

# Woodchester Parish Council

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## **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2015 in the Endowed School, North Woodchester at 7pm**

### **Present**

Cllr. Hamilton (Chair)

Cllrs. Baldauf, McNealey, Swait and Warnes

Ann Bijkerk (clerk)

Ray Canham, Woodchester Mansion Trust

9 members of the public

### **Welcome**

Cllr. Hamilton welcomed everyone present and explained that the purpose of the Annual Parish Meeting is to review what local groups have achieved and to hear what is planned for the coming year. Our village organisations do a great deal and it's what helps to make the quality of life in the village so attractive.

### **Apologies for Absence**

Cllrs. Baynham-Honri and Lead

Rhiannon Wigzell, District Councillor

George Bastin, St. Loes

Diana Fowler, Seys and Bridges,

## **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2014**

The Council approved the minutes of last year's meeting as a true record. This was proposed by Cllr. Swait and seconded by Cllr. Warnes.

### **Presentation by Ray Canham of the Woodchester Mansion Trust**

The Trust was set up in 1989 and is responsible for the Mansion and its vicinity. The National Trust (NT) owns the park and the track leading from the car park to the Mansion. At the end of 2013 the trustees produced a strategy for the next seven to eight years. The aim is to ensure the business is self-sustaining, without the need for grant-giving organisations. A large amount of expenditure is required for the restoration of the building and they are currently working hand-to-mouth. The Trust would like to see the building restored to the state it was left in 1869. This involves replacing a great deal of damaged stone.

Blocks in the Chapel are currently supported by scaffolding which will be replaced by acrow props. The Chapel roof is also in need of repair.

Ray's estimate was that a cost of £10 million is required to get to this stage and for the resulting building to be stable for the next 100 years.

The Trust would like to see the business grow as a visitor attraction, hoping to attract up to 50,000 per year and to become a first class visitor attraction. The desired income could also

be achieved by holding more high quality events with a lower footfall. Last year there were 7-8,000 paying visitors through the ticket office, but many more who spent money in the tea shop whilst walking through the park. The tea shop has improved a great deal since Jo Scriven was appointed and a new kitchen was installed.

The Trust also hopes to work closely with the National Trust to improve the track. This would enable the Mansion Trust volunteers to run more journeys per hour from both the NT and Mansion car parks and hence have the capacity to transport more visitors down to the Mansion.

Personnel has seen many changes over the past year. Kate Howe has been appointed as Chief Executive and her main role will be fund-raising. It is hoped that £3-4 million can be achieved through the Heritage Lottery Fund.

A Visitor Services Manager has just been appointed to take over managing events from Lisa Jamieson.

A question was raised by a member of the public concerning plans for expansion of parking facilities. Ray explained that the Trust are very conscious of the issues, but are expecting the increase in visitor numbers to be gradual. The National Trust are keen to improve and expand parking in their car park and Kate Howe is working to foster relations with the National Trust. On the days on which the Mansion Trust car park at the top of the drive is open, it requires two volunteers, one to run the minibus and one to supervise the car park and to ensure it is promptly closed by 5.30pm.

The footpath from the lower end of the valley (from Woodchester Valley Village) was an issue of concern. The footpath is poor and in need of improvement. This is not the responsibility of The Mansion Trust and Gloucestershire County Council would need to be contacted to advise on improving the state of the path.

The Mansion Trust is also working with the National Trust for brown signs to help visitors find their way without getting lost in the village!

One resident had visited the tea shop in the past and was unable to pay by credit card. Ray confirmed that facilities are now in place to pay by card.

Ray was thanked by Cllr. Hamilton for his interesting update on The Mansion and for giving his time.

### **Cllr. Gervase Hamilton - Report on Parish Council business over the past year**

Cllr. Hamilton summarised the Parish Council report.

Two councillors have resigned this year, but have been replaced by Paul Baynham-Honri and Katharine McNealey.

There have been many Government directives again this year, particularly linked with localism. Lots of discussion has taken place around Neighbourhood Plans. Councillors felt it not necessary to undertake this process as we have already completed a Village Design Statement and Parish Plan.

Our Parish boundaries have been maintained after the Boundary Commission Report. We shouldn't see any major development as a result of Stroud District Council's Local Plan, but some infill may take place.

Affordable housing was identified as a need in both our Village Design Statements and Parish Plan. Karen Phimister from the GRCC (Gloucestershire Rural Communities Council) recently approached the Parish Council to carry out a survey to assess the need for

affordable housing in the village, receiving approximately 160 responses. The results of this survey will be presented at the Parish Council meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July.

The issue of a lease from Gloucestershire County Council has led to delay in the construction of mountain bike trails. It is now the bird nesting season and it is therefore likely to be late summer before work is underway.

The Parish Council has also been working on improving the website, introducing Facebook and installing and renovating notice boards in the village to improve communications with residents.

Rod Harris was thanked for his work on the Woodchester Word.

The Village Shop appears to be a success and the village should be proud of all the work which has been done.

### **Planning**

Concerns still remain about the future of Rooksmoor Mills and the issue of The Convent advertising as being open for business when the access road has not yet been granted permission.

The application for a Certificate of Lawful Use as a petrol filling station in relation to the car wash on the A46 was recently refused permission. We await to hear a decision on the whether the car wash is granted permission. The Parish Council opposed the application primarily on the grounds that the proposal on a busy junction will create a dangerous situation.

### **Jenny Bailey – Priory Church**

Jenny Bailey made residents aware that their Church Magazine is available to purchase at a cost of £2.50.

Cllr. Hamilton and residents praised the efforts made in restoring the Wayside Cross, which now looks very impressive.

### **Malcolm Swait – Events**

Open Gardens has been organised for the 6<sup>th</sup> June and the Produce Show will take place in September. There will possibly be a re-run of the popular football match against Woodchester Football Club. All information on events organised by the Events Committee is on the village website and notice boards. Jenny Bailey also offered to publish details in the Priory Church weekly bulletin.

### **Historical Society – Katharine McNealey**

The Society has a very healthy number of members and the next meeting will take place on 2<sup>nd</sup> June when David Smith will speak about William Tyndale and the origins of the King James Bible. New members are always welcome.

### **Comments and Question from Members of the Public**

Concerned was raised that the bus services provided by Cotswold Green which go through the village on Tuesdays and Fridays could be stopped if they do not become more popular.

It was felt that residents may be unaware of these services and that the Parish Council could make their existence better known by advertising the times on the village noticeboards. Concern over resident's safety crossing the A46 at Station Road was raised. Cllr. Hamilton outlined measures taken in the past couple of years and communication with Gloucestershire Highways to try to improve safety. The Parish Council will look again at approaching Gloucestershire Highways to ask that a traffic island be installed.

Cllr. Hamilton explained there has been an issue recently with the Cotswold Green bus being unable to get through the High Street. There is concern that there are times when an emergency vehicle would not be able to reach some properties. A letter will shortly be delivered to residents in the High Street asking that they are considerate when parking and asking for suggestions to improve the situation.

It was suggested that local journalist Ben Falconer be contacted to help publicise local issues.

Concerning the proposed designation of the cycle track, one resident asked what it means to be 'undesignated'. Councillors explained that without a designation, the 'cycle track' could be used for means other than bicycles. Although it is a Sustrans route, it could currently be used by horse riders for example. The Parish Council have been told that a consultation will take place before any decision is made.

The meeting was closed at 8.25pm followed by refreshments.

Chair .....

Date .....