



Minutes of Branch Committee Meeting:

Tuesday 6 February 2017

at The Organ Grinder, Portland Street, Newark

Attendance: Liz Mayle (Chair), Stephen Bradwell (Secretary), Rose Thompson (Treasurer), Jason Mordan, Roy Lewis, Chris McKinney, Rob Walker, Kelly Appleton-Swaine, Ros Worrall, Jane Roylance and Fiona Newton

Apologies: Becky Waddington, Paul Grundy & Liz Blood

Guest: Carla Pianese, IHBC Branch Support & Events Officer

Minutes of Last Meeting

Agreed, except for one change to make clear that in the discussion on conservation areas it was intended that it should be a celebration of conservation areas in general not just a focus on Lincolnshire.

Chair's Report & Business Plan

Liz introduced Carla Pianese, IHBC Branch Support & Events Officer, as a guest to the meeting to give some support to the Branch's project to celebrate the 50th anniversary of conservation areas.

1. 50 Years of Conservation Areas Celebrations

Liz introduced the first item and noted that the Business Plan had not included any provision for the conservation area celebrations as this was project had come about since the last AGM.

Liz updated the Committee on recent correspondence with Sean O'Reilly (IHBC Director) regarding the Branch's proposals for the conservation area celebrations and also her attendance at a recent meeting at Stamford to discuss the conservation area events at the end of September. Liz reported that Sean appeared keen to support the Branch's proposals to produce a

software application to highlight the impact of incremental changes to domestic buildings within conservation areas and the benefits of Article 4 Directions (A4D), with a view to it being widely used by the public and planning officers alike.

Liz had also had discussions with a software developer and Sean had suggested that the Branch needed to work with Carla and Fiona from the main office to develop the project.

Fiona circulated an outline brief for discussion for a possible software app, although she explained that it was difficult to give more detailed technical specifications until it was clear what exactly what was required, but once agreed the brief could then be used to get comparative prices and access to other funding.

It was proposed to start the app with a simple pair of generic buildings, with the possibility of adding other buildings in future, and to list the sort of changes that could be made to the buildings.

Liz pointed out that she had received a quote between £2,500 - £4,000 to cater for up to five examples with a range graphics, and that there was a need to allow 10 weeks for the development process.

There was then a general discussion about the scope and nature of the project and the time scale.

Jason thought that it might be useful if the app could include the issue of cladding, which people were using to improve the efficiency of their homes but which had an impact on the appearance of their properties. Fiona commented that a replacement for 'Stitch in Time' was being prepared and green deal type issues could be included in this new guide, whereas the app should look at the changes people can do and highlight necessary to highlight their impact.

Chris had some concerns about taking a negative approach, but he recognised that the legislation allows changes to be made and the app should highlight the impact of such piecemeal changes.

Rob referred to the positive approach taken by East Lindsey in Woodhall Spa, where he was trying to introduce a Local Development Order to encourage positive changes in restoration works alongside an A4D.

Fiona suggested the app could be used to show the positive impact of reinstatement works and it could also promote the use of A4D in conservation areas, as Liz pointed out, the designation of conservation areas without A4D could often make the designation worthless. Rob also highlighted the importance of follow up enforcement action with unauthorised changes.

Chris thought that it would be useful to show the changes both backwards and forwards.

Fiona noted that the brief would form the basis for competitive quotes, but the final decision did not need to be made on cost alone, and in response to a query from Chris she noted that the tender process would be secured through IHBC central office.

Ros queried whether we were fixed to the amount of images, particularly as she also noted the importance of keeping the users' interest.

Fiona also suggested that we also needed to consider the next step, such as adding the app to the IHBC website, and whilst it would target a professional-led audience, this was not necessarily the core audience.

Liz thought it important to get the app into planning departments to ensure that conservation areas held their value in the future and to try to address the resistance to A4D, which she thought could operate successfully when people are aware of the restrictions.

Fiona thought the app also needed to address a wider professional audience, and Liz referred to the ongoing debate about conservation areas with Civic Voice raising questions about conservation areas in Parliament. The app therefore needed to be an informative tool used by professionals and semi-professional as well as homeowners.

Liz also hoped that it could be launched at Stamford in September with a professional lecture about conservation areas and the use of proactive tools to protect conservation areas.

Roy thought that the app was a good idea and that it was important to promote conservation areas, but we also needed to consider townscape which he thought was a key element of conservation areas that tends to get ignored, it was not just about individual buildings. Therefore conservation area controls should highlight the importance of townscapes.

Roy was also concerned about an over-emphasis on A4D and dry planning legislation, and thought it best to steer away from legislation, and to use the app as an educational tool to show changes both positive and negative. Fiona also expressed concern about being too tied to the PD allowances as the app would then need to track keep track of any changes and PD allowances were open to different interpretations in different areas.

Roy agreed that the app should not to go too much into technicalities, instead it should celebrate conservation areas, but it should also to look at the impact of changes on the street scene, noting that fences and walls were as important windows and doors, and the app could show the impact of reinstating boundaries and removing car standing areas and the treatment of gap sites. But overall Roy thought that the emphasis should be positive, highlighting the benefits getting it right.

Chris noted this brings it back to considering the audience and the objectives of the app.

Liz pointed out that this should be a tool to help hard-pressed planning departments protect the conservation areas in the future.

Rob agreed that it was necessary to highlight the positives, and to get the message out to a wider audience, but he was wary of getting too bogged down on discussing gap sites and the use of traditional designs.

Roy also noted that the September timescale was very tight and suggested that we start with a basic model that could be placed on the IHBC web-site, which could then be developed, but he was concerned about the inclusion of green deal issues. Jason noted that people were changing their properties for different reasons, and therefore you had to consider the audience for the app.

Roy also thought it had to get away from the idea of the planning officer telling people what they could do. Rob pointed out that having emphasised the positives, the app still needed to recognise that there were controls available in conservation areas and the app could be an important tool in showing property owners how to restore character. Rob also suggested exploring the opportunity of linking the app to the planning portal.

Ros also thought it important to show the 'sense of place', but the app needed to provide information to suit the audience with links to many more technical information. Liz mentioned the SPAB web-site as an example of a website that provides different levels of access and information, and although the app should be for anyone to use, it would also give the planning officer an opportunity to promote good practice.

Roy also thought the brief needed to make clear that this was a pilot project that could then be developed given the timescales.

Liz queried the costs of using photographs to illustrate the app, but Fiona noted the app would probably need to use graphics based on photographs, so as not to identify people's houses.

Liz raised the issue of costs, and how the project could be paid for. Roy noted that this was not just a local project, but was meant for the whole country, and Liz pointed out that Sean had been amenable to providing some funding, but some would need to be raised by the Branch.

Rose confirmed that there was £469 in the current account allocated for the Annual School bursary with a further £1,067 remaining from the Buxton fund. Liz noted the need to consider the Branch's activities, such as sending people to the Annual School and being involved in promoting a national project.

Rob noted that the Branch could probably afford the Annual School and then use the rest of the Buxton money. Fiona suggested that if the Branch could put some money into the pot this would encourage funding from other areas such as the IHBC, the HLF and others.

Fiona also added that there had been mention of holding a conservation fair in Stamford in September alongside the conservation area celebrations and this would require money for room hire. Kelly noted that a similar event in Lincolnshire had been charged £250 for room hire.

Liz mentioned that Chris Surfleet of Bidwells, who was working in partnership with the Council to organise events, was looking hold a day of professional lectures and was asking people if they wanted slots within the day's events, which would be labelled as an IHBC event.

Fiona suggested that it would be useful if the Branch could send someone, possibly to launch the app, otherwise to give a general talk about conservation areas.

In response Roy offered to deliver a lecture on conservation areas and Rob also mentioned that he would also be happy to talk about the use of A4Dt and local development orders in conservation areas to both restrict and promote changes.

Liz therefore suggested that we should amend the brief based on the Committee's comments and then use it to find competitive quotes, but we had to agree how much the Branch would commit to the scheme.

Rob noted that as the Branch AGM had approved the Annual School bursary then it had to go ahead.

In addition Liz also wanted to offer support for the conservation fair.

Liz proposed that the Branch commit £500 from the Buxton fund to the development of the app, with a reserve for the conservation fair.

This was agreed by the Committee.

2. April Peripatetic Meeting

Liz queried the arrangements for the April peripatetic meeting.

Jason noted that there had been no progress to date, but he was hoping to speak to Jane Roylance about possible venues in Nottingham and also to Alice Ullathorne the heritage strategy officer for Nottingham City Council. Fiona recognised that it was difficult for the Branch to organise different events alongside the Annual School bursary and the Stamford event, but as Branch members were probably expecting an organised event she wondered whether there were any other possibilities that were 'ready to go', however Jason still felt that a Nottingham event could still be organised.

Rob also pointed out that organising event involved a lot of work, particularly when the main attendees in the past had been Committee members.

Rose also noted that it was difficult for the Branch to rely too heavily on Jane, although Jason said that if we wanted use Nottingham Castle then we would need to involve Jane as she was working on the Castle project, but he could bring in other people to give a talk to the Branch, and Ros noted that if Alice Ullathorne discussed the City's heritage strategy this would feed into the philosophy competencies of the IHBC membership.

Chris queried whether it would be simpler to organise a heritage/social event in Nottingham given the timescales and the other Branch events that we were trying organise. Roy noted that the peripatetic meeting had been set up to overcome comments that the Branch meetings were too Newark-centred, but he queried whether a CPD event could be bolted onto a County meeting as there was a limit to what could be done by the Branch committee.

Steve noted the importance of clarifying the dates for the April meeting and the timing of the development work required for the app, and Liz thought that this would need a sub-group to develop the software and also proposed that the Branch AGM could be held in Stamford to tie with the conservation area celebration events.

This was agreed by the Committee.

Ros also pointed out that a Heritage Action Zone had been announced in Nottingham and Roy referred to a THI running in Carrington Street, that could make useful subjects for Nottingham meeting and Jason agreed to speak to Tom Street at Nottingham City.

Ros also offered to help Jason organise the event, and Rose confirmed that there was a budget set aside in the Business Plan for this meeting.

3. Annual School Bursary:

It was agreed that applications would be invited from Branch members for the Annual School Bursary to cover the costs of the IHBC Annual School.

4. Treasurers report

Rose confirmed that the Branch finances were:

£843.94 in current account

£190.233 in deposit account

She also reported that the Business Plan had been approved by IHBC Council and she had claimed the Branch allowance.

5. Branch Reps Report

Roy reported that the F&R+ Committee had met in December as a virtual meeting, and an e-bulletin had been circulated. In brief the meeting discussed:

- Jason was confirmed as the Branch membership secretary and the Branch had 170 members, which included 100 full members.
- Heritage England's advice on curtilage had been withdrawn following counsel's advice.
- IHBC was looking for hosts for forthcoming Annual Schools and it was likely that the Branch would need to consider hosting either the 2019 or 2020 Annual School.

In a brief discussion it was agreed that the Committee preferred the option of the 2019 Annual School.

6. County Reps Reports

Circulated with the agenda

7. Communications Officer

Chris McKinney noted that the website had now been updated, but some County information needed updating.

8. Any Other Business

Carla described her role with the national office, to offer assistance and additional capacity to the Branches, and she was also keen to set up digital meetings to promote Branch activities.

Fiona noted that the previous Branch Connection Days had met with a good response when they were offering training to Branch committee members, but that numbers had dropped when the meetings got too strategic.

Carla noted that she was trying to get people talking to each other and to encourage Branch officers to share information and to provide basic training.

Rob expressed one particular concern within the Branch, that there was no communication with the Northants Branch members, who had not had a County rep for sometime.

Liz noted that the Committee would need to take advice from the Branch membership as to how it wanted to develop, but it was important to recognise the diverse geography and membership of the Branch, as well as the retirement of Committee members.

Liz also noted that she had received an email from an associate member who was interested in serving on the Branch Committee and it was agreed that there was no requirement for Committee members to be full IHBC members.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 9.30pm.
