

Minutes of the 39th Annual General Meeting of Linlithgow Union Canal Society held in the Canal Basin Tea Room on 6th December 2018 @ 7.30pm

A list of all members present is shown on Appendix "A" (available on request)

Introductions

The interim Chairman Stuart Rennie introduced himself and Mike Smith (committee member), David Shirres (Treasurer) and Lynne Nelson (committee member)

**Item
No.**

Item

1

Apologies

A list of all apologies received from members was read out by LN. It is shown in Appendix "B" (available on request). It was proposed that a short time was allowed at the end of each item for comment or Q & A.

The Annual report has been distributed to all members and the Convenors reports are included in the Report

2

Chairman's Welcome and Statement

The Chairman referred to the Annual Report and in particular the concept introduced back in June regarding the formation of Sub-Groups with a view to reducing the burden of management for a few people, and sharing the responsibility and working knowledge of what they are doing for the Society. The society has suffered as many roles are being undertaken by a single person, and when that person bows out, for whatever reason, then there is a huge management hole to fill. The bottom line is the Society needs more hands on volunteers.

In addition, there are vacancies for a number of convenors due to existing members standing down.

In the Annual Report statement, there is mention of the relationship with Scottish Canals and the need to build a trusting and working relationship with them. It is a real possibility that volunteer societies like ourselves will need to become much more involved in the future management of the canal network. We have been building up a relationship with the new CEO for Scottish canals – Catherine Topley but there is currently doubt whether she will now take up that position.

One new group that has been set up is the Strategic Development Group who will be able to give time and consideration to some of the larger issues affecting the Society. They have already had a couple of meetings, and will be mentioned later on in tonight's agenda.

Comments from the floor

Stuart Mackie thanked SR for stepping into a stressful situation as Interim chairman and that everyone realises how much work has been on him this year which he has coped with exceptionally well.

Andy Davenport asked if we knew why Catherine Topley may not be taking up the COE position. Answer is it is thought to be Admin issues but we are not clear

3 **Adoption of previous minutes**

The chairman asked if there was any correction to the previous year's minutes. There were two questions

John Aitken

Q- the Gas supply was originally there in Canal house. Why can't it be used

A – Scottish Gas advised they can't use the existing household pipe as we are a commercial property

Norman Foulter

Q - is there not gas in Mel Gray Centre that could be used

A – this would mean digging up our new driveway which no one wants to happen.

Chairman advised that decision was taken to progress with an oil fired boiler

Minutes were Proposed as accepted by Peter Nixon and seconded by Danny Callaghan.

A copy of the approved minutes will be posted onto the member's web site.

4 **Matters arising from previous minutes**

This will be covered though the other items

5 **Report of the management committee**

It is important to acknowledge the role of various convenors in the Society and the Annual Report covers the enormous amount of work done by many to keep the Society functioning. Many of these Convenor Roles are becoming vacant with immediate effect, and it is important that these functions are filled from within the current membership. The Chairman would like to take this opportunity however to thank those who have undertaken the convenor roles during 2018.

Below is an update for the AGM on a number of matters:

Boats

Victoria (Stuart Mackie) – needs a major upgrade, including replacing the engine with a hybrid power unit. The final round of Leader grant funding ends in 2020, and it was suggested by Leader that we may wish to apply for funds for any project we were considering. Our Strategic Development Group has prepared an expression of Interest application to apply for funds for the Victoria Refurbishment Project. This was submitted on 5th November. We have been informed that our Expression of Interest has been approved and we can now go forward to submitting a full application. This does not mean that funding is guaranteed, but is encouraging that we are approved to go to the next stage.

St Michael (Mike Smith) – The final Passenger Safety Certificate inspection is scheduled for 14th December, and we are fairly confident that St Michael will be operational in the very near future. There is a programme to commence crew and driver training early in the New Year so that she can be in service for the opening of the new season.

Leamington (Ian Walker) – verbal approval has been received from Scottish Canals regarding the proposed spend. An estimate of the total project to fit a reconditioned engine and all necessary associated work has been compiled. It should be emphasised that this work will be totally funded by Scottish Canals, and will be carried out at no cost to LUCS. This work should be carried out early next year, with Ian Walker Project Managing this task. LUCS engineering volunteers will carry out the work, so if any members wish to get involved in this “engineering” project, their assistance would be most welcome.

Colin G – More maintenance work on the canal will be undertaken using Colin G. One of the stumbling blocks in the past has been the question of “insurance” for Scottish Canal’s volunteers working on our boat. Scottish Canals have confirmed that their Insurance will cover their volunteers, and Colin G will only be driven and crewed by LUCS members. Scottish Canals are going to furnish the boat with the necessary maintenance tools, together with life jackets etc. A work schedule will be agreed with Scottish Canals.

Andy Davenport questioned the insurance coverage as SC and SW are separate entities. The chairman confirmed that we have been assured by SC that their insurance covers the volunteers but Andy can raise this at the next SC meeting if he needs clarification.

Norman Foulter questioned whether we should keep asking Leader for money. Response was that they are actively encouraging us to apply which is positive.

IT Group (John Aitken)

The IT Group has been very busy. High on the agenda has been the improvement of Wi-Fi facilities throughout the basin. Main advantages will be that we will be able to offer credit card payments in the tea room and museum. This should be in operation by the start of the 2019 season and there should be credit card payment facilities at the ticket desk in Santa’s Grotto.

There will also be an upgrade of computer software to Office 365 which will allow better storage and sharing of all documents, and a much improved email system for all the convenors.

A new security camera system will be installed and improved Audio Visual equipment will be available in the museum.

There are numerous other items on the IT Group's agenda and these will be prioritised for implementation.

Danny Callaghan asked if there was an intention to transfer the museum CDs onto a memory stick. John Aitken advised that he plans to do this as part of the IT programme. Also archives and external talks will be maintained for the museum

Driver Training Programme

One of the most active new groups has been the driver training programme, with 12 new potential drivers in the programme. There is also a new BML driver with Ian Walker passing his BML inspection just last week. Ian was congratulated on this achievement.

Other Matters

There are numerous other aspects of the Committee report covered in the Annual Report, but one recurring theme is the need for more convenors. The recent initiative brought forward a number of new volunteers, but the society is still lacking members to take the lead on many aspects. The new group structure should help against any one person being solely responsible, so hopefully this sharing of duties concept will encourage more members to take the lead in some of these positions. The chairman emphasised how much this is needed.

David Roy asked about the fact that drivers numbers were not increasing due to drivers dropping off. There was discussion and it was agreed that this can happen for many reasons but there is recognition that part of the drain is due to the strain of the commitment needed. It tends to be the same people and this year we need to look more to spreading the workload.

John Aitken made the point that bureaucracy around driving has increased and this has an effect. Alan Davenport recognised that some find it hard to find time to cover the commitment needed for the licence i.e. so many hours/trips in a time period.

6 Accounts for the year to 30th September 2018.

David Shirres referred the meeting to the Trustees report and unaudited accounts. This contains all the figures but should be noted that they are in accounting terms and some money is accounted for in different accounting years. This is apparent in how the costs for St Michael are shown. The main figures are contained in the report in the Annual Report and this gives a clearer picture of income, expenditure and how much money we currently hold. Main thing is that the Strategy group make sure we spend our money on the right things.

Norman fouler asked if we have 50k in account are we going to spend it. Response from Treasurer was that after a large expenditure last year, it would make sense to build up our reserve and this should be taken into account if considering any large purchases.

The Chairman made mention of St Magdalenes and advised that this year the focus was on getting St Michael ready and that in 2019 we will consider all available options for St magdalenes

Alistair Mackie - commented that he realised how many transactions the Treasurer has had to deal with this year and thanked David for his hard work and commitment

David Roy – asked if it had been considered that life members they don't pay every year and this means that we get limited membership money from them

It was recognised that the amount of money we get from fees is a very small part of the overall income for the society so to raise them would not have any significant effect.

Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by John Aitken and seconded by Gordon Beatham.

7 & 8 Independent Examiner Report

The Treasurer proposed that the Independent Examiner be appointed for a further 12 months. This was approved by the meeting. Proposer Danny Callaghan, seconded by Chris Hunt

9 **Appointment of Solicitors**

The Treasurer proposed that the Solicitor be asked to continue for a further 12 months. This was approved by the meeting. Proposer Ian S, seconded by Peter Nixon

10 **Election of Officers and Members of the Committee of Management for 2019**

So far, there have been very few nominations for committee positions. We can have up to 13 members on the committee - 4 of which are the Officers (Chairman / Vice Chair / Treasurer & Committee Secretary). This potentially leaves 9 other "ordinary" positions.

While the management committee has a role to play, much of the day to day organisation is done by the various convenors. There is an ever growing number of vacant roles to fill. Currently, we do not have a Booking Secretary, Allocation Secretary, Tea Room Convenor or Gardening Convenor. We don't have anybody to organise the Fun Day, nor do we have a Cardboard Boat Race convenor. There is also a need for a Social Convenor to take on the organisation of the Deacons Night, and Marches.

Nominations for the committee were discussed

Chairman - there are 2 nominations for Chairman, these are both for Stuart Rennie. There were no other nominations from the floor for the position of Chairman.

Stuart Rennie advised that he is only willing to continue in this position if sufficient support is forthcoming. So he will continue as chair until early in the New Year, but unless there is a sizable committee, and the convenor roles are filled, he is not willing to continue indefinitely.

On that basis, and as there are no other nominations, can I ask for a proposer and seconder for Stuart Rennie as Chairman.

Vice Chair ~ We have one nomination for Mike Smith ~ nominated by Ronnie Reis

Do we have any other nominations from the floor for the position of Vice Chairman?

On that basis, can I ask for a proposer and seconder for Mike Smith as Vice Chairman.

Treasurer ~ Traditionally, the treasurer also takes on the role of Company Secretary.

We have one nomination for David Shirres ~ nominated by Norman Foulner

Do we have any other nominations from the floor for the position of Treasurer?

On that basis, can I ask for a proposer and seconder for David Shirres as Treasurer.

Minute Secretary ~ We have one nomination for Douglas Robertson ~ nominated by Norman Foulner

Do we have any other nominations from the floor for the position of Minute Secretary?

On that basis, can I ask for a proposer and seconder for Douglas Robertson as Minute Secretary.

Ordinary Members ~ We have nominations for Ronnie Reis (Nominated by Norman Foulner) & Lynne Nelson has indicated that she would be willing to sit on the committee.

Do we have any other nominations from the floor for the position of Ordinary Committee Members

On that basis, can I ask for a proposer and seconder for Ronnie Reis

Can I ask for a proposer and seconder for Lynne Nelson.

So that concludes the election of the committee. Thank you everyone who has stepped forward. But as I have stated as strongly as I can, we all have a vitally important task to attract more committee members, and the all-important convenor roles.

Item 11 ~ Proposals for the coming year

Basically I would suggest it will be more of the same ~ there really is lots to do keeping the basin and premises in order. To list the main objectives however they are probably ...

- Finally getting St Michael into service
- Renewing the engine in Leamington
- If we get funding ~ getting the Victoria Refurbishment programme underway.

But most of all, widen the scope of the activity & involvement for all members. There is much more to the Society than the Wednesday & Saturday morning groups. Let's get more folks involved in enjoying our canal and everything the Society has to offer. Let's have fun.

As one prominent member said to me recently ~ "If it ceases to be fun, it will cease to be ~ full stop.

Item 12 ~ Fixing of Subscriptions

While this has not been discussed at Committee, I would propose that we leave the current subscription level at their current rates. Does anyone have any objection to this, or other proposal

Can I have a proposer and seconder for retaining current subscription fees.

Item 13 ~ Any other relevant business