

Present:

Trustees: Judie Hodsdon (JH), Fiona Clarke (FC), Paul Benfield (PB), Gloria Jones (GJ), Chris Archibald (CA), Andy Hopkins (AH), Philippa Howell (PH), Janina Kay (JK), David Richards (DR), Henry Williams (HW)

Non-voting representatives: Dennis Parsons (DP), John Payne (JP)

Pump Room Action Group (PRAG) representatives (for the first part of the meeting): Hilary Simpson (HS), David Collins (DC)

Observing: Robert Hyatt-Williams

Minutes: Jocelyn Potter

1 Welcome and self-introductions HS and DC, representing PRAG, and a potential new trustee, Robert Hyatt-Williams, were welcomed to the meeting.

2 Apologies Sandy Marshall

3 Minutes of the last meeting, 21 May 2019 These were accepted as a true record.

4 Matters arising (See below.)

5 PRAG, issues and follow-up A report was circulated before the meeting.

HS reported as follows: PRAG was set up 18 months ago because no group had a specific remit to oversee the Pump Room and it wasn't often open to the public. The group meets regularly, and also meets members of The Cheltenham Trust (TCT). They have also recently met a trustee and manager of the Lido; lessons can be learnt from the revival of that failing enterprise. They have had a meeting with the new chief executive of TCT, Laurie Bell (LB), recruited to put the Trust on a firmer financial footing.

PRAG believe that commercial uses can co-exist with the Pump Room's heritage role, but want the building to be a tourist destination and social space for Cheltenham residents too. They have set up a volunteer guide programme, with some success. 'Mystery shopping' visits a year ago led to a visitor experience report indicating that visits weren't a very positive experience, so they are now trying to ensure that the report's recommendations are implemented, but without much success so far.

The 'mystery shopping' exercise will now be repeated; trustees took questionnaires, to be returned to PRAG after visits, and were also encouraged to take photographs and interview members of the public during their visits. A follow-up report will be used to put more pressure on TCT. PRAG are also developing a longer-term vision for the building (promoting the water and pump workings, showcasing Cheltenham and Cotswold products etc): see the YouTube video on the FoP website.

DR asked for more detail of future bookings, and was told that the Pump Room is booked for about 250 days a year.

DC pointed out that setting-up before and clearing-up after events can take hours and even an extra day, while the building remains closed to visitors. Many people try unsuccessfully to visit, and other towns make much better use of lesser resources; it is important to give TCT a vision and build momentum for action quickly. Meanwhile, TCT's enquiry into the

Pump Room seems to have stopped. JH said that it is a question of priorities: money will need to be spent, and is first needed for the Town Hall and the Wilson.

AH asked if the idea is to present a vision and business plan to TCT, which would be more useful than begging TCT for improvements. DC agreed that a plan will be needed, but first sponsorship (eg from local businesses) is needed for work that must be done, and caterers sought. It is also important to find out if TCT itself has a new vision.

JP commended PRAG on their essential work, but feels that TCT's interest is more in Leisure at Cheltenham and the Prince of Wales Stadium (in addition to a commitment to the Pump Room). DP disagreed. He reported on a meeting the previous day between TCT and Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) at which the focus was on developing a five-year plan for the commercial side of all venues; there would be another meeting the next day.

JH said that the Pump Room is being described as an events venue, and that combining income-generating events with visitor access will always be an issue. She thanked PRAG for raising awareness of issues and raising the profile of FoP, while making (slow) progress towards its aims. She asked whether visitors can find out about access before going there; HS said that they can in theory, but in practice information on the website is often out of date and inaccurate.

CA said that the attitude of staff towards visitors and volunteers is improving now that there is a manager at the Pump Room. Staff are enthusiastic about LB, who has actually visited the building (neglected by previous management). However, the current number of volunteers (4-5) is not enough, given that on one Bank Holiday day there were 80 visitors. Setting-up and clearing-up for commercial events shouldn't prevent visitor access. He also reported that volunteers are asking for a simple information sheet to hand out, and a brochure with a small amount of text and glossy photographs. FC agreed that Steven Blake's booklet is inappropriate – but it is apparently being reprinted.

PB asked what CBC is doing to promote the Pump Room, which it owns, and whether it is being pressured by TCT. The building should be open at particular times on particular days every week. DP responded that LB wants more cooperation between CBC and TCT, and that the relationship is much better.

JH said that LB used to work for a council, so understands their workings. She thanked HS and DC for their presentation.

6 Trustees and roles JH thanked trustees for their comments on the previously circulated form. Only FC will be standing down, leaving the number of trustees two below the maximum permitted. Robert Hyatt-Williams is considering joining, and other interested people should make contact.

The allocation of specific responsibilities is more problematic. FC will continue managing the website and Facebook page temporarily, but the secretary's position needs to be filled. SM has volunteered to do the administration, leaving the communications role (excluding the newsletter). JH said that the website could be managed by a non-trustee. PB asked if CBC could help with it, but AH pointed out that WordPress is intended for amateur users.

AH asked who would provide the information for the website and Facebook; as for the newsletter, he said, it should arrive from other trustees without the need for prompting. CA suggested drawing up a list of regular events, news items etc (from past newsletters) and allocating responsibility for copy to different trustees. Updates on events in Cheltenham's parks are, he said, occasional and can't be relied on. DP will request a monthly list of these –

and, at JK's suggestion, an online diary that includes events in the parks and in the Pump Room. AH volunteered to manage the Facebook page as well as the newsletter. There was some discussion about emailing the newsletter rather than delivering it by hand, since both PB and AH felt that the current system discriminates in favour of an older membership. but GJ pointed out that FoP only held email addresses for about two-thirds of members. JH suggested that this should be reviewed in a few years' time. FC informed the meeting that 650 people follow the group on Facebook.

JK will be taking over the membership role from GJ, although GJ will remain a trustee. JH suggested that the number of trustee meetings be reduced to five – four regular meetings and a fifth for longer review discussions – which would make email communication between meetings more important. This was agreed. She thanked AH for his work on the newsletter.

PB asked about the amount of work required to take over the bird-feeder from FC, which isn't clear from the Facebook appeal for a volunteer. FC will clarify the role, which would be ideal for a dog-walker who needs to be in the park regularly anyway. JK suggested that it could be a job-share, with one person in charge.

Action: DP, FC

7 Forthcoming events

7.1 Curry Corner JH and JK will visit the restaurant to see if they wish to support FoP.

Action: JH, JK

7.2 Drop ins There were 12 people at the last gathering. The next one will be on 25 July.

7.3 FoP volunteers barbecue HW had only received seven replies and FC three, which she would forward to HW. The invitation will be sent out again, but the event may need to be cancelled.

Action: FC, HW

7.4 Cheltenham Horticultural Society Summer Show, 18 August JH, HW and GJ will represent FoP there, and will take a table with them since table space is limited.

Action: JH, HW, GJ

7.5 Heritage Open Days, 13-22 September JH and CA will be talking about the historic landscape.

Action: JH, CA

7.6 North Rotary Club talk, 31 October JH will be giving this talk.

Action: JH

8 Finance report PB referred to the report that he circulated before the meeting. Finances are healthy.

9 Park masterplan CA said that he had nothing to report. AH asked if there would be an update for the September newsletter; CA thought not.

10 Any other business

10.1 Newsletter AH will email trustees about the deadline for the next issue, asking for contributions. FC said that a box on the front page should give official notice of the AGM; JH thought that a reminder email should be sent later. An enrolment form will be an insert, with JK's name and address on it. GS will provide AH with copy about JK taking over her role.

Action: AH, GS

10.2 Car park HW asked when FoP would know whether they can collect funds in November. DP will check this – he suggested that the new parking regime might be suspended for both November and March – and CA will ask whether the surface inside the gate is going to be improved by CBC.

Action: DP, CA

11 Date of next meeting, Tuesday 3 September 2019 at 6.15 pm

The meeting ended at 7.50 pm.