

River Thames Boat Project

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 9 November 2020 by Zoom

Jon Chapman (Chair) welcomed all those present via the video conference link. A special welcome to Richard Kornicki, Representative Deputy Lieutenant for the London Borough of Ealing, who was acting as assessor for RTPB's nomination for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

Minutes of the AGM held 4 November 2019. The minutes were agreed; there were no matters arising that were not covered on the current Agenda.

Review of 2019-2020: Jon Chapman reminded those present that 2019-2020 had been a fantastic year for the Charity, one in which we had celebrated its 30th anniversary. We had run 112 Accessing the Thames cruises providing an opportunity for almost 1,200 clients and their carers to enjoy time on the River. This was helped by our second boat, Thames Discoverer, coming into full service. Our outreach to schools and young people had also increased with 69 education bookings for just over 2,100 young learners.

Financial Report: Stephen West presented the Financial Report for 2019-2020. Stephen reported that the Charity had incurred a loss of £23,913 in the year largely because necessary repairs to Thames Venturer whilst in dry dock had cost £35,000. Part of this cost had been offset by an unrestricted operating surplus of £9,026. Grant income had been stable and fees/charges and fundraising income had increased. Stephen considered that, because of good management, we had been able to increase the access to the Thames that we provided. He thanked Pippa for her work on managing the accounts throughout the year. Looking forward, the Charity was in a secure financial position to withstand Covid-19 and return to full operation as soon as it was able. The current forecast loss for 2020-21 was £27,000; the pre-Covid figure was £14,000. There were no questions for Stephen and the Report was accepted unanimously.

Election of Directors: Bob Darke and Stephen West had served their three year period and both were prepared to stand for re-election. Both had been duly nominated and seconded. There were no other nominations. Bob Darke and Stephen West were elected unanimously to be Directors and Trustees of River Thames Boat Project.

John Frye presented a short photo montage of activities from 2019-2020.

Update on 2020-2021: Jon Chapman reminded those present that we had said goodbye to some important people this year. Firstly, Peter Oldham, our Operations Manager, who had left the Charity after 13 years for a role with the National Trust on Brownsea Island. His knowledge of the Charity, his experience and enthusiasm will be greatly missed. Secondly, the death of Sir Peter Harrop who had been part of

the Charity since its inception. He had been a Trustee for 18 years, part of the time as Chairman, and then became our Honorary President. Jon paid tribute to Sir Peter; he was a font of information and experience and someone you could always turn to for sensible advice. He would be sadly missed. And finally, Sophie Owsianka who had made an impact on our educational delivery in the short time she had been with the Charity. We will miss her but wish her every success in her new career. Jon introduced Gunnar Christensen as the 'new' member of the staff team looking after the boats. Gunnar was very experienced in boat management and the Charity had been lucky to secure his services.

Gunnar reported that he had moved the boats when necessary and also been involved in volunteer training in September. Thames Venturer had had considerable work done while in dry dock last year but Thames Discoverer also needed some extra work to improve safety – extra ventilation had been fitted to the forward bilge [and gas struts fitted to aid lifting]. Handrails were planned for the roof; these had already been fitted to the front of the saloon and improved stowage for the anchor was planned. Gunnar had been meeting the volunteers gradually. He and Sophie had researched volunteer skipper training, looking at qualifications acceptable to the MCA and the assessment needed. MOB and fire systems' refresher training would be undertaken annually.

Sophie reported that, as the first lockdown came soon after she joined the Charity, she had made a video of the School on the River experiments with a work programme that people could use at home and had concentrated on bringing the education programmes up to date. In September, one school wanted to go ahead with its booking for 4 year 5 groups so the programme offered had been revised to meet the Government guidelines with all sessions taking place above deck or off the boat. We also hosted a Woodcraft Folk group. Refresher training for a group of crew took place in October; other groups may have virtual training. She thanked volunteers for their support and enthusiasm.

Kate commented that the assumption had been that after the lockdown ended we might start something like normal operations in July. Sadly that didn't happen as restrictions continued. Thames Discoverer was able to take part in the River Blessing ceremony with RNLI volunteers on board. There had been a couple of cruises in October before the second lockdown. The restrictions had affected our fund raising plans – we had six water stations planned to support local running events – all postponed or cancelled. These may start again in February/March 2021. If the current lockdown restrictions ease we might be able to do a few small scale fund raising events before the end of the year. Regular grant funders had continued to support the Charity for which we were very grateful. Kate stressed the importance of the Friends, providing support and a regular income stream; please encourage others to join. She had also been keeping everyone up to date with regular mailings and social media posts. During furlough Kate had undertaken phone befriending, linked to one of our client groups, RUILS.

Pippa, like other staff members, had been furloughed for much of the summer, returning in mid-August after a short break in June for a handover with Peter Oldham. During her furlough period Pippa joined a sewing group making PPE, which was provided free of charge to local hospitals and care homes. This service was offered to RTBP's client groups, many of whom took up the offer. Pippa had completed the annual accounts and maintained the monthly management accounts. The staff kept in touch on daily Team meetings and communicated with volunteers via weekly Zoom meetings, email updates and more frequent than normal newsletters. Fee income had been badly affected by the lockdown as we were unable to offer any trips and many of the clients with elderly or vulnerable members were not willing to book outings. We had received some generous donations in memory of Sir Peter Harrop and Rob Martin, a volunteer who had died. Pippa had run crew training in October with Sophie.

John Frye presented a short montage of photos from 2020.

Jon Chapman thanked all the staff for their efforts during this very difficult period. He added that there had been slow progress on the lease for Canbury Wharf. E.ON the successor owner of the Wharf was prepared to transfer the land to RB Kingston. The Kingston lawyers were being rather slow dealing with the necessary documentation. RBK intended to give RTBP a long lease on the Wharf once the transfer was completed. There was a Section 106 planning order on the Wharf meaning that RBK needed to advertise any changes planned. Once that was done, RTBP should be able to go ahead with improvements to the Wharf.

Jon considered the Charity was well set for the post-Covid period. We needed to explore what the 'new' normal would be – looking at new areas, possibly new client groups. We already had provisional bookings for educational activities; schools were keen to come back.

Any other business: Peter Finch asked what the current position was on the Dock. Jon confirmed the Dock was under the control of the developers; we had had no recent contact with them. Their last planning application appeal had been refused. The developers had not given RTBP a formal licence for mooring Thames Venturer as they should have done under the S106 order but he was confident RB Kingston would support us if any issues arose.

As there were no more questions, Jon thanked John Frye for managing the meeting and providing the photo montages and declared the meeting closed.

November 2020