrance bank.

We have been delighted to have made a successful application to receive a grant from Veolia to replace the eastern fencing. The new fence will hopefully see an end to the breaking through of the rescue horses when they return.

As last year, the deterioration of the wooden fencing and railings erected in 2004 continues and we have had to buy in more rails, posts and palings as they fail. In the Copse, the sturdy new bird boxes made by the 'Monday Group' proved as attractive to blue tits as we anticipated. We did not anticipate that several would be attacked and knocked to the ground whether by human or squirrel action. This resulted in the loss of one nest of blue tit eggs last summer. At least we know that the boxes are squirrel and magpie proof because the eggs were intact, if abandoned.

This year you will have noticed that the tennis court margins are being cleared. When funds allow we shall be looking at some form of summer netting system so that they can be used for tennis. In the meantime, the croquet players and informal tennis players should find it easier to retrieve balls.

As ever, thank you so very much to the devoted few who come on the first Sunday of the month and work tirelessly litter picking; cutting back brambles; pruning, repairing fences, raking up leaves, sweeping paths, bringing in wood chips for the paths and painting, all for coffee and cake and our gratitude!

**c. Booking Secretary's Report.** Sheila Kent (Booking Secretary) reported that the field took 19 bookings overall with a total of £1340 generated from this activity. It was an exceptional year for bookings, well up on the £630 of the previous year.

**d. Website.** Stone Adams reported that the website continued to be updated with relevant information such as field bookings, meeting minutes and other important artefacts. The website hosting was recently extended for another five years.

#### **Northern Boundary Further Discussion:**

Once the Directors had presented their reports, some further general points were raised regarding the Northern Boundary dispute which were covered by CS and PC. PC also mentioned that each party's solicitors had recently met and that the Directors had only just received a report from their solicitor which they still had to study. PC confirmed that the Company had legal expenses insurance in place and that he had recently received confirmation in principle (subject to certain conditions being satisfied) that the Land Tribunal costs would be picked up if matters came to that.

### **7. ACCEPTANCE OF THE ANNUAL REPORT**

Acceptance of the Annual Report was proposed by Chris Slack, seconded by Marjam Kelly and was duly accepted.

### **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

### **THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WAS FORMALLY CLOSED.**

To finish our meeting, SK read out a newspaper article which noted the research being done on the availability of green open spaces and the positive contribution they made to people's mental and physical well-being irrespective of their backgrounds.