

## **Dartington Recreation Association Trustees Meeting 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

**Present:** Trustees: Will Fitzgerald (Chair), Louise Morpeth, Jinty Balch, Jan Maddick, Helen Tune, Mandy Burton, Sarah Guest, Charlotte Huish, Alan Blake, Margaret Cushen (note taker).

Volunteers: Joel Riley, Ashish Ghediali (sp?) Bex House

**1. Apologies** Nicola Perrins, Peggy Prout

**2. Notes from the previous meeting 29<sup>th</sup> June** were accepted. Jinty pointed out that the fire alarm work has yet to be completed on the pavilion.

**3.** Will welcomed everyone and asked each to introduce themselves. He gave an overview of the summer's activities and the amount of change in and around the DRA and Meadowbrook.

**4. Changes in Trustees** Will informed the group of Stephen Henney's resignation as secretary and thanked him for his contribution. A secretary for the DRA is required.

Carole Tudor has reached the end of her term as treasurer and has handed over the financial affairs in a good state with Jan and Jinty's help. Louise offered to take the treasurer's role in the absence of another volunteer.

**Will proposed this** change to trustees, Jinty seconded and all trustees agreed.

Louise is hoping another volunteer may come forward in this operational year and she is looking forward to working with Bex on further funding bids.

Peggy Prout has resigned. Will read her e mail and mentioned her long service in numerous capacities in the village. Will suggested that her resignation should be marked formally at a later date.

We currently have two trustee vacancies

**Louise proposed Joel** as a community trustee – he has demonstrated is commercial acumen on the building subgroup. Margaret seconded this proposal. Joel said as some one who grew up in the area and returned to live in Dartington 3 years ago with his partner and children his main interest is to see the Meadowbrook building become the heart of the community. He brings experience of 9 businesses, retail and commercial letting. Agreed by all trustees.

Will pointed out that partnerships were important to the DRA –

-with SHDC who provide S106 money to us. We need to nurture that relationship and with the developer Bakers, as immediate neighbours the impact of the estate will have to be managed carefully.

-with DHT. Will's last meeting with them was open and amiable, and is not problematic as some might have feared.

-with Dartington Parish Council: Will recently attended a meeting and was warmly received. They agreed the £1500 grant towards a defibrillator. Will hopes to build an even stronger relationship with them

-with the commercial users new Lion and Pizzalogica- which are working well.

The DRA needs to turn attention to the field and the bridge. He pointed out that DCC originally built the bridge to allow ease of access to the school. He will be exploring what responsibilities might have been handed over by DCC, to the Academies in relation to this and will have discussions with both on the matter.

### **Trustee management group**

Will has not prepared the terms of reference, as the role of the group has shifted as the challenges of the past few months arose. The management group meet fortnightly to enable timely decision making and to address the practical issues on behalf of the trustees. A person has been found to empty the bins regularly!

### **5.Financial report**

Has been circulated and is attached

Louise made the point that trustees want to be confident that the charity is being appropriately managed. The charity holds £62,772.94 as of 11<sup>th</sup> September some of which is restricted in use. The community centre is less of a financial risk currently.

**Will proposed** acceptance of Louise's report, Trustees agreed

### **6.Meadowbrook subgroup** Louise reported.

When the social club took the difficult decision to wrap up, the responsibility for the community centre returned to the DRA. Taking on an ageing building presented a risk to the charity. The costs of maintaining it could have easily wiped out the DRA reserves, especially in the time of COVID.

The most pressing issue at that point was to work out the cost of keeping the building open and closed and taking steps rapidly to minimise the financial impact on the charity.

The process of wrapping up the social club included terminating the relationship with the brewery, negotiating with Chris Norton and Michela about refurbishment and installation that had been done to the building and learning how the building works - fire safety, insurance, utilities etc.

Thanks to a generous move by Chris, and Jan's ongoing expertise and support, we took the decision to keep the building open and to get users into the premises as soon as possible. Both New Lion and Pizzalogica were keen to come into the building but neither knew how COVID might affect their businesses. We took the decision to charge a low user fee to enable them to get started but included clauses in user agreements to review these charges depending on their respective success.

We also wanted to open the building up to sports and recreation clubs as soon as permitted.

After a very successful community effort we cleaned and completely de-cluttered the upstairs space. This is now regularly used by Aikaido, sub aqua and ballet - old users. We also have tai chi on a Tuesday night and a stream of ad hoc bookings including a drama group, local schools for training etc.

We successfully fund-raised for improvements to the windows and heating system and as well as attracting funding for a disabled toilet (still to be installed).

Thanks to the lifting of COVID restrictions and a good summer both businesses have thrived. We have created a very popular hub for families. Swimming, playing, eating, meeting. Both have been more successful than we might have imagined.

Both organisations get on well together and are considerate users of the building. Ed, from NL, for example, has managed booking of the upstairs rooms for us. We received concerning feedback from Robins about the behaviour of some customers and some concerns about noise. Ed has acted quickly to respond and we are in regular touch with Robins to ensure we are being considerate neighbours.

We have been in discussion with both about their user agreements and their contributions to running costs. Jinty has done some excellent work developing a sensible formula for determining each organisations contribution to rates, insurance, gas, water and electricity. Due to the differential use of electricity e.g. the pizza ovens, we are installing meters to monitor usage by Pizzalogica.

Through the combination of usage fees and payment for bills, we will be at the point of generating surpluses to reinvest in maintenance and repair of the building. In addition, we have a regular stream of revenue from the pop-up caterers and room bookings.

We have engaged a cleaner 2 hours per week to keep the upstairs clean.

We have installed door handles that are controlled by a key pad to the upper door and lower door. This means users can access the building without a key holder and when they leave, we know it will be secure.

In summary, in the space of six months we have turned the building around from being a potential mill stone to the charity to a viable facility providing a valuable service to the community.

The working party has fulfilled its brief. We now need a group willing to oversee the management of the building and to look to the future - a re-build or refurbishment.

I need to step down from this role and am hoping my colleagues, who have been brilliant to work with, can pick up the baton for the next phase.

Louise was thanked for her contribution.

Margaret asked what Louise thought the next phase for the subgroup would be, Louise highlighted communication with the commercial and other users including the pop-up caterers; managing the processes of bookings and invoices, dealing with repairs and maintenance issues, opening up the building advertising its availability to the community and developing a plan for the future.

Jinty suggested it would be good to see the snooker room back in use. Helen asked about Silver Churn and skittles. Louise pointed out it was difficult to manage the return of all previous users, Silver Churn are now using the village hall and the

skittles club use the rugby club. Mandy pointed out that repairs and maintenance may give the building 5 years but long-term planning is essential.

**7.Pool pavilion Sub group** Margaret reported Meadowbrook FC and the pool committee have worked cooperatively to avoid clashes of use, through the summer.

Jinty's management of the completion of the necessary repairs to the pavilion following the burst pipe, has been hugely appreciated. The squirrels have been cleared from the roof space and access points have been blocked -we hope! Carole organised the kitchen upgrade, the alarm is fitted and emergency lighting is near completion. The outstanding item is floor covering.

The group will work with the pool committee over the winter to ensure the plans for the pool upgrade move forward and that the future of the pavilion (which is not part of the pool fundraising strategy) is fit for purpose given the growing use of the outdoor spaces- MUGGA, bike track, increased number of teams using the field.

**Swimming pool** Helen's report attached

Helen added that there had been some problems reported of break-in and use of the pool at night. Free swim sessions had been offered to the football teams, the children's teams took up the offer, but the adult team did not.

Helen asked if the DRA would hold the proceeds of fundraising towards the refurbishment for the pool committee. **This was agreed**

**Bex** reported that full planning permission will be required for the refurbishment. The bike track planning cost £5,000 and she thought the pools would be about the same amount. A refurbishment group will need to be established to manage the process and for crowd funding.

Jinty asked if the schools who use the pool could help with some of the costs. Charlotte said Dartington Primary has allocated a large part of its PE budget to swimming lessons to help the children catch up. Alan pointed out that every primary gets £16,000 a year and a per capita allowance for sport activities. He suggested cycle, swim and run days in the summer term for year 6 pupils- he **offered to share the programme devised for these days.**

**8.Bike track group** Mandy reported notes attached

The proposed build date in October may be delayed while the landscape and ecology plan is implemented. DHT retained responsibility for trees on the land and they need to organise the cutting. Mandy asked if trustees are happy for the group to flesh out the plan commissioned, Will asked Jinty if she would liaise with Mandy about the details, Jinty agreed.

Having lost the trustee who managed the coppicing we may need to find more volunteers to implement the landscape management plans into the future. Also Cycle England will only release grant funding once bills have been paid, so there may be a need for the DRA to fund the gap. Alan pointed out the S106 money can be

accessed earlier in these circumstances. Louise said she would like to build a relationship with someone in Cycle England to understand how they fund and what the delay might be. A user agreement for the bike track group needs to be prepared in readiness for the group formally taking on the management of the track. The insurance would need to be paid by the DRA if a functioning bike track committee is not established.

## **9.Reports**

**Play park** see attached report

Sarah thanked Bex for her work with the young people at Dart Academy, particularly from one you man who has been out to check “his” plants regularly!

**TSAC** see attached report

**Meadowbrook Athletic FC** Will is their trustee, but cannot continue. The club was in the Charity Shield, they have a changing membership. A user agreement is in place till June 2022. The grass cutting and line marking needs to be coordinated to save the need to redo!

**Totnes and Dartington Football club** see attached report

Jinty pointed out that the S106 moneys for drainage of the Dorothy Elmhurst field cannot be accessed till all the houses are occupied which will be many years. The ditch which was cleared some time ago, helped drain the field, but it is now becoming overgrown again. Alan agreed to look at it and see if a volunteer effort could clear it.

**10. Community Day** this will now be scheduled for the spring

**Trustee session** on vision strategy and organisation: Will would like to schedule this in early December.

**11. Defibrillator:** £1500 from DPC St Johns Ambulance are advising. The total cost will be £2,300 and Will advised that he will be asking for donations from schools and clubs to make up the difference

## **12. AOB**

Jinty will send all trustees the required bank mandate signature form and will collect them all.

Margaret reminded trustees that 2022 is the Diamond Jubilee of DRA and we need ideas for the year on the agenda of the next meeting.

