

TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Monday, February 5th, 2024
The Malthouse, at 1000



In attendance: Michelle Ryan (MR, Chair), Neil Davies (ND, Vice Chair), Paul Barton (PB), Alan Simson (AS), Stella Bolam (SB), Rob Murison (RM), Steve Westmore (SW), Sarah Kiss (SK), Keith Sacre (KS).

Staff: John Parker (JP).

Apologies: Sarah Armstrong (SA), Liz Nicholls (LN).

MINUTES

1. Opening

1.1 Introductions and welcome

Attendees recorded for minutes as above

1.2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received by SA and LN

1.3 Conflicts of interest

No conflicts of interest were declared

2. Minutes of previous meetings

2.1 November 2023 Board Meeting

RM proposed that the Minutes of the November 2023 Board meeting were accepted as a true record. AS seconded, all agreed.

2.3 Actions from previous Board meetings

JP provided an update on actions from the previous Board meeting:

- The Reserves Policy has now been amended and is on the website.
- The L6 Apprenticeship end point assessor is Myerscough.
- Terms of Reference draft is now with Senior Technical Office Emma Gilmartin and were used for the first time at the recent Women in Arboriculture Group meeting.
- The Committee schedule for 2024 still needs to be arranged.
- An update on VETcert statistics was included in the February CEO Report.

ACTION JP: Arrange the 2024 Committee meeting schedule.

3. Finances

3.1 Budget update

JP apologised for having not been able to arrange a Finance & Governance Committee meeting in advance of Board. RM did sit down with HB for an afternoon recently though, and they had a positive and productive meeting.

JP presented the final figures for 2023 (pending audit). Overall the picture is positive, with a predicted in-year deficit reduced considerably, and perhaps just nudging into a surplus.

Budget questions from Trustees:

- The cost of the climbing competition was considerably higher than budgeted for. Why was this? JP explained that 2023 was the first year we have funded the climbing competitions in this way, and we had to estimate costs – which ultimately came in higher than anticipated. We hope to mitigate for this in 2024 through sponsorship and a review of entry fees for competitors.
- What was cause of the variation on the ‘online events’ row? JP explained that when we initially budgeted for the year we were intending to run at least one, and maybe two, paid-for online events. However, in the end this turned out not to be practical with all of our in person events, so we decided not to proceed with them.
- What was the increased costs associated with publications? JP explained that we purchased additional stock in 2023 in advance of paper prices increasing, to set us up well for sales in 2024.

3.2 2024 Budget

JP presented an overview of the proposed 2024 budget. Unfortunately this is predicting a deficit of approximately £80k in 2024, but we are hopeful that a better result than that will be delivered. JP will investigate ways in which this can be mitigated.

Budget questions from Trustees:

- Is £5000 still an appropriate amount for the annual Research Grant? JP said that we are in the process of reviewing this to see if a different sum might be more appropriate in 2025, and how we can attract more applications. MR suggested we run a piece in the ARB Magazine about past grant recipients which could tie in with our 60th anniversary celebrations and be used to promote the grant. *Post meeting note: JP has taken this forward with the team.*
- Does the increased payroll include additional staff members, or does it relate predominantly to increased pay for existing staff members. JP said that under the existing structure we are not planning to recruit more staff, but that the organisational structure is under review and updates would be provided as any changes were made. If additional recruitment in excess of the agreed payroll budget is required then authorization will be sought.
- Is the publications revenue too conservative compared to what we have achieved in the last couple of years? JP agreed that it is relatively conservative, but that the impressive 2023 figures were partly due to two new publications – Roots and Treetime – and that we may not release any new publications in 2024, meaning that it is reasonable to expect our revenue to be lower in this area.

KS proposed that the Board agree to the 2024 budget as presented. SK seconded, all in favour.

4. CEO Operational Report

4.1 JP had provided a written CEO Report in advance of the meeting.

Some of the key highlights were:

- Our new Succession in Arboriculture page has been launched, acting as a single point of reference to link to all of the work we are doing in this area. It can be found here: <https://www.trees.org.uk/Careers/Succession-in-Arboriculture>
- Systems review is still going well, although it does take a large amount of time for Jess. An internal staff working group is being set up in January to spread the load.
- On January 23rd we held a Team Day at the Malthouse to bring everyone together and discuss how things are going, and what our plans are for the next year.
- Management training has been arranged by an external provider to be held at the end of January for the whole management team. The training went very well and all managers found it beneficial.
- Emma Gilmartin has joined us as Senior Technical Officer and has already made a very positive impact on the team.
- The Wednesday Webinar series is now being sponsored by Stihl and is drawing record crowds. The event with David Lonsdale broke our attendance record, with an attendance of 956 unique viewers.
- Conference planning is going well and we hope to have a draft programme by the end of January. We received some very strong abstracts and have plenty of ideas for workshops.
- Arb Show is approaching, we are confident for a good event although income is likely to be reduced because this is an APF year, which always has an impact.

JP asked for feedback from the Board about the content and layout of the CEO Update Report. All agreed that it was useful. Increased spacing and more headings on tables were requested, as well as more diagrammatic representations where possible.

ACTION: JP to make suggested changes to the layout of the next CEO Report.

PB noted that the Trustee page on the website needs to be updated. *Post meeting note: The required changes have now been made.*

4.2 Complaints

JP provided an update on the status of complaints.

At the time of writing we have one open complaint, which has not yet been validated.

4.3 Risk Register

There have been no updates to the Risk Register since the November meeting.

5. Committee updates

5.1 Finance & Governance

- There was no Finance & Governance Committee meeting prior to the Board meeting.

5.2 Resources

- There was no Resources Committee meeting prior to the Board meeting.

5.3 Standards

- There was no Standards Committee meeting prior to the Board meeting.

6. Items for discussion and agreement

6.1 Fellowship Proposal

- A proposal to amend the process for members seeking to become Fellows was circulated to the Board in advance of the meeting. JP talked through the details and answered questions.

KS proposed that JP proceed with the new procedure and write some accompanying guidance. PB seconded, all agreed.

ACTION: JP to write some guidance to accompany the Fellowship proposal and progress the changes.

6.2 Chair update

- MR had coordinated contributions from the Board and created a hamper for the team to say thank you for their hard work in 2023. This was very much appreciated and JP thanked everyone on behalf of the team.

6.3 Working Group Update

- WiA had a successful in-person meeting at the Malthouse at which the new Terms of Reference were discussed.
- Emma Gilmartin has suggested creating a Biodiversity Net Gain Working Group, which will be taken forward at an appropriate time.

7. Any other business

- JP informed the Board that the Association has agreed to add our logo as a partner to the forthcoming Trees, People & Built Environment Conference, arranged by the ICF.

- JP reminded the Board that our Strategic Plan is dated 2022-2024, so Trustees are invited to consider how the strategy has worked and what might need to be changed ahead of an in-depth discussion at the August Board meeting.
- JP updated the Board about the Association's safeguarding policy, which is being developed from a template kindly provided by Trees for Cities.
- JP informed the Board that he has been selected to stand as a candidate for Stroud District Council in the May elections. No objections or concerns were raised.
- SW asked if the security patch approved by Board with Oomi had been completed, and if the money had been paid? JP confirmed that the work had been done and that the payment would be recorded on the budget against the reserves as agreed.
- RM informed the Board that he had a productive meeting with Hanif about finances and had completed a training course about being a charity treasurer.

8. Date of the next meeting

8.1 The next meeting is scheduled for Monday May 13th, online at 1500.

9. Confidential items

- JP left the meeting.

Meeting closed at 1443

Minutes to be circulated to all Trustees and posted online once approved at the next meeting.