

**Minutes of Meeting: Tuesday 24th February 2009
at The Fox & Crown, Appletongate, Newark**

Present: Rachel Booth, Chris McKinney, Rose Thompson, Robert Walker, Roy Lewis, Dave Boyson, Jane Roylance, Liz Mayle, Philip Grover & Jason Mordan (arrived at 8.15 pm).

1. Apologies: Stephen Bradwell, Fiona Newton, Jenny Timothy & Chloe Oswald.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes were approved as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising

Item 3: Chairs Report & Business Plan.

JM reported on a proposal to host a Branch CPD event for the HER with other County HER's. He can supply a small venue for interactive activity but this could be difficult with a large group and an alternative venue would be needed. RL suggested that the event could also be run for non-members.

[Action: JM to liaise with Lincs and Derbyshire County Councils and discuss with FN, to consider arranging an event for later in the year after the Annual School and would be additional to the AGM.]

[Action: JW and LM to discuss possibility of Buildings at Risk CPD event.]

Item 8: Improving Communications & Raising Interest.

RW suggested that this be made a regular Agenda item to allow updates on IHBC Committee matters to be raised by the Branch nominees, namely:

Jane Roylance: Technical Panel
Fiona Newton: Editorial Board
Dave Boyson: Membership & Ethics
Jenny Timothy: Policy
Rose Thompson: Finance & Resources
James White: Communications & Outreach
Philip Grover: Education & Standards

In relation to the Editorial Board FN had sent in a request for articles for the next Context (deadline 16th March) on a theme of Underground History (mining, sewers, etc.). If anyone is interested and can meet the deadline please contact FN.

The theme for articles for the following Context is Rural Matters so similar expressions of interest to FN.

RW noted that PG's role in taking on 'Education & Standards' effectively co-opted him onto the Branch Committee as the Education Rep post had not previously been filled.

He also noted that Mike Brown, Chair of Policy, had been in touch with Jenny and RW understood that at the last Policy Committee the Branch's initiative had been mentioned.

Richard Morrice, Chair of Finance & Resources, had also been in contact with RT.

RW said he would chase other the Committee Chairs if there was no contact soon. He reminded Branch contacts that the Committee Business Plans were now on the IHBC website and contained a lot of useful information about the respective committees, their plans for the coming year and committee membership.

[Action: RW to chase Chairs of Communications & Outreach*, Membership & Ethics and Education & Standards if no contact is made by the next Branch meeting.]

(Since the Branch meeting RW understands that the Chair of C & O has resigned.)

RW also mentioned that the IHBC Director considered the Branch finances to be well organised and had wondered whether RT would be prepared to help other Branch Treasurers, particularly those wanting advice about budgeting or preparing a Business Plan if new to the job.

RT said she was happy to do this.

[Action Point: RW to respond to the Director.]

Item 10: IHBC web site.

RW noted that SB had arranged updating of Branch web pages on IHBC web site and it was much better. Chair asked to have his thanks to SB recorded.

RW also admitted he had forgotten to send photos to JR from EM Branch visits to Stoke Rochford, both after the fire and more recently after restoration. As it seems everybody else did too, he again asked if this could be done so that JR could put these on the Branch web pages.

[Action: REQUEST FOR ALL to send selection of best photos of visits to Stoke Rochford to JR.]

JR then to select best to put with a report on to the Branch web pages.]

4. Chairman's Report and Business Plan 2008/2009 (RW).

The Business Plan is progressing satisfactorily. If either the HER or Buildings at Risk CPD events can be undertaken the Branch would exceed its target. The priority however, remains the Buxton Annual School.

5. Treasurer's Report (RT).

RT gave the latest figures from the accounts:

Current Account: £582.59

Reserve Account: £389.44

The Treasurer reported some problems trying to claim £500 from Head Office but this is now resolved.

Further invoices to deduct were expenses for the Buxton Annual School Working Group and the Branch meeting at Newark. Of the £300 set aside for the Buxton Annual School Working Group, £27.00 had been spent so far.

6. Membership Secretary's Report (DB):

One new full membership has been supported.

RW reported that the Director was impressed with the list of potential members put forward by the EM Branch. The first tranche of letters have been sent out and the Branch's suggestions are likely to follow shortly.

RL was concerned about the number of applications for full membership, there had only been two to Full Council this year, although plenty of affiliate membership applications had been made.

7. Branch Reps Report (RL):

There had not been a Council since the last Branch meeting.

8. County Reps Reports:

Northamptonshire (RB): Next Conservation Officers Group scheduled for the first week of March. A Heritage Protection Reform Working Group has been set up and 2 meetings have been held with Anthony Streeten.

Derbyshire (CM): County colleagues are leading the response on behalf of CODS on proposed revisions to Part L of the Building Regulations.

Lincolnshire (LM): A meeting to consider the possibilities of countywide shared services for heritage is being held at the County Council on 6th March. Next LCOG is on 27th March.

Leicestershire (DB): Very little to report other than a meeting at John Moore's school next week.

9. IHBC Branch Officers: Summary of Roles and Duties (RL):

A draft of the Roles & Duties of Branch Committees, prepared by National Office, had been sent out with agenda to facilitate discussion.

Some members of the Branch were concerned about the approach being 'top down' rather than 'bottom up' and that this might stifle Branches. Other members welcomed the document stating that it could be a useful document for Branches who were struggling as the roles and duties are clearly set out.

The Chair explained that he thought it was purely for guidance and that asterisks were actually bullet points and not essential criteria. It was noted that the EM Branch already fulfilled many of the roles and duties and that, with its recent initiative to get more involved with IHBC committees, probably exceeded the guidance.

Overall it was felt useful as guide but that that it was important that Branches be able to evolve to suit their needs.

[Action Point: RW to respond to Director with Branch's views on draft Summary of Roles and Duties.]

10. RIBA Split from AABC and Implications for Conservation Projects (JR):

RW asked JR to give some background as to how the AABC was originally set up and then to expand on the item.

JR reported that the AABC was set up in the mid 1990's as an independent group which shortly afterwards went into partnership with the RIBA. It satisfied English Heritage's demand that accredited professionals only should undertake grant aided works funded by them. A booklet was produced annually and despite running for some years the membership is still low.

The present split between the RIBA and the AABC could lead to twin systems, as the RIBA plan to form their own accreditation system and register. The AABC will continue to issue pamphlets instead of being incorporated with the RIBA Annual book on conservation architects. The AABC does not have great support and is not always considered to be credible.

English Heritage was instrumental in setting up the AABC but has not issued any statement on this matter yet it is an EH stipulation for all grants for church work and major projects receiving individual grants and for heritage led regeneration schemes, such as HERS and PSICA, where works total £20,000 or more.

The Branch agreed that accreditation is a good thing generally for those professions that undertake a broad range of work which may also include conservation work, particularly those professional institutions where members undertaking conservation work may only make up a small percentage of the profession.

However the system of accreditation has to be credible. Many good historic buildings architects for example are not accredited. The accreditation system also has to attract sufficient professionals from a wide range of disciplines to ensure that there is the capacity to carry out grant aided work.

English Heritage should recognise that the IHBC is the professional body for conservation – high standards have to be met to become a full member – and therefore EH should recognise that membership of the IHBC is a sufficient accreditation in itself. The IHBC also has HESPR to recognise the skills of consultants working in the historic environment.

[Action: RW to pass on the Branch's views to Anthony Streeten.]

[Action Point: RL to raise issue with IHBC Council]

11. Annual School Buxton 2009 (CmK):

RW reported on behalf of FN that bookings for the Annual School would be available online from Friday 27th March. CmK explained that Sponsorship was going well but more was needed to cover the Annual Dinner, Lunch for the Day School and refreshments. Any ideas for sponsorship would be welcomed with suggestions to CO, JR or FN.

The programme including speakers etc is almost complete, sufficiently so for flyers to be distributed. RW asked that the Branch note the hard work by all concerned in respect of the arrangements for the Annual School so far. More helpers are still needed for jobs in preparation for the School.

12. AOB:

Revisions to Part L of the Building Regulations were discussed. It was agreed by all that the existing arrangement giving special consideration to historic buildings was working well and should not be changed.

It was agreed that RL would prepare a statement on behalf of the Branch, the following has now been submitted:

"This branch considers that the special consideration provided for historic buildings in Part L of the Building Regulations is highly beneficial to conservation of the historic built environment and has no significant adverse impact at global level, so should be maintained.

It is essential to consider the potential damage to the cultural, functional, and aesthetic qualities of historic buildings when considering adaptations to improve thermal efficiency. Whilst many historic buildings are capable of upgrading to meet modern thermal standards, in some cases this will not be possible without damage to their character. However, historic buildings represent only a small proportion of the total building stock. Consequently, the impact at global level by taking a balanced view of all material considerations and utilising the special consideration for historic buildings where appropriate will be minimal.

The East Midlands Branch is currently organising the Institute's Annual 2009 School on the theme of sustainability and the historic environment, with the aim of improving members' understanding of sustainability issues, which include the application of Part L."

LM mentioned a recent case of unauthorised works to a LB whereby remedial damp treatments were administered by operatives belonging to the Property Care Association, a trading body who offer operatives a qualification that includes letters after a name (Certified Surveyor of Remedial Treatments). Operatives with these qualifications cited conservation projects to give credence to their work which included a website with the Grade I listed Royal Courts of Justice Vaults to promote their methods. Members advised LM to write to Chris Wood at EH with concerns.

13. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 7th April 2009.
