

MELTON & OAKHAM WATERWAYS SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SATURDAY 4 NOVEMBER 2023

Minutes of the 26th Annual General Meeting held at 10.00am on Saturday 4 November 2023 at Sysonby Knoll Hotel, Melton Mowbray.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the AGM.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Rob Nash, Mo Murray.

2. Adoption of Minutes from 2022 AGM (5 November 2022)

The minutes of the previous year's AGM were adopted as a true record of the meeting and acceptance proposed by Linda Hulme and seconded by Mick Clowes.

3. Matters Arising from Chairman's Report and Accounts 2022

No matters arising.

4. Chairman's Report

Glynn Cartwright said he joined the committee in November 2022 and took on the role of membership secretary. Upon Mick Clowes standing down as Chairman, Glynn agreed to take on the chairman's role for a year. Glynn admitted he had no previous experience of society chairmanship or knowledge of waterways or boating in general.

However, there will be rowing boats for hire starting next season, launching from behind the park pavilion, previously purchased pontoons will be positioned there for public access.

Thanks to a generous member benefactor we now have a trip boat which is also being readied for use next year. We are looking to launch this from the canal section as the water levels are too low behind the pavilion. Negotiations are taking place with Melton Borough Council to effect this, if this fails an option could exist to launch them from Eye Kettleby Lock.

The six local walks along the Melton to Syston navigation in book form is selling well, with many local outlets. Geof Malone has updated a second book (our society owns the copyright) previously issued by the Railway and Canal Historical Society, which will be available for purchase soon. Copies are already available from the Railway and Canal Society's website.

The Society is short of money and applications for grants from Melton Borough Council has been initiated by committee member Eric Brown. The local authority appear supportive and a request for £20,000 has been submitted to enable completion of public access to our boats and contractor dredging of the waterway. Recently council leaders were invited to take a trip around the Melton ring to investigate the water assets. Councillor Sharon Butcher, the councils Tourist officer, Sheila Core from Melton BID and Pranali Parek, officer in charge of Melton regeneration, seemed to be keen to reopen stretches of the navigation and also support the provision of a post of Project Manager to open up the former towpaths.

Mick Clowes said that Melton Borough Council had not been that supportive in the past.

Mike Patterson, Footpath Ranger Coordinator (originally recruited by former committee member Paul Dadford), said that if the towpaths were used more, a better understanding of the benefits of the outdoors and waterways would develop.

The availability of the MM Navigation book has given a greater impetus to walk the local towpaths and footpaths.

Footpath Ranger Rod Axon had recently walked from Ratcliffe to the Three Way Bridge at Syston, parts of the path had become dangerous and he had contacted the Leicestershire County Council who had addressed some of the problems he had outlined.

There may be opportunities to obtain training for volunteers in the restoring of tow and footpaths from Leicestershire County Council.

Eric Brown mentioned a contact he had at County Hall, Mr Ozzy O'Shea JP CC, who had been helpful in the past. Mike Patterson said that the Footpath Rangers had completed the stickering of the footpath way markers with the Melton Navigation stickers which tie the routes to the Navigation booklet.

Finally, he mentioned a guided walk organised by himself and Footpath Ranger Lorrie Forman in August. Ten people took part and further walks may be planned. Mike had said that in the Frisby area one landowner has planted 29,500 saplings to create a future forest with public walkways in and around the area near the waterway.

Cllr Sharon Butcher said that Brian Fare was doing Heritage Walks around Melton for a fee. It was mentioned that a donation was asked for on our organised footpath walk.

Current members were encouraged to find new members from among friends and relatives.

Work parties on the first and third Sundays of the month, and midweek Wednesday work parties are also to continue. Details of these would be put on Facebook.

Cllr Sharon Butcher has been very supportive behind the scenes pushing the positives of the waterways to Melton and the Society in its role of river/canal maintenance and its need for funding to continue this work to increase footfall to the town and increase the wellbeing of the wider community.

Cllr Butcher has had to declare an interest to the local council when Society Matters are discussed at Council. She has a contact with the Hub as she is also a Director. There could be potential helpers who are covered by their own insurance.

Mike Patterson said that the document shown by Mick Clowes from the IWA outlining the route/steps needed before a waterway can be reopened was particularly inspiring.

Eric Brown mentioned about an amount of money potentially being available from a central government Levelling Up fund. Three projects are currently being considered locally, one of which could involve funding for the Society.

Glynn introduced Diana Patterson as the new Treasurer.

5. Treasurer's Report and Presentation of 2022/23 Accounts

The accounts to the period end 31/08/23 were discussed, Mike Handford questioned the writing off of certain stock. Lorrie Forman said it had been difficult to get in touch with Mike Handford so the stock was written off.

Future end of year statements would now be to 31 March, with future AGMs being held in May rather than November.

There is still a feeling that Gift Aid is not available to non-tax payers-and it needs publicising that this is not the case, also with a change of Treasurer the bank statement will need to be redirected to Diana Patterson.

At the last committee meeting Rob Nash was asked to look into the cost of stickers to show increases in society membership fees. The price difference between stickers and a full reprint of the document was small so a reprint of 500 membership forms was agreed.

The membership fee will increase to £15 from £10 from the age 21. Membership fees for 18 to 21 will be £10. Additional member at the same address will be £10, Life membership will be £150 and joint Life membership will be £225.

In the new year there maybe incentives available to include a free Navigation book for all new members and vouchers for boat rides.

Glynn felt that the fees should be reviewed every two years.

The Society's postal address will continue to be Sysonby Knoll Hotel.

The Society has received a good condition second-hand treadmill which could be raffled or put up for auction. Cllr Butcher will look on eBay to see what a likely auction value might be.

6. Election of Committee Members

Diana Patterson will look at updating the Society's Facebook page.

Votes were taken on the Society's accounts and new members Diana Patterson as Treasurer and Cllr Sharon Butcher as Chairwoman. All were passed, Mick Clowes proposed the accounts, seconded by Mike Handford. Lorrie Forman proposed Diana Patterson as Treasurer, seconded by Mike Handford. Cllr Sharon Butcher was proposed as Chairwoman by Glynn Cartwright and seconded by Mike Handford and carried by a show of hands from the attending membership with an abstention from Mick Clowes and others.

7. AOB / Open Discussion

Cllr Butcher then took the Chair and thanked Glynn for his work over the last year. Cllr Butcher will promote MOWS in the community. Glynn said he would offer any help if required. Eric Brown said he will make every effort to get Facebook members to become full fee paying members.

There was a need to maintain MOWS and its future plans to the forefront in the Melton area. Geof Malone had recently completed an article on new history of the Melton Navigation for the Melton Times and Waterways World magazine, could it also be supplied to the Syston Town News and the Loughborough Echo, to stimulate a greater interest in the waterway.

In the future the local electoral districts are about to change, Melton will be joined with the Charnwood area which will encompass all of the navigation. The current Loughborough MP is a Mr Ed Argar and it was suggested we start to contact him now to make him aware of our future aspirations for the waterway.

Glynn asked if it was possible to get the workboat out of the water to bitumen the sides and bottom. We have suitable winches available to pull it out on the slipway near the scout hut.

Geof Malone brought up the idea of a more Melton orientated name for the trip boat. Lorrie Forman suggested 'Wreake Valley Wanderer'. This will be discussed at the next MOWS Committee meeting on 22 November 2023.

A bouquet was presented to Lorrie for her work as the Society's treasurer.

Cllr Sharon Butcher brought the meeting to a close.