

WIDCOMBE ASSOCIATION

Minutes of AGM held at Widcombe Junior School on Thursday 30th April 2009

1. There were over 60 members present. The Chairman, Richard Wales, welcomed them and gave apologies from the Mr & Mrs King, Mr & Mrs McConnel, Mrs Hawkes, Mr & Mrs Woodman, Sarah Webb and Peter Metcalfe.
2. The Chairman's report was brief as there was a full one in the newsletter. The Legorobotics team from Widcombe Junior School had left for the finals in Copenhagen. We sponsored them £100 and our name was on their t-shirts. They are the only English team in the final.
The WA and Greenway Lane RA held a public meeting on 22nd April on the Two Tunnels Project. There was a walk of the site first when it was realised there would be temporary gates at the entrance. Sustrans agreed to leave the gates at the end of the construction so they could be closed if there are any problems. They gave a good presentation and answered difficult questions fully and frankly. Our councillors, our beat manager and his inspector all attended.
3. The Treasurer gave his report. Marilyn Phillips had examined the accounts. Our reserves are £4000 and £1000 in the Abbey Cemetery Fund. We donated £1400 to Widcombe Rising last year. Jeremy Boss thanked members for paying their subs and being patient with the new DD system which has proved more difficult than anticipated to introduce. He asked members to pay the extra £2 if they had still paid by SO this year.
4. Richard Wales proposed adopting the accounts and was seconded by Don Lovell. The motion was carried unanimously.
5. Richard proposed Marilyn as Examiner for Accounts and Ro Emsley seconded. The vote was unanimous.
6. The reason for updating the Constitution is the litigious age we now live in. There is little change in principle. A time limit has been put upon the length of time in one position that officers can serve. The new constitution is on the website and hard copies were available from the secretary.
The motion that the revised constitution, initialled by the chairman, should be adopted by the WA, in substitution for and to the exclusion of the old one was proposed by Richard and seconded by Rupert. Several members abstained as they felt they had not had a chance to see it but the motion was passed nem. con.
7. The Chairman told members that we needed to recruit at least two more members to the committee, one of whom should be an assistant treasurer. Under the new constitution, Rupert Rhymes has reached the end of his service as vice chair but he can be reappointed until a successor is found. He was proposed by Richard Wales and seconded by Paddy Doyle. The re-election of Ro Emsley was proposed by Paddy and seconded by Don Lovell. Sue Dawson has been co-opted to the committee to look after streetscape and bus services. She was proposed by Julian Williams and seconded by Graham Cox. All committee members were voted in unanimously.

Sue takes over from Brenda Beeton. The chairman thanked Brenda for her work and presented her with a bouquet. He then introduced her husband, David, our speaker for the evening. David has been appointed as the new Chairman of the Bath World Heritage Site Steering Group. He and Brenda have lived in Lyncombe Hill for 40 years and joined the WA when it was founded. He was the youngest ever Chief Executive of Bath and went on to be secretary to the National Trust and then administered four royal palaces so he is well qualified for the role.

David explained that there are only two complete cities in the world are designated as World Heritage cities, Venice and Bath. This should be a source of great pride but it isn't. The designation carries no legal status and no money. The delegation last November from UNESCO was concerned about the impact of Western Riverside and the Dyson Building on our city and will report in June but our status is not in danger. Bath is a very challenging site for 6 main reasons.

- a) Lack of cash. A low spending Council doesn't spend on conservation. The parish council tax in Bath itself could be raised. We only pay £6.62 per resident compared with Norton Radstock's £87.55.
- b) The state of the local economy. We have two universities with world class young professionals but there are few opportunities for them to stay in Bath and work. We export rather than attract talent.
- c) Traffic is the biggest threat to our heritage. 24,000 people a day commute into Bath from new housing outside the city centre.
- d) Low priority is afforded by the Council to Heritage. Most Councillors live outside the city. Only one Cabinet member lives in Bath. Our World Heritage status is not mentioned in the 'Vision of Bath.' There is even talk of moving the Council Headquarters to Keynsham.
- e) Council Housing The areas outside the city such as Whiteway and Twerton are part of the World Heritage Site and the residents are restrained by this. They cannot put up a garden shed without permission. Why should they pay for Heritage?
- f) We have a great problem in developing modern building styles. Most people like the new Spa and Pulteney Weir but there is great controversy over the bus station, the Holburne, the Rugby Club and particularly Western Riverside.

What can we do? There are many letters in the Chronicle accusing our Council of being morons. This is not true. There are huge challenges –not enough money, no easy answers and a polarised citizenry. We need to raise pride in our city by doing something. 1 in 5 residents are members of a Residents' Association, the National Trust or other Heritage Association. The number of members of the N.T. in Bath is twice the national average. The Council needs to give this more attention.

David has four suggestions for action.

- 1) Setting up a charity to raise funds for conservation work with a contribution from the Council.
- 2) Volunteer working parties

- 3) Extend the National Trust's ownership of Bath Skyline. It already owns over 2 square miles. When they acquire land it is safe.
- 4) Start an annual Heritage Festival –national and international.

Richard thanked David for an excellent presentation and questions were taken from the floor.

There were wine and nibbles and much conversation after the formal part of the meeting.