

**BUXTON CIVIC ASSOCIATION LIMITED**  
**Minutes of the 41<sup>st</sup> AGM**  
**Held at Poole's Cavern Visitor Centre on 14 June 2010**

**Present**

Paul Dinsdale (Chairman)	Martin Wragg	John Boardman
Peter Phillipson	Mike Monaghan	Peter Stacey
Clive Beattie	Rod McKay	Olive Middleton
Rosie Hughes	Arthur Packham	Betty Packham
Alistair Rogerson	David Pritchard	Pat Robinson
Keith Robinson	Peter Skinner	David Lewis
Chris Wilson	Irene Wilson	Mary Monaghan
Paddy Gore	Margaret Schofield	Frank Dent
Mel Stevens	Brian Shawcross	Clive Morton
Margaret Morton	Trevor Donald	Hilary Armitage
Peter Thornley	Joan Thornley	Angela Wills
Paula Hobdey	Eileen Carlile	Jon White
Michael Bryant	Brenda Bryant	Thelma Fraser
Liz Saunders	Ian Saunders	

**1. Apologies**

Apologies for absence had been received from the following members:

Ken Smith	Kath Smith	Bill Preece
Hilary Lawrence	Brian Cowlishaw	Colin Carpenter
Lyn Noble	June Noble	Philip Astill
Margaret Astill	J B Grice	Tim Middleton
Geoffrey Willis	Freda Willis	Stephanie Low
John Rawicz-Sczerbo	Isobel Rawicz-Sczerbo	Eunice Rolland
Jean Pendlebury	Trevor Gilman	Margery Sherwood
P L Hobby	Trevor Johnson	Stella Johnson
Lois Brooks	Kenneth George Parker	Leonard Colin Carpenter
Betty Lindsay	Judith Ramczyk	H L Williams
Gwenfa Thomas	Thomas Tuson	Jean Ball
Andrew Rothwell	Derrick Bowden	May Marchington
Bill Ward	Joan Ward	Diane White
Anne Vesey	John Vesey	Meg Pritchard

**2. Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Company held on 15 June 2009 had been distributed in advance of the meeting with the Agenda. The Chairman invited the meeting to take the minutes as read and that was unanimously agreed. Mr Bryant seconded by Mr Beattie then proposed that the minutes be adopted as a true record of that meeting. There was one abstention but all other members present so agreed and the Chairman declared them duly adopted.

**3. Directors Report**

The Chairman presented the directors reports to the meeting. He noted that at the 2009 AGM the report then delivered covered the 12 months up to the date of that meeting and he therefore proposed to report now on the 12 months that had elapsed between the 2009 AGM and the present meeting. Mr Dinsdale stated that he would lead the report but ask a

number of other directors to contribute: Mr Wragg regarding the Cycle Trail, Mr Monaghan on Environmental Policy and Mr Phillipson on the work of Woodlands Committee. Following conclusion of the formal business of the AGM Mrs Hughes and Mr Bryant would give a short presentation regarding the new BCA website.

Mr Dinsdale advised that the financial performance of the Company during 2009 had been excellent as a result of hard work and effective co-operation by the treasurer, other directors, members, management and staff. Sound financial management, gift aid and Go Ape rent had all contributed to this as, ironically, so had the economic downturn. This had enabled the Board to recognise the contribution of staff by the award of a Christmas bonus. However poor weather conditions had resulted in a less encouraging start to 2010 which coincided with commencement of capital repayments on our loans necessitating careful control of expenditure as we looked to improve performance during the remainder of the year.

The Chairman thanked Trevor Donald, Pat Cadwallader and Arthur Packham together with other members of the Community and Membership Committee for their work in organising a varied programme of events during the last 12 months. Attendance at some events had been disappointing and the Committee had therefore distributed a questionnaire with the last newsletter inviting members to indicate what they would like to be included in a calendar of future events. Mr Dinsdale thanked John and Isobel Rawicz-Sczerbo for hosting the very successful summer garden party at Greenmoor “profits” from which helped fund the **Ring of Trees** guide book. The Planning Committee had also organised a members meeting to discuss the Sainsbury planning application and he thanked Hilary Lawrence, Peter Wright, Steve Robinson and Mike Bryant for organising this and Richard Silson for leading the presentation. BCA had also held a members meeting and then organised a public meeting to discuss the Cycle Trail Proposal and Mr Dinsdale invited Mr Wragg to report on current developments with that project at this point.

Mr Wragg reported that subsequent to the public meeting at the Pavilion Gardens which many members had attended the project had evolved both as regards delivery generally and the Staker Hill section described in the planning application which had prompted the public meeting. Various improvements to the Staker Hill section had been identified, some of those in response to expressions of concern by local residents, the most significant of which was to divert the trail away from cottages on Grinlow Road and through the carpark of the Parks Inn. Another had been to extend the Staker Hill section all the way to Ladmanlow to incorporate land within the HSE site consequent upon HSE offering to construct and provide a free carpark for trail users. It was expected that the revised Staker Hill planning application would be submitted within a few weeks and that works would commence in the autumn.

Whilst pressing on with work on the Monsal Trail sections the Peak Park had been considering difficulties that it had in delivery of work where the trail crossed private land outside the Peak Park which arose from its statutory remit. A solution had been identified which involved creating a new private company limited by guarantee which would seek registration as a charity dedicated to construction and maintenance of those sections of the trail. Peak Park had agreed to provide technical and other assistance, to transfer those parts of the grant provided for these sections and to raise grant funding for the remainder of the budget. The new company would then take leases and licences from other

landowners including a licence from BCA to construct a trail across the western edge of Grinlow Woods in that location identified as being most suitable by Woodlands Committee. Other planning applications including that for Grinlow Woods would be submitted in the autumn in the hope that all planning consents would be obtained before the year end and contracts entered into with landowners so that other works could be undertaken in 2011.

The Chairman then resumed his address and offered his view that the creation of the **Ring of Trees** walk and publication of the guide book were the jewel in the crown of BCA's achievement this year and he gave thanks to John and Gill Boardman both for the idea and its delivery. Members were entitled to a free copy of the guide and it was proposed to use it to promote BCA to new members.

Mr Dinsdale advised that aspirations for the coming year included consolidating the trading position, undertaking detailed surveys of the woodlands, preparing management plans and undertaking improvements to the woods; replacing the Cavern lighting with state of the art LED lighting; and establishing permanent and travelling exhibitions to promote BCA and encourage new members.

Mr Dinsdale reminded members that at the previous year's AGM he had mentioned that Arthur Tomlinson was then gravely ill and he had passed away only two days later. Arthur had served as director for over 20 years and Mr Dinsdale considered that BCA would never find a truer friend and he had been pleased to deliver an address at his memorial service.

Mr Dinsdale also gave thanks to other directors who had or were shortly to depart, albeit less dramatically. These included Mrs Hughes who had worked diligently with Communications Committee and had introduced her daughter as the Association's web master. Mrs Hughes would shortly relocate to Cornwall but she and her daughter would continue to assist for the foreseeable future. Mr Boardman was also relocating whilst maintaining a base in Buxton and would therefore continue with his role as treasurer for the time being with the assistance of Brian Shawcross who had agreed to accept the role of assistant treasurer. The Chairman considered that John had been an outstanding treasurer who had guided BCA through major development projects and established sound financial management strategies. Both he and Gill had made a considerable contribution. Mark Sisson had also recently retired as director and from his role as Chair of Corporate Affairs Committee and the Chairman thanked him for his efforts in developing the Visitor Centre business. Mr Dinsdale also wanted to welcome a new director, Alistair Rogerson, who had been recently appointed and had agreed to chair the Membership and Community Committee, taking over from Ken Smith who would continue to be a member of that committee and would also continue his work collating the BCA archive.

Mr Dinsdale then thanked the various committees for their work. He noted that the Planning Committee had been particularly busy in considering the applications for the redevelopment of the Spring Gardens Shopping Centre and the proposed housing development at Templemore. Mr Walker had given evidence to the public enquiry regarding the Town Green application on the latter site. The Planning Group had also reviewed the proposed development of Cowdale Quarry and would participate in the consultation regarding the local transport policy.

The Community and Membership Committee was consulting members to assess what they wanted from BCA and he urged members to contribute to the debate. The Committee also intended to establish a civic award programme. The Group has also produced a new leaflet about BCA to assist with recruitment of new members.

Mr Dinsdale thought that the work of Corporate Affairs Committee was less glamorous but vital to the administration of BCA and management of the Visitor Centre business. He offered thanks to the secretary for his role on that committee and on the Board and for advising both when required.

Mr Dinsdale then introduced Mr Monaghan to talk about the Environmental Policy adopted a year earlier, which he had prepared and reviewed. Mr Monaghan stated that BCA was committed to protecting and enhancing the environment in Buxton and wanted to reflect that with high environmental standards in its own activities. The policy had been adopted in May 2009 and an audit undertaken the following month and that had been subject to a progress review undertaken recently.

Mr Monaghan considered that the management and staff of the Visitor Centre shared the concern about environmental issues, had regard to these in operating the Visitor Centre and management of the ecologically sensitive woodland. Cash limitations had prevented BCA doing as much as it wanted to in woodland management but the Board and Woodlands Committee were committed to doing more as the financial situation improved. The Visitor Centre and Poole's Cavern had high energy demands but some steps had been taken to minimise energy use and further improvements were under consideration.

Many of the actions identified a year ago had been implemented, ranging from energy use to including environmental considerations when sourcing products and suppliers. Further actions are planned for the next 12 months including installation of low energy lighting in the Cavern. Other proposals included capturing rainwater to supply the toilets, reviewing environmental and animal welfare issues of food purchase and staff training on environmental issues.

The Chairman then spoke about the work of Communications Committee. The Committee has responsibility for publicity, PR, the newsletter, website, membership leaflet and exhibition materials. Olive Middleton's efforts have ensured that the local press publishes around 30 articles about BCA each year which contributes to the profile of the organisation. During the last 12 months the Committee has created a new BCA website which will go live imminently. It will inform members and the public of BCA activities and enable easier communication between members and directors. It will also facilitate electronic distribution of information about meetings, which was authorised by a resolution at the 2009 AGM amending the constitution. Members are requested to provide written consent to electronic communications and their email address. Work on a permanent BCA exhibition at the Visitor Centre and a mobile exhibition has commenced and is continuing. Mr Dinsdale thanked Olive, Rosie Hughes and Charlotte Tangye for their hard work on these projects.

Development Committee chaired by Bill Preece is arranging funding to enable the antiquated lighting system in Poole's Cavern to be replaced. New infrastructure and LED

light fittings will be installed each of which will be individually programmable in terms of switching, fading and colour. This will provide a much improved visitor experience and be capable of tailored special effects for individual events. It will also have environmental benefits in terms of reduced power consumption and minimising heat generation which is damaging to the cave environment. Nearly half the estimated cost of £60,000 has been raised from a grant through the Lafarge Aggregates Scheme and an application for the balance has been made to the Derbyshire Aggregate Levy Grant Scheme. Meanwhile the Committee together with Mark Sisson and John Boardman have been reviewing and evaluating the performance of the various elements of the business conducted at the Visitor Centre with a view to improving the offering and its profitability.

Mr Dinsdale then introduced Peter Phillipson to report on the activities of Woodlands Committee. Mr Phillipson offered thanks to his Committee for their work in a busy year, especially the secretary, Trevor Donald. He acknowledged the contributions of retired members, Bill and Joan Ward and Richard Niseley-Marple. He welcomed four new members, Peter Burgess Allen, Maria Hurlston, Mel Stevens and Patti Hoskins.

The Committee had considered the proposal to construct the Cycle Trail through Grinlow Woods and had looked at a number of alternatives before identifying and approving the best solution along the western edge of the woods. The Committee had also considered a planning application by Persimmon Homes for a housing development on Templemore Fields adjoining Sherbrook Woods. Unfortunately High Peak Borough Council had granted a planning consent for the development without imposing conditions that would be effective in protecting the woods in consequence of which it was likely that a number of mature beech trees would need to be felled.

A survey of the woodlands infrastructure had been undertaken to identify priorities for improvement and to assist in planning future work. Corbar had been identified as the first priority. Path improvements had already been undertaken and it was expected that stone walls, styles and gates would be re-built this autumn. New entrance signs had been placed at all entrances to all woods in recent months and the Ring of Trees way marking undertaken. The glades in Grinlow were an SSSI and required annual maintenance. Preparation of new orienteering maps would assist woodlands management as did the land terrier produced by Mr Wragg. Consultants had been instructed to undertake a tree condition survey to identify any in dangerous condition.

In answer to a question from Mr Wilson, Mr Phillipson confirmed that BCA did own the pond in Gadley Wood and that maintenance works in relation to it were under consideration. Mr Morton enquired whether BCA owned the pathway from Holmfield into Grinlow Woods which was the proposed access for the Cycle Trail and Mr Wragg confirmed that it did.

Mr Dinsdale then concluded the directors report by offering thanks for their support to the vice chairman, treasurer and secretary, respectively Hilary Lawrence, John Boardman and Martin Wragg. He also thanked the Committee Chairs and all directors for their quiet endeavours and commitment. Mr Dinsdale also wanted to give special thanks to the Communications Team for their work in developing the website and exhibitions in addition to their routine tasks. He also extended his thanks to all those members who assisted by serving on various committees or with woodland and garden maintenance.

The Chairman also wanted to extend his thanks to the staff led by Alan Walker whose role carries particular responsibility since BCA has no executive directors. He was assisted by our conscientious administrator, enthusiastic senior guides and the other guiding staff and catering staff, all of whom made great efforts to deliver a high quality service to visitors.

Mr Dinsdale also wanted to acknowledge the assistance provided by grant providers including:

The Derbyshire Aggregate Levy Grant Scheme.

Lafarge Industries.

The Derbyshire Dales and High Peak Accessibility Partnership.

The Bingham and Satterthwaite Trusts.

The Waitrose Community Matters Programme.

In concluding the report Mr Dinsdale thanked all members for their interest, support and commitment. This was their association and should respond to their needs and requirements. He urged members to contribute to the discussion about how BCA could best serve its members.

#### **4. Annual Accounts**

Mr Boardman presented the accounts for the year ending 31 December 2009. He noted that at the beginning of that year BCA had an overdraft facility of £20,000 and relied on it through the winter but at the year end there was no overdraft and a current balance of £30,000 which was sufficient to meet expenditure during the closed season. He regarded that turnaround as a testament to the efforts and commitment of staff.

The accounts showed a surplus of £30,535 during 2009 which was less than the previous year, but that was a consequence of a substantial amount of grant assistance received during the previous year. The accounts showed a year on year increase in trading income of 15% reflecting the increase in visitor numbers and Go Ape rental income was up £11,000. Gift aid had also increased substantially due to the efforts of staff and in return visitors were entitled to a subsequent visit free of admissions fee. Year on year expenditure had increased by 17% but that reflected business decisions. Penalties had been paid on cancelling hire contracts for vending machines after it was identified that they were unprofitable. More money had been spent on managing the woodlands, which had been the rationale for redevelopment of the Visitor Centre to improve trade. A new workshop had replaced the old shed, the exhibition space had been completed and new café furniture acquired. Security had been upgraded following a break-in and new carpark alligators installed. Performance had also been enhanced when interest charges were less than provided for in the budget.

Mr Boardman reported that the audit had been trouble free and the accountants had been satisfied with the financial management. The Visitor Centre had also undergone an inspection by HMRC who had expressed satisfaction. The economic environment and early season inclement weather suggested that 2010 might be more difficult. Visitor numbers and income to the end of April were 15% down on budget and approximately £30,000 below where he would like to have been at this stage of the year. Expenditure would need to be carefully monitored and adjusted as necessary to keep it within income receipts. However the result of changes in the set-up and offering of the café had been very successful and exceeded expectations. Caution was necessary because capital

repayments on the loans taken to finance the Visitor Centre redevelopment commenced in May and would continue for the next 10 years.

Mr Packham proposed that the accounts be adopted, Mrs Hughes seconded the motion and the members voted unanimously to adopt them.

## **5. Appointment of Director**

5.1. The Chairman introduced Alistair Rogerson who had been appointed as a director by the Board on 17 May and advised that Mr Rogerson had agreed to act as Chair of Community and Membership Committee in succession to Mr Smith. The appointment needed to be confirmed by the members at the next meeting following his appointment. Mr Wragg seconded by Dr Donald proposed that Mr Rogerson's appointment be confirmed and the meeting approved that proposal unanimously.

## **5.2. Re-election of Directors**

Mr Dinsdale reminded members that the Articles required that one third of serving directors retired by rotation each year but are eligible for re-election. The retiring directors this year were Messrs Boardman, Dinsdale, Preece and Sisson and Mrs Lawrence. All had offered themselves for re-election save Mr Sisson who had resigned his directorship for personal reasons. Mrs Hobdey proposed that they be re-elected en-bloc, Mr Wragg seconded the proposal and it was unanimously adopted by those members present.

## **6. Auditors**

The Chairman advised that it was necessary to re-appoint the auditors every year. Smith Cooper had acted as BCA auditor for many years and were willing to continue. Mr Boardman proposed that they be re-appointed, Mrs Middleton seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the members present.

## **7. Any Other Business**

7.1. Dr Donald wished to take the opportunity to remind members of two forthcoming events. The following evening there was a flower walk through Millersdale guided by a professional botanist. On Monday next 20 members of Bollington Civic Society would visit Buxton to view the Visitor Centre, walk in Grinlow Woods and take refreshment in the café.

7.2. Mr Morton wished to offer a point of information that the email address set out in the secretary's letter to members did not work and was presumably incorrect. The secretary apologised and confirmed that it would be corrected in any future correspondence.

7.3. The Chairman thereupon declared the meeting closed, there being no other business. He reminded members that the meeting would be immediately followed by an informal presentation of the new BCA website.