



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ACRE

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 16th November 2016

PRESENT:

Gareth Lugar Mawson (Chair)
George Hook (Director)
Hugh Walmsley (Director)

Ken Christy (Director)
David Powell (Director)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Elaine O'Leary (Chief Executive) Frances Harris (Community Facilities Adviser)
Rebecca Breakwell (Rural Officer) Linda Hook (Rural Wellbeing Fieldworker)
Dawn Howard (Rural Wellbeing Fieldworker) Gordon Shorley (Vice-President)
Cllr Catherine Lomax (DDC) Hugh Fenton (CVS)
Guests from Parish and District Councils, Village Halls, community groups and local businesses

APOLOGIES:

David Laing (President) Bernard Lock (Director)
Lord Tim Boswell (Vice – President) Canon Paul Rose (Vice-President)

1. WELCOME:

Sir John Robinson Bt DL, on behalf of David Laing, President, welcomed everyone to the AGM and gave a brief overview of NACRE's work. The charity thanks Sir John for deputising on behalf of David Laing.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 23rd September 2015 were approved as a true and accurate record. Proposed by GLM, Seconded by DP and carried unanimously.

Approved

3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

GLM stated that it has been a very good year for NACRE. After some years of financial uncertainty, the situation is now much improved, allowing NACRE to repay two long term loans.

GLM explained that NACRE is expanding its areas of activity into, amongst other things, facilitating community planning and working with MIND on suicide awareness.

GLM stated that the trustees would like to put on record the very great success of the wedding business which contributes the major part of NACRE's funding (in line with HMRC/Charity Commission guidelines).

GLM was pleased to confirm that Defra has made a grant allocation to the ACRE network for 2016/17 of £2.3m, of which NACRE has received a share of around £53,000. Defra has indicated that it wishes to have a positive ongoing dialogue with the ACRE network. GLM stated

that he would like to put on record NACRE's thanks to Defra's Secretary of State for her Department's support of the ACRE network.

GLM explained that, in respect of the Hunsbury Hill Centre site and the future of the charity, the trustees keep all options under constant review with the aim of maximising income and making best use of the charity's assets.

GLM said the annual National ACRE conference would be taking place on 17th November 2016 and EOL will be attending on behalf of NACRE.

GLM referred to the Best Village Competition which is run under NACRE's aegis. The competition organisers are hoping more villages and parishes (rural and urban) will choose to be involved this year.

GLM commended OLIVE, NACRE's new oil ordering scheme. It can provide significant savings on heating oil and other benefits.

GLM expressed his wish, as Chair, to thank NACRE's very strong team of trustees for their work. There is a need for greater diversity within the Board. If anyone knows of anyone that would be interested in becoming a Trustee then please encourage them to contact either EOL or GLM

GLM also extended thanks, on behalf of the Board, to NACRE's strong and committed team of staff under the excellent leadership of EOL.

4. SECRETARY'S REPORT

EOL started by thanking staff for their work and commitment over the past year.

EOL referred to the Big Lottery funded Rural Wellbeing Service, which has been in operation for 18 months. Thanks to Linda Hood and Dawn Howard (Rural Wellbeing Field Workers), it is thriving.

EOL confirmed that the Village Halls advisory service provides good value and now operates for increased hours (15 hours per week) because of the Defra funding for 2016/17.

EOL explained that, because of the success of NACRE's trading arm, the charity has been able to acquire a new member of staff in the role of Rural Officer. The Defra funding for 2016/17 means the role is full-time.

EOL thanked SC for her valuable assistance and support and commended her for securing 82 new wedding bookings this year. EOL also thanked JD for his hard work maintaining the grounds and buildings of the centre and for winning a Northampton in Bloom Silver Gilt award for the Hunsbury Hill Centre site.

In relation to the Defra funding for 2016/17, EOL explained that Defra has identified a number of key priorities for the ACRE network. These include broadband, community services and neighbourhood planning.

EOL explained that many charities are now having to explore working in partnership with other organisations. NACRE has initiated a Good Neighbour Scheme in partnership with Daventry District Council. The intention is to roll the scheme out across the county.

5. TO RECEIVE THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS AND BALANCE SHEET FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH 2016:

GH explained that NACRE has had a difficult few years because of uncertainty about securing Defra funding for the ACRE network. In consequence, NACRE has had to cut costs dramatically and has been running at a minimum level. With Defra funding secured for 2016/17, NACRE is now on a much securer footing. This has been helped by settling the insurance claim on the Low Barn (for loss of income) and also by successfully running the wedding business at full capacity. As a result, the charity is in a position to continue to reduce debt and to build up reserves. GH confirmed that NACRE's future looks better than it has for a number of years and the charity is now in a position to begin to expand its activities.

The draft Annual Accounts for 2015-2016 were formally approved. Proposed by GLM, Seconded by DP and carried unanimously.

Approved

6. ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR THE YEAR 2016 – 2017:

President – GLM confirmed that David Laing is happy to continue as President and proposed that he be re-elected. Proposed by GLM, Seconded by DP and carried unanimously.

Elected: David Laing

Vice Presidents – GLM proposed that Lord Boswell of Aynho, Donald Allister – Bishop of Peterborough, Canon Paul Rose, Gordon Shorley and Jeffrey Greenwell be re-elected as Vice-Presidents. Proposed by GLM, Seconded by DP and carried unanimously.

Elected: Lord Boswell of Aynho, Donald Allister – Bishop of Peterborough, Canon Paul Rose, Gordon Shorley and Jeffrey Greenwell

7. ELECTION OF DIRECTORS:

Directors - GLM proposed that DP & KC, by rotation, be re-elected as a Directors. Seconded by GH and carried unanimously.

Elected: David Powell and Ken Christy

8. ELECTION OF HONORARY TREASURER FOR THE YEAR 2016 – 2017:

Honorary Treasurer – GLM proposed GH be re-elected as Treasurer. This was seconded by DP and carried unanimously.

Elected: George Hook

9. APPOINTMENT AND REMUNERATION OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS:

GLM proposed that Messrs Jervis and Partners be remunerated and be appointed as Independent Examiners for the year 2016 - 2017. Seconded by GH and carried unanimously.

Approved

GLM ended the formal part of the meeting by thanking Directors, Observers & staff for attending.

10. GUEST SPEAKERS:

William Dallimore, Interim LEADER Project Manager for North and West Northants LEADER

WD explained that the LEADER project is a rural development programme for England. Grants of between £10,000 and £100,000 are available via Local Action Groups (LAGs). LAGs have six decision making priorities when considering applications for grants. These include boosting rural tourism and supporting micro and small businesses. WD explained that the focus is on “jobs and growth”.

WD said The North and West Northants LEADER Project’s budget (over a five year period) is worth almost £1.3m. A grant will usually equate to 40% of the project’s costs.

James Wells, Insure Your Village Hall

JW explained that Insure Your Village Hall, which is an insurance broker specialising providing insurance for community buildings, was founded about two years.

He said that a major problem for many village halls is under insurance. This often arises where village hall committees continue to renew their existing policy index-linking may not be applied. He emphasised the need to insure full re-building costs (as distinct from the property’s market value). He warned that under insurance can result in the partial settlement of a claim, with consequent potential liability for trustees.

To avoid under insurance, JW said hall committees should ask a qualified building surveyor to undertake a fire insurance reinstatement assessment valuation. The valuation should be re-done every 3 to 5 years.

Community Shorts

Rural Wellbeing Service & Good Neighbour Volunteers

Dawn Howard, Northamptonshire ACRE

DH began by saying that, since securing Big Lottery Funding in March 2015, the Rural Wellbeing Service has visited twenty-seven villages in Northamptonshire as well as attending conferences across the county. DH explained that visits are made by an information bus. On the bus is a range of information on matters such as befriending and social activities. Many direct (and indirect) referrals have been made by the Service to organisations who can help with enquiries.

DH explained that another aim of the Service is to reduce loneliness via “Good Neighbours”, who are volunteer helpers with good local knowledge. Seven Good Neighbours have been recruited to help older residents in villages. In Brigstock, for example, Good Neighbours have helped to start an Old Gents Club.

DH said that next year the intention is to promote the Service more extensively and to recruit more Good Neighbours. The Service is also exploring working in partnership with other organisations such as doctors’ surgeries.

How to become a Good Neighbour community

Emma Pulley, Daventry District Council (DDC)

EP began by quoting from the Ageing Well Consultation which found that 25% of the population is expected to be over sixty-five by 2056 (rising from 18.7% in 2016).

EP explained that DDC has worked with NACRE and other partners in devising a strategy for helping vulnerable older people. This will be done by means of Good Neighbour Schemes. The key priority areas are: living independently at home; public transport; health; access to welfare and benefits.

EP said Good Neighbour Schemes are run by local people to provide day-to-day help for residents in relation to gaps in services for non-critical needs. EP said NACRE had applied to Aviva for funding to help pay for the project.

EP finished by saying Moulton Parish Council is the first parish council to run a pilot Good Neighbour Scheme.

Whalebone – helping village halls to raise funds

Sarah Ibberson, Whalebone

SI said Whalebone, an acoustic musical trio, was founded ten years ago. The group specialises in playing in informal community spaces. They are family friendly and not exclusively “folk”. They offer a business model which is designed to help village halls – Whalebone shares door money on a 50/50 basis. All other income (e.g. from raffles) is kept by the hall. Whalebone will also undertake promotion e.g. printed posters, tickets, press releases and newsletters.

Meet *Olive* our new online oil ordering system

Elaine O’Leary, Northamptonshire ACRE

EOL gave a brief overview of the new online bulk oil buying system that was implemented in August. Members no longer need to pay a subscription, can set themselves up on *Olive* and order oil at any time. The system is run by a company called eSmartMetrics who have worked with other RCCs such as Rural Action Derbyshire where the system has been very well received and enable the RCC to increase membership.

Neighbourhood Planning – what’s in it for my village?

Rebecca Breakwell, Northamptonshire ACRE

RB gave a brief overview of the current Neighbourhood Planning process and outlined the services that NACRE could provide to assist a designated group to carry out their plan. She also explained about the workshops and masterclasses the charity will be running for Neighbourhood Plan groups over the following year and that if any group was interested in attending these, to contact her for more details.

11. CLOSING REMARKS

GLM the meeting by thanking everyone for coming to such a successful evening and expressing his hope that they had enjoyed it as much as he had. He thanked the staff of NACRE for all their hard work and sent his appreciation to all the speakers who had kindly given up their time to be present.