

Carmarthen Civic Society-Executive Committee
Minutes of Meeting held on 7th November 2018
At Richmond Park Football Club, Priory Street, Carmarthen

Present: (in alphabetical order) Nigel Evans, Wendy Evans (Treasurer), Huw Iorwerth (Secretary), Jeremy John, Linda Jones (Chair), Iris Owen Julie Rees (Publicity), Brian Rowlands, Molly Thomas, Mary Thorley (vice-Chair), Trefor Thorpe, Lee Whatley.

Apologies: Peter Hughes-Griffiths, Jonathan Lewis, Janice Powers, Peter Rowland, Ralph Siggery

Personal: There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

1. Minutes:

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd October were approved.

2. Arising:

- **Joint Meeting with Friends of Carmarthenshire Museum:** Linda reported on a successful meeting at the museum on 20th October, when Ina Niedrgang had given a fascinating talk on connections between Wales and China. A brief report had been placed on the Society's Facebook page with a photograph of Mrs Niedrgang holding a dress owned by Gladys Aylward. Huw reminded members that it was the Society's turn to organise the joint meeting in 2019 and thought would soon need to be given to approaching a guest speaker.
- **Great British High Street Awards:** The judges had visited the town on 24th October. Their decision was awaited.

3. Correspondence:

There was no new correspondence to report.

4. Treasurer's report:

Wendy reported that the bank balance stood at £2,817.51. However, there were bills to pay including those for the two blue plaques and for the guests' meals at The Falcon; a more realistic reflection of the Society's assets would be £1,586.41. In reply to questions, Wendy confirmed that within that balance a sum of £190.17 was earmarked for gardening resources, while £300 had been received from St Twrog's Church, Llanddarog towards the cost of the plaque commemorating Alice Abadam. Each plaque cost £336. A bucket collection on Saturday had raised £51.75 towards Society funds.

5. Reports from sub-groups:

- **Green spaces:** Molly reported that there was little opportunity for active garden maintenance at this time of year. There was, however, concern about the leaves in the public car parks which were not being routinely swept, causing a hazard underfoot, particularly for the infirm. It was suggested that highlighting the problem with photos on Facebook might attract the interest of voluntary groups. However, before pursuing this course of action, **it was AGREED: enquiries be made with the County Council regarding their current policy for clearing fallen leaves in the public car parks.**
- **Town appearance and image:** Brian gave an account of his recent attendance at a meeting of the Chamber of Trade when The Leader of the County Council and councillors representing the town had reported on their achievements in developing and regenerating the town during the last three years. There followed a discussion on the difficulties facing the town centre in the light of worldwide trends and developments in the retail sector. Particular concern was expressed regarding the future of the landmark stores and whether smaller retailers in the cultural quarter would be able to hold their own. Some members emphasised their view that it was counterproductive to prevent traffic from accessing these areas.

- **Publicity, marketing:** Julie reported that the website was ready to go live once a new photo had been chosen for the Home page. The Facebook coverage of the Blue plaques celebrations on the previous Saturday had reached 1500 people.
- **Landmark buildings (including Planning):** Trefor reported on three key issues:

i) Former Police station / Bulwarks: There was no current information regarding progress with the planning application by Lidl to demolish the former police station and redevelop the site. Apart from the Society's own submission, a number of other statutory bodies had expressed their opposition to the plans, particularly as they related to the Bulwarks Ancient Monument;

ii) Penlan workhouse: the Appeal brought by Mr Jonathan Stephens against the Enforcement Order issued by the County Council was to be heard on Wednesday 14th November. Trefor hoped to be present as an observer, the Society having presented detailed written evidence in support of the Council's stance. He expressed his continued concern that even if the Inspector found in the Council's favour, the appellant would be given time to undertake the remedial work and if this was not carried out, the Council would be faced with difficult decisions about further action to be taken.

iii) Guildhall: A letter dated 10th October had been received from the Head of Decisions Branch of the Welsh Government Planning Directorate in which it is concluded that the Local Planning Authority had appropriately assessed the Listed building Application and the issues it raised. The Head of Decisions considered that the issues raised by the application and the requests for the application to be called in are not of exceptional significance or controversy and the application should not be called in for determination by the Welsh Ministers. It was now for the LPA to determine the application as it saw fit. It was noted by members that subsequently on 19th October, Listed Building Consent had been granted subject to eleven conditions.

Members expressed their great disappointment at this decision and in particular to the reference in the letter to the low numbers of objections received, mainly from the local area. In this respect it was noted that the two main statutory consultees in Wales, Cadw and the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments, had both objected. It was also of concern that the letter concluded that the application was not exceptionally controversial despite conceding that a Grade 1 listed building should be afforded the highest levels of protection.

Reference was also made to claims by council officials that Cadw had inordinately delayed their consideration of the application and their submission to the Welsh Government. In this respect it was noted that the LPA papers were referred to Cadw in mid-April; on 12th June Cadw recommended to Welsh Government that the application be called-in (less than two months); on 10th October Welsh Government announced their decision (four months later).

Various options were considered of action the Society could take, including seeking Judicial Review and referring the matter to the Ombudsman. Pending further advice and discussion, it was **AGREED: to seek confirmation from the County Council that full access be granted to RCAMW to record the building before any work be allowed to proceed.**

- **Riverside:** Julie reported on the damage caused to the riverside by the recent flooding. The footpath was caked with mud, planters washed away and significant damage done to coracles and canoes.
- **Blue plaques:** Linda referred to the extremely successful arrangements for the unveiling of the plaques in Picton Terrace and Morley Street on Saturday 3rd November, attended by a large number of people. She thanked Mary for her preparatory work and for the hugely interesting talk she gave at the Falcon Hotel regarding Alice Abadam and Rachel Barrett. Mary confirmed that she had subsequently written to the two secondary schools complimenting their Head Girls for the way they had conducted themselves and represented their schools.

It was explained that the Alice Abadam plaque had only been installed temporarily pending full listed Building Consent being received.

Huw agreed with Lee's suggestion that there should be a leaflet available outlining the role of the Society, which could be given to potential new members at functions and events, and stated he would pursue the matter.

Mary confirmed that discussions with the Girls' Grammar School Old Girls' Association were nearing completion. Huw stated he would convene a meeting of the Blue Plaques sub-group in the New Year to review priorities for future plaques.

6. Programme of meetings 2018/19:

Mary confirmed that Louise Austin, Director of the Tywi Gateway scheme would be the guest speaker at the meeting on Wednesday 6th February.

In regard to the Christmas dinner planned for the 5th December, response had so far been disappointing. It was, therefore, **AGREED: to hold the dinner on the 5th December as planned but to postpone presentation of the David White Award until a future date when suitable arrangements and publicity can be organised.**

7. Regeneration Forum:

Huw stated that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on 28th November, when reviews of the Masterplan would be discussed.

8. Any other business:

- **Carmarthen War Memorial:** Mary drew attention to the restoration of the railings between the War Memorial and Plas y Milwr, which had been beautifully crafted and greatly enhanced the location. **AGREED: that a letter of commendation be sent to the developer, Mr Dorian Davies, before the Armistice ceremony on 11th November.**
- **Unnoticed Carmarthen:** In reply to a question from Jeremy regarding the work undertaken a few years previously on preparing an information leaflet, Huw recalled that work had been suspended because of Margaret's health. He would, however, look out the papers with a view to continuing the work.