

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**OF**

**THE TWENTIETH CENTURY SOCIETY**

held on Saturday 12 June 2021 at 11.30 am  
by webinar with advance postal and electronic voting because of Covid-19 restrictions

1. **Attendance:** the Meeting was quorate.
2. **Apologies for absence:** list available from the Society's office.
3. **Announcement of Advance Postal and Electronic Voting Results**
  - 3.1. The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 31 October 2020 were **approved** to be signed by the Chairman.
  - 3.2. The audited 2020 Accounts were **accepted**.
  - 3.3. Ordinary Resolution to appoint Catherine Slessor as President for a term of three years: **passed**
  - 3.4. Ordinary Resolution to re-appoint Argents Accountants Ltd as auditors: **passed**
  - 3.5. Ordinary Resolution to elect Ian McInnes as a Director, as recommended by the Directors under Article 27, and to re-elect 4 of the Directors who are required to retire in accordance with the rotation requirements of Article 24 of the Articles of Association: Peter Ruback, Ellen Gates, John Clarke and Julia Lane: **passed**
  - 3.6. Ordinary Resolution to increase Affiliate, Benefactor and Corporate subscriptions, in line with the cycle of regular increases in previous years, to cover regular expenditure and support the Society's mission to save and protect the best post-1914 architecture and design, to take effect from 1 January 2022, as follows: Affiliate from £120 to £130, Benefactor from £330 to £350, Corporate from £500 to £530. All other subscription rates will remain the same: **passed**
4. **Annual Reports** from the Hon Events Secretary, the Hon Membership Secretary and four Regional Groups had been placed on the Society's website, with paper copies available on request from the office.

**5. President's Address**

Retiring President Gillian Darley said that she had followed the Society's work during her period of office with real pride in the small deft team's accuracy, in its casework and in its publications. She expressed gratitude to the Society's members, who are the battery power behind our punch. As past President GD will do her best to keep the influence spreading. She commended the appointment of Catherine Slessor MBE as the new President.

## 6. Chair's Address

- 6.1. Chair of Trustees, Peter Ruback, introduced the Meeting, and thanked Members for attending and for voting in advance of the meeting in order to enable the Society to continue to function despite the Covid-19 restrictions. He expressed the Society's gratitude to the Director, staff and volunteers for managing the transition to off-site working during the closure of the office. He thanked retiring Trustee, Suzanne Burn for her service to the Society.
- 6.2. PR said that the main positive from the pandemic has been that our online lectures had been meeting a larger and more geographically diverse audience, with the ability to attract with ease lecturers not based in London. The loss of the physical events, however, means the loss of the substantial contribution they make to the Society's income (typically third only after membership subscriptions and the Historic England grant). The decision was taken to charge for online lectures after a couple of months of asking for voluntary donations, but an audience of 2 or 3 times the numbers we would have attracted to Cowcross Street continued to be maintained and this wider audience had sustained and even increased membership numbers.
- 6.3. PR reported that Trustees had modelled a number of financial scenarios in order to ensure that the Society is spending sustainably and able to continue core functions, but a swift recovery in total income will be required to be able to expand the reach of the casework and campaigning. This is crucial given the threats we now face. First of all, the Government is liberalising aspects of planning: in the short term they have expanded the type of developments that property owners can undertake without full consideration of the heritage implications. While there are some safeguards built into the system, it is unproven whether they will ensure adequate heritage protection. Changes to use classes and the latest change to permit conversion of empty commercial units to residential and proposals to pare back "article 4 directions" add to the threat. Mainstream heritage and amenity societies have been critical of these latest proposals although that has not stopped the Government proceeding with them. Of potentially greater risk of unintended loss of heritage of the Society's period are the Planning White Paper proposals for zoning. The Society is concerned about these proposals, not least because it is very unclear how they are intended to operate and the scale of areas in which liberalised/automatic consents might operate. The Society has worked with the other amenity societies (such as the Victorian Society, the Georgian Group and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings) to lobby against these proposals but at the moment it is unclear whether and how Government will be taking this all forward. And we are also concerned about the threats from changes in the High Street, and Department Stores in particular.
- 6.4. PR reported that there had been no slowing in casework, whether listed building consent, cases requiring listing submission as the only way of ensuring protection, or other engagement, and that the move to online working and an online Casework Committee had been fairly smooth.
- 6.5. PR noted that the Society had been shocked and saddened to hear that Patric Morley the Society's administrator 2012 – 2016, and subsequently a volunteer, with the Society, had died unexpectedly towards the end of 2020. Patric was the

main point of contact for members and helpfully fielded numerous queries from event bookers as well as making sure that financial procedures were up to standard. He was a Barbican resident who found a niche working for the Society, following early retirement from a City career and became a good friend to many members and Trustees. He left following a period of ill health, but continued to attend Society events and his cheerful presence will be missed.

- 6.6.** PR expressed his personal thanks to Gillian Darley for being a wonderfully supportive President over the last seven years and for her involvement in events and social media, and her constructive challenge of the Society. PR welcomed the appointment of Catherine Slessor to succeed GD, an architectural critic, editor and writer, with extensive experience in architectural journalism, who will be a great help to the Society.
- 6.7.** PR confirmed that he intended, in view of his increased local commitments because of the pandemic, to stand down as Chair of Trustees at the next Trustees' meeting, at which Trustees intended to propose newly elected Trustee, Ian McInnes, for election as Chair. Ian McInnes has previously held all the major offices in the Society (Chair of Casework, Events Secretary and Treasurer) and brings immense management experience as well as knowledge of commercial architecture and in particular the immediate post war period.

## **7. Director's Presentation**

- 7.1.** Catherine Croft, Director, spoke about two positive examples of recent casework: Wood Street police station, 1963-6 by McMorran and Whitby, listed Grade II\* and the IBM building, South Bank, London, of 1979-1984 by Denys Lasdun, listed Grade II. Both had initially damaging proposals for major alterations considerably scaled back after intervention from the Society. The former is now likely to become a hotel (in line with the Society's recommendation that this was a much more compatible use than continued police use) and the latter following a successful listing request by the Society.
- 7.2.** CC noted the impact of Covid-19. Department Stores: CC requested members to let the Society know of any standing empty, so that we can assess the extent of the threat, and put pressure on HE to list the best, and campaign for local listing and suitable viable alternative uses as appropriate. Churches: caseworker Clare Price has been inundated with applications for adaptations for social distancing and installing audio-visual equipment, with which obviously the Society is keen to help but is concerned about reversibility and care for the building. This work needs real attention to detail, not exciting but crucial.
- 7.3.** 10 Buildings at Risk List: the Society's principal intention is for this to generate publicity, deliberately selecting, not necessarily the ten most important buildings (which would be a controversial task anyway) but those that we think will attract the press, being a range of different buildings evidencing our concerns, with good stories and for which we have good images. There was excellent press coverage. Coventry is of great concern to us for example and the media picked this one up constructively. The list was published in the week of London mayoral election so we

included City Hall which is going to be vacated by the mayor's office. A number of local authority buildings have been listed but still many are not protected and are being considered for demolition, all in good condition and reasonably well-maintained, so demolition would be an environmental waste. The Guardian, for example, picked up the hook of our link between the Oasis Leisure Centre and the eponymous band. This building was an opportunity to highlight our general concern about the Covid-19 effect on leisure centres. The Lawns was an opportunity to signal our concern about adaptive re-use. Golden Lane estate was also discussed as a positive example of extensive research into how buildings can be adapted to improve ecological performance, while negotiating the sensitive resolution of issues such as like for like replacement of windows.

## **8. Hon Treasurer's Report and presentation of 2020 Accounts**

- 8.1.** Hon Treasurer, Carolyn Parmeter, presented the 2020 Accounts which had been published on the Society's website. The overall deficit of just over £16,000 included Monograph funding (ie restricted passthrough funds) which the Society passes on to Liverpool University Press. Our ordinary recurring activities showed a deficit of around £18,000, but we would always expect a deficit in a year when we publish a Journal. We received over £16,000 in gifts and donations, up from £10,000 in 2020.
- 8.2.** Events, usually a significant and important income stream, were severely impacted by Covid-19. Profits were around £9,000 (not including donations) compared with 2019 profits of nearly £47,000. We had budgeted to expect profits of at least £33,000 with a rich programme of events planned, including Chicago and Oslo.
- 8.3.** Membership and Gift Aid income remained our most important stream of income. We reversed the trend seen in 2019 when income was 5% down on 2018 and there was a concern about declining membership. We know that some of the amenity societies are seeing declining membership. The 2020 income was up by nearly £10,000 at around £136,000.
- 8.4.** We continued to receive the HE Grant towards casework of up to £40,000. This is not inflation linked and was reduced by 5% from 2016. The grant may be reviewed as part of the upcoming Spending Review though obviously we hope it will continue.
- 8.5.** At the end of 2019, and due to the generosity of our members, including past members who left legacies, we had healthy unrestricted cash reserves of around £347,000. At the end of 2020 that was around £330,000 (unrestricted funds less stocks) which gives us confidence that we can continue to weather the Covid-19 storm.
- 8.6.** Looking forward: CP observed that 2021 was continuing to be an uncertain time; we did not know when we might be able to return to a full events programme; and it is possible that Covid-19 could have changed members' recreational habits for the longer term, which we hope is not the case. There are positives though: lockdown expedited the Society's embrace of virtual events, with a rich programme of free virtual talks from spring 2020 and continuing into 2021; this had given us an opportunity to explore how we can be more inclusive, eg for regional members, and that had been reflected in the upturn in membership. Virtual events are not free to

run. A professional Zoom subscription, which is necessary for well-run seminar and lecture events, has been a new and not insignificant cost for the Society, around £5,600. In conclusion CP stated that the Society's healthy reserves mean that we believe we can maintain our staffing and casework commitments through at least to the end of 2023, notwithstanding Covid-19 driven uncertainties, though we will keep this under review.

**9. Any other business**

**9.1.** Alan Powers expressed the Society's appreciation of Peter Ruback, who was intending to stand down as Chair of the Trustees of the Society at the next Trustees' meeting in July 2021. AP, the previous Chair who had handed over to PR in 2012, said that his confidence had been justified, that PR had been the best Chair so far, a hard act to follow. AP noted PR's professionalism from his Civil Service background, his participation, consulting widely, his prudence, political insight particularly in relation to planning, patience, generosity of time, all of which were outstanding. AP noted that the proposal to elect Ian McInnes as Chair was an excellent succession plan, and that he will steer excellently. PR thanked AP and acknowledged that he had every confidence in Ian McInnes

**9.2.** There being no questions the Chair declared the meeting closed.

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Date: ..... 2022

Ian McInnes, Chair