

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of The Broomfield House Trust

Held over the internet via Zoom on January 13th, 2021, starting 6pm

(This meeting had been postponed from 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic)

Present: Zahir Anwar, Don Arthur, Laura Davenport, Ivor Evans (Secretary, T), Kim Lumley (T), David March (Deputy Chair, and Treasurer, T), Nick Peacey, Ron Tabor, Bill Yates (T), Colin Younger (Chairman, T), Sue Younger

Note: current trustees are indicated by (T).

AGM Formal Business

Apologies for Absence: Ann Bishop-Laggett, Keith Maxwell

Welcome: The Chair welcomed newcomer Nick Peacey to the meeting: Nick has recently moved into the area, having had a very active role in the restoration of Lauderdale House in Highgate.

Minutes of the AGM 3rd September 2019 – The Minutes had previously been circulated to all participants, and were confirmed.

Chairman’s Report for 2019 – to date: The report had previously been circulated to all participants. Colin Younger (CY) summarised his report, section by section, highlighting some key elements.

During an Enfield Heritage meeting in autumn 2019 (in Dugdale House), Trustees received the strong impression that the Council saw The Regeneration Practice’s (TRP) scheme for a “shell” restoration of the House as workable. However, at a meeting held on October 29th with Mark Bradbury (Director of Property and Economy) and Cllr Claire Stewart (Chair of The BH Partnership Board), the Trustees were surprised to be told TRP’s scheme was too expensive and demolition/memorialisation was the only credible option: no detailed costings were presented.

The Trust therefore made an FoI request for all relevant documents (summarised in the Chairman’s report). Enfield largely overrode TRP’s costings, commissioning their own. In the Trust’s view this was a one-sided exercise undermining the project’s original viability assessment. Examples of these are what seems to Trustees to be over liberal and indiscriminate use of a “Priced Risk Register” and insertion of a massive sum for park landscaping. This is not essential for the initial restoration and surely suitable for a later funding bid. As would be the case with bids for restoration of the House interior, bids for landscaping would be more convincing against the evidence of a completed exterior.

Informal contacts with Historic England suggested that more information had been released to the Trust under FOI than they had seen, and that there had been no recent contact from the Council. Ron Tabor commented on how favourably he had been impressed by the restored Gunnersbury Park on a recent visit; this project had been one which had been drawn to our attention some time ago as an example of the gradual way buildings and landscape restoration had been dealt with.

Nick Peacey asked if the Trust had done its own costings, Colin replying that we had no funds for that and relied on figures generated by the Council. David March pointed out that Historic England have in-house specialists capable of undertaking costings.

CY also reported that we'd heard nothing more from the eminent architect Maxwell Hutchinson, who'd expressed interest in the House and visited the park with Trustees – but Mr Hutchinson had said he thought it highly unlikely that the Council would find it easy to get permission to demolish the House.

CY reiterated how Historic England see the House as the centrepiece of the (also listed) historic, baroque park landscape. They are unlikely to support demolition without evidence of much more determined and coherent efforts from the Council to restore it. Certainly, HE would not be likely to agree to a stable yard development that did not enable restoration. Thus, the council is quite boxed-in, with ongoing scaffolding, hoarding and security costs for both House and stableyard and no obvious strategy to escape from it. The meeting was also reminded that HE had been attracted by the idea of the local wild-swimming group (who hope to bring swimming back to the bottom lake) having facilities in a restored/redeveloped House.

Ron Tabor reminded the meeting that the failure to rebuild the House after the first fire may in large part have been caused by the Council having under-insured the building. Sadly, this fact cannot be changed.

The Chairman's report was accepted.

Treasurer's Report for the last financial year and to date – David March (Treasurer) prepared two reports, which were circulated before the meeting. The closing balance for the year to 31st January 2019 was £795.07, and for the year ending on the 31st January 2021 is due to be £652.40 (with no further transactions anticipated before that date).

Significant cash flows occurred in 2020 in connection with the repairs to the “shell” memorial commemorating the purchase of the Park and House for public use: a £6000 grant from the Heritage of London Trust (thanks to Colin Younger for securing this) with £800 donations from the Enfield Society and FoBP; the total for the repairs was £7,748.15. The Trust partly took this on since its charitable status allowed it to raise funds from other charities.

David made the point that we have on-going costs for posting on and maintaining our website, though these are modest, and raised the issue of fundraising: the meeting did not express views on this issue since there was no specific current target needing funding. CY

noted that it was possible to list the Trust under the Amazon Smile fundraising scheme. Under this, purchases through Amazon generate small sums which trickle into our accounts at no cost to the purchaser.

The Treasurer's report was accepted by the meeting.

Appointment of trustees to serve for 2021-next AGM – The trustees present at the meeting, Ivor Evans, Kim Lumley, David March, Bill Yates and Colin Younger, all agreed to stand again, with the meeting's approval.

The Trust would like to express its thanks to the Rev Dr John Cullen for his helpful and enthusiastic service to the Trust and its activities over the last several years: John has decided to resign as a Trustee, but we hope he will remain engaged as a supporter of the Trust, and we wish him well in his new Beaumont Southgate home (with its own Lanscroom mural!).

Appointment of officers to serve for 2021-next AGM – the following were duly proposed and seconded: Colin Younger (Chairman); Ivor Evans (Secretary); David March (Treasurer and Deputy Chairman).

Other Business

Discussions related to the Chair's report

Nick Peacey said that from his long (and ultimately successful!) experience regarding the restoration of Lauderdale House, the crucial factor was political support in the Council: having councillors committed to the project's success was vital.

Currently, Broomfield House has no champion in a powerful or influential position in the council. CY suggested that the Trust formally writes again to Claire Stewart and Mark Bradbury to ask when the Partnership Board will next be convened. Contacting Bambos Charalambous (formerly Chair of the PB, but currently an Enfield MP) was suggested, but it was thought he was unlikely to want to "interfere" in Council policy making. David suggested writing to Ian Davis, the Council's Chief Executive to ask about the Council's next steps, and this was agreed as an action by the meeting.

Date and venue of next meeting

It was suggested that an open meeting be held at some time in July this year – when a meeting in person may be possible, and by which time there may be more definite information about the House's future. The date and venue will be circulated in advance.