

# **Bedford Park Society**

## **Minutes of the virtual 56th Annual General Meeting of the Bedford Park Society which was concluded on 20 May 2021**

### **1 Introduction**

Because of the Covid Virus affecting the country it was not possible to hold a meeting at which members could attend in person. Instead a video presentation by the Chair was made available to members on the Society's website, questions were invited by email, the responses were made available on the website, and voting was conducted electronically via Survey Monkey, or by paper submission for those members not able to access the internet.

### **2 Resolution to approve the Minutes of the 2019 meeting**

The Executive Committee had approved the minutes of the 2019 AGM and members were asked to approve those minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously by members signifying their approval.

### **3 The Chair's annual review and questions**

The wide range of the Society's work and details of the key activities were set out in the Annual Review, a printed copy of which had been delivered or posted to members.

The Chair provided an overview of these activities in a video presentation, transcript below:

"A central aim in 2020 as the Covid19 pandemic took hold, was to play our part in helping ensure our Bedford Park community maintained its strength and cohesion. We were pleased to make a contribution in supporting the Society's members with our decision, early on, to produce a weekly "Lockdown E-news." Judging from the feedback we received, this initiative lifted spirits and strengthened interest in the heritage we have the privilege of enjoying in Bedford Park. We were delighted that so many members provided photographs and also details of the lives of past residents.

Notwithstanding the unusual year, we were kept extremely busy on the planning front, commenting on over 60 applications resulting in 46 decisions of which 40 were approved. There were three appeals to Hounslow of which two were allowed and one dismissed. Several successful applications were modified following comments from the Society. There was a further increase in pre-application questions and general requests for help. detailed planning guidance can be found on the Society's website. The Society has worked with both councils on updating Conservation Area Guidance and in keeping members informed of and working with Councillors on the various new traffic management schemes which have an impact on Bedford Park.

We greatly missed Green Days and much of our usual programme of events, which normally also offer opportunities for members to meet with our committee members and volunteers to discuss issues informally. We are, however, developing new merchandise ideas and looking forward to holding events again later this year. We have been able to progress our plans to update and relaunch our Bedford Park logbooks and conserve the original Tabard sign, which has been donated to the Society. We have also been

investigating an alternative charitable legal status for the Society, which we think will offer a number of advantages. Such a change will require the agreement of members, and we will provide information on any proposal during 2021.

I would like to thank all our many volunteers who have worked so hard and flexibly this year in very unusual circumstances to ensure that the priorities of the Society could be achieved. In particular, our thanks are due to the Planning and Infrastructure teams whose work was made much harder by having to rely on remote meetings. Unfortunately, Covid restrictions meant our Road Representatives were unable to get together as usual to share ideas but we hope to be able to resume these meetings in 2021.

Simon Baddeley has decided to stand down this year after 17 years as our Honorary Treasurer. We are most grateful to Simon for looking after the Society's finances for so many years, as well as being an active member of our Events and Merchandise Committee. We are delighted to welcome Libby Bassett who has kindly volunteered to take on the Hon Treasurer role. We would also like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of Chris Carrington and Justin Morris-Wyatt who stood down from the Infrastructure and Environment Committee.

If you have some spare time and would like to get involved, we are always looking for new volunteers to help us do our work more effectively and bring fresh ideas. We would particularly welcome support with administration, representing views to local councils, helping with our archive material or organising our events. We would be delighted to hear from you if you would like to help either on a regular or occasional basis."

#### 4 **Treasurer's report**

A written report on each year was delivered to all members and the Chair provided a summary of the financial position for the year ended 31 December 2020 in her video presentation.

##### **The accounts for the year ending 31 December 2019**

Subscription income increased this year by £674 reflecting the continued increase in our membership numbers. Net income from events increased by £1,347 this year. Our two lectures proved particularly popular. In addition, having for many years recognised the support of Sir John Betjeman in the founding of the Society by making a contribution to the Parkinson's Society, we have now decided no longer to continue with this practice and instead to use the funds to further the Society's aims.

Proceeds from the sale of goods increased by £1,397 reflecting the popularity of the two new mug designs we launched. Generally, our merchandise is priced to be sold more or less at cost, hence the surplus from the sale of goods did not increase substantially. The surplus for the year on ordinary activities increased the Society's Revenue Reserve by £3,638. We have several heritage projects in the pipeline for which the Society's Revenue Reserve will be available as funding.

The Society maintains a Strategic Reserve in order to be able to deal with any exceptional expenditure which might be needed to protect the architectural heritage and amenities of Bedford Park, for example. This reserve has been maintained at £20,000 for several years. We concluded that we should increase

this reserve to £25,000 this year by a transfer of £5,000 from the Society's Revenue Reserve to reflect inflation in the fee rates of lawyers and specialist consultants from whom the Society might need to seek advice. We believe this Strategic Reserve is an appropriate level taking account of estimated likely costs, the funds similar organisations have set aside, and the value of the Society's total assets.

The Tom Greeves Bedford Park Society Fund of £14,290 represents accumulated income from the capital held by the Charities Aid Foundation and donated by Eleanor Greeves in memory of her late husband Tom Greeves. The fund is to be used to promote the appreciation and preservation of Bedford Park, and for historical and present day architectural and design matters. Expenditure from the income and capital of the fund is controlled by the successors to Eleanor Greeves, and so the accumulated income is shown on the balance sheet as a Restricted Fund.

### **The accounts for the year ending 31 December 2020**

Subscription income increased this year by £181 reflecting the increase in the number of household memberships. Net income from events decreased by £1,013 as we were unable to hold most of our events this year due to Covid-19 restrictions. Proceeds from the sale of goods decreased by £1,494 mainly because Green Days could not take place. We did, however, sell some items via our E-news, generating a surplus of £126 on proceeds of £898.

Our revenue for the year decreased by £1,749 as a result of our reduced events programme and fewer opportunities for selling merchandise. However, savings in our costs, through not holding an AGM because of Covid-19 restrictions and other reductions in normal expenditure, resulted in the surplus for the year on ordinary activities increasing the Society's Revenue Reserve by £2,965. We have several heritage projects in the pipeline for which the Society's Revenue Reserve will be available as funding.

The Society maintains a Strategic Reserve in order to be able to deal with any exceptional expenditure, which might be needed to protect the architectural heritage and amenities of Bedford Park, for example legal or consultant costs of contesting a particular scheme. We concluded that we should increase this reserve to £30,000 this year by a transfer of £5,000 from the Society's Revenue Reserve to reflect inflation in the fee rates of lawyers and specialist consultants from whom the Society might need to seek advice. We believe this Strategic Reserve is an appropriate level, taking account of estimated likely costs, the funds similar organisations have set aside, and the value of the Society's total assets.

The Tom Greeves Bedford Park Society Fund of £14,083 represents accumulated income from the capital held by the Charities Aid Foundation and donated by Eleanor Greeves in memory of her late husband Tom Greeves. The fund is to be used to promote the appreciation and preservation of Bedford Park, and for historical and present day architectural and design matters. Expenditure from the income and capital of the fund is controlled by the successors to Eleanor Greeves, and so the accumulated income is shown on the balance sheet as a Restricted

Fund. This year £744 of this income was used to cover initial costs related to conserving the original Tabard pub sign, now owned by the Society.

### **Approval of accounts**

The members approved the accounts of the Society for the year to 31 December 2019 and also the accounts of the Society for the year to 31 December 2020. The accounts had not been verified by the Society's independent examiner who had retired, and had not yet been replaced.

### **5 Election of members of the Executive Committee of the Society**

Libby Bassett, Kate Bowes, Helen Jameson and Carol Woolner were unanimously elected to the Executive Committee.

### **6 Questions and Responses**

#### **6.1 Tree trimming/pruning**

*The trees of Bedford Park are essential for wild birds. Many trees have been recently trimmed/pruned. According to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the recommendation is "Avoid trimming or cutting trees between late February and the end of August as this is the main breeding season for birds in the UK". (See section "Maintenance" under Planting Garden Trees on the RSPB website.)*

*Why has this tree trimming/pruning activity been taking place in spring? What measures have been taken to protect the nests?*

We do agree that pruning trees at this time is not ideal but the programme in both boroughs has been affected by Covid, a change in contractors in Ealing and a general backlog. As a result, additional work has been necessary at this late stage to prevent trees from growing too large, thereby causing problems with excessive shading and damage to houses, pavements and kerbs. Nesting birds are protected by law and both councils have confirmed that trees with birds' nests are left alone. A large plane tree at the top of Abinger Road, where a major programme and pollarding was recently completed, is an example.

#### **6.2 Tree replanting**

*When a tree is removed, the expectation is that a new tree is to be planted at the same place. However, it is not the case in Marlborough Crescent. What is the plan with tree replanting?*

Both Hounslow and Ealing have a policy to replace a removed tree, and this is something we regularly follow up with both councils. There has been an inevitable delay, more so in the Hounslow side of Bedford Park. In addition, there can be issues about using the same pit when the previous tree was, for example, diseased and when time has to be allowed for old roots to die off. Ealing have told us that they are planning to carry out further planting in the autumn. Do let us know if you have any specific questions about individual trees in your road.

#### **6.3 Energy efficiency**

*With the Government emphasis placed on energy efficiency, do the Society, and the Council, have any views about the installation of heat exchange pumps in listed buildings, to replace our gas-guzzling boilers? We read they can be noisy, which*

*seems to be replacing noise pollution for another, but the Government will be making life increasingly difficult for houses which do not reach certain energy standards and unless we are allowed to install double glazing and solar panels (away from the fronts of houses), there does not seem to be much else we can do to meet required standards.*

The context to this important question is that the significant issues of energy conservation are global ones, and most authorities currently consider that listed buildings comprise such a small proportion of the total building stock that their potential contribution does not warrant any compromise of their historic value. Against this background there is a widely held view that 'green' objectives for historic buildings should be approached 'Fabric First' by minimising requirements for energy, especially in the form of heat, before addressing how energy is supplied or generated.

Unfortunately, the potential for any 'renewables' form of generating energy is very limited in Bedford Park houses:

*solar panels:* the aesthetic impact is largely unacceptable from a Council planning perspective on listed buildings and on the front of houses in the Bedford Park Conservation Area

*ground source heat pumps:* require extensive and expensive excavation, particularly tricky in the context of relatively small Bedford Park gardens

*air source heat pumps:* are noisy and can be visually intrusive for neighbours, similar to having an external air conditioning unit attached to a neighbouring wall.

There are, however, a number of ways in which the thermal performance of a Bedford Park house can be upgraded, first by insulation and then by reducing and controlling, but not eliminating, air flow (it is important to be aware of the risks of condensation). We are developing guidance on improving the insulation of Bedford Park houses, and it will be available on our website when ready.

#### 6.4 **Yeats sculpture**

*I can't believe that the Society can ever approve, let alone support, that totally inappropriate "object" in a totally inappropriate setting. I regard The Triangle, War Memorial and restrained information column as a peaceful and caring place, not flashy and jazzy! Is it too late to stop it?*

This application was by its nature highly unusual and outside the normal pattern of applications in the Bedford Park Conservation Area, being for a sculpture in a prominent public space in front of the grade 2\* listed Church. In commenting on the application, the Planning Committee of the Society was mindful of the frameworks established by documents such as the Council Management Plans, and raised a number of questions through the planning application consultation process.

The Committee questioned the proposed location for the sculpture on 'The Triangle' and suggested one possible alternative position which it was felt would be more appropriate in terms of having less impact on the view of the church from the Green and probably enhancing the visibility of the monument itself. However,

Hounslow's decision allows the monument to be constructed in the location proposed in the application.

In addition, the Society raised questions on the detail of the construction that were relevant to issues such as safety, the dangers of vandalism, maintenance, and future insurance. These are not strictly planning issues and the sponsors have confirmed that they are committed to resolving the questions raised by the Society and we have a continuing dialogue with them on these matters. The proposal is outside the normal pattern in the extent to which it raised issues of taste and opinion. Views were bound to differ, and inevitably some residents were likely to be disappointed at the result. It should be noted that the substantial majority of comments (26 to 9) submitted during the consultation by residents were favourable to the monument.