

Friends of Geilston Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 16th March 2022 via Zoom: MINUTES

Attending 43 members and 4 guests

1) Welcome

Allison Hillis (Chair) welcomed members and guests to the meeting. Housekeeping arrangements to facilitate the running of the meeting were explained.

Allison welcomed the guests to the meeting: Ian Mclelland, Louise Baker and Rachel Thompson (all NTS) Jackie Baillie (MSP).

2) Apologies

Apologies had been received from 35 members and the following guests: Sir Mark Jones and Philip Long (both NTS) and Maurice Corry

3) Minutes of the AGM held in 2021 and their approval

The minutes of the 2021 AGM held via Zoom on Wednesday 3rd March 2021 had been circulated prior to the meeting. They were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

Proposed by Fiona Lockhart

Seconded by Alana Ingram

4) Matters arising

None raised

5) Chairperson's report

Allison had circulated the text of her report prior to the meeting and proceeded to make a presentation of the main points.

These included:

- **NTS and the future of Geilston**

Allison referred to the Friends submission to the NTS Board meeting of June 2021 outlining options for the house based on a report commissioned from Sutherland Forsyth. The Board were impressed with our work, but decided to opt for the proposal submitted by the regional manager Ian Mclelland for restoration of the house as a mix of holiday accommodation and events/community use space. The Trust had subsequently committed £35,000 for initial investigation and a further £205,000 for the second phase of the project which would continue the investigation of the property and begin the work of stripping out. These funds have been budgeted. Ian expressed optimism that the Trust was committed to the project, but did caution against unknown problems that might be uncovered during the investigation and early work. He was hopeful that there would be no major issues. The project would take longer than originally envisaged. One issue for NTS was the lack of in-house surveyors. The second was just the general increase in costs for building projects. But the Trust had committed funding for the first two phases of the project.

Ian also reported on the decision to employ an additional full-time gardener and also an apprentice.

Allison thanked Ian for his efforts and commitment to Geilston.

- **Calendar competition**

Allison reported on the successful 2021 Geilston Calendar and photo competition. Thanks for organising this to Ken Readman and Veronica Davis.

The 2022 competition was promoted. Advice about the minimum resolution required for entries to be accepted and the earlier deadline to allow more time for printing and sales.

- **Gifts**

The committee had decided to donate a sum of £2,000 to the garden for projects. Various ideas had been discussed and one that we were particularly interested in exploring further was for the construction of a drystone wall and integrated seat to be located overlooking the waterfall.

- **Events 2021**

Allison reported on the events we had managed to promote during the year including the Sunday baking stalls with music. Thanks were due to Veronica Davis for organising the choirs. We had run two Art Workshops. A new event for the season had been Thai Chi classes on Thursdays in the garden run by Adrienne Kerr. These had proved popular.

The committee had decided to purchase two FOG branded gazebos to help with the events and these should be in use for the forthcoming season.

Allison also referred to the events NTS had promoted at the garden. Rachel Thompson elaborated on these.

All together these various events had helped boost visitor numbers and enhanced enjoyment of the garden.

- **Events 2022**

Allison then outlined the planned events for the forthcoming season. We would run 3 Friends of Geilston "Sundays in the Garden" and again would hope to have live music to accompany these. There would be another two Art Workshops and it was hoped to have the Thai Chi classes again.

There would be two herb/flower themed guided walks led by Nicky Brownrigg.

Two big events which we hoped would make a welcome return after their absence over the last couple of years were the Craft Fair and the Apple Day. Alana Ingram had been planning these and was hopeful that they would again prove very popular.

Information about all of these events would be posted on our website and Facebook page.

Rachel Thompson then highlighted the events NTS was planning to hold beginning with the Easter Trail.

- **MEB Trust**

Allison thanked the Trust for its grants over the past few years and reported that the Friends had been awarded a grant of £2,000 for organising visits to the garden by local community groups. This had been an idea emerging from the community survey we had carried out.

- **Reflections and outlook**

Allison wanted to thank several people who had made significant contributions over the years she had been Chairperson of the Friends. In particular: Mike and Sue Thornley, Michael Davies, David Price, Stewart and Gillian Macdonald who had all been helpful in establishing the Friends and promoting the garden and its history.

Allison also thanked members of the committee who were standing down: Jim Gibb, Nicky Brownrigg, Nick Barton and Michael Fisher. As a token of our appreciation for their commitment and expertise the committee had decided to gift Ardardan vouchers worth £25 each.

Thanks also due to Jackie Baillie MSP and Maurice Corry (formerly MSP) for their support in the Scottish Parliament and help in presenting our petition in 2020.

Thanks also to Patrick Trust, Chair of Cardross Community Council, Cardross Golf Club (for allowing us to host meetings), Craig Borland (Helensburgh Advertiser) and Kirsty Moyes (Argyll and Bute Council).

Thanks as always to Alison Farrell and all of the gardening team at Geilston for the work they do building on the legacy of Miss Hendry and Miss Bell.

Allison then paused to ask those present to reflect on one word that would best describe the garden for them and to post this up on the chat function. Recurring words included *peaceful* and *tranquil*. Allison observed that it was important to preserve these qualities going forward.

Finally, Allison thanked the Visitor Services team who staffed Geilston during the season. This could be demanding, especially at the start and end of the season when the weather was not always conducive. But the team provided a welcome to visitors which was much appreciated. And with the addition of a new coffee machine, the team was able to offer hot refreshment for visitors to take around the garden.

- **Wildlife and conservation sub group**

During the year the committee had established this sub group comprising Lindsey Young and Jim Gibb to explore ideas for promoting the wildlife and conservation activities in the garden. They had discussions with Alison Farrell and Simon Jones and hoped to continue this to establish what projects might be practical and acceptable. Jim Gibb briefly elaborated on this, saying that essentially the ideas revolved around the concept of citizen science and would look at things such as monitoring the wildlife in the garden. Any members interested in joining this group should contact Chris Moore.

Allison finally thanked everyone for all their support during her time as Chairperson. She was very appreciative of the gift of a tree that the committee had decided to give as a mark of her commitment. She wished the Friends every good wish going forward.

Questions

The meeting was open for any questions on the Chair's report. One was about the use of rooms in the house for community benefit and whether the planned holiday accommodation would impact on this. Ian McLelland responded by repeating the point that it was not the plan to use the whole house for holiday accommodation. The west wing would make space available for community use, subject to what the investigation work found.

Patrick Trust said that he had been sceptical of how the property had been managed in the past but was now feeling much more optimistic and positive. He felt that Geilston could be a real attraction for locals and visitors.

6) Treasurer's Report and receipt of the Annual Accounts

John Hanks presented his report and the accounts which had been circulated to members. He explained that following approval at last year's AGM for the Friends to become a registered charity, we had wound up the old unincorporated Friends of Geilston group and transferred its funds to the Friends of Geilston registered charity. The presentation of the accounts reflected this transfer. We had set up a new bank account which had been active from September 2021. We had decided to adjust the financial year end to 31st January.

John then highlighted some of the main items of income and spending. We had received reimbursement of £1,000 from NTS to cover the costs of our commissioning of the options appraisal report which we had presented to the NTS Board in June 2021

The main items of income had been the events (Baking stall) and the sales of calendars.

Going forward in addition to recurring administrative costs we would purchase two gazebos and donate £2,000 for garden projects.

John reminded members that subscriptions for this year were now due. We had decided to adjust the membership period to the calendar year.

In a note to the accounts John highlighted that there was an unspent sum of £700 from a previous MEB grant which had been designated for the production of the historical leaflets. It was planned to spend the outstanding money to the production of more leaflets as this money was ring fenced.

7) Questions arising and acceptance of the accounts

There were no questions arising.

The acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Nicky Brownrigg and seconded by Patrick Trust

Allison thanked John for all his hard work during the year especially around the transfer of funds to the new incorporated charity.

Allison reported that there were 547 signed up members which was an increase over last year.

8) Election of Committee

The constitutional rules governing elections for the committee had been circulated with the agenda together with the names of those retiring from office and not seeking re-election: Jim Gibb, Nick Barton, Nicky Brownrigg, Michael Fisher and Allison Hillis.

Those members retiring but indicating that they were willing to be re-elected onto the committee, together with the positions they were willing to stand for were:

Chairperson-Chris Moore

Vice Chair- Ken Readman

Secretary- Alana Ingram

Membership Secretary- Fiona Lockhart

Treasurer- John Hanks

Committee member- Veronica Davis

Committee member- Lindsey Young

The meeting was asked for proposers and seconders for each of the above:

Chris Moore: *Proposed* by Ken Readman; *Seconded* by Veronica Davis

Ken Readman: *Proposed* by Fiona Lockhart; *Seconded* by Nicky Brownrigg

Alana Ingram: *Proposed* by Anita Gaw; *Seconded* by Nick Barton

Fiona Lockhart- *Proposed* by Ken Readman; *Seconded* by Susan Jenkins

John Hanks- *Proposed* by Nick Barton; *Seconded* by Alana Ingram

Veronica Davis- *Proposed* by Patrick Trust; *Seconded* by Janet Peattie

Lindsey Young- *Proposed* by Anita Gaw; *Seconded* by Fiona Lockhart

The above were duly elected to the committee

The following members had indicated that they were willing to be elected onto the committee as trustees for the session 2022-2023 having met the criteria set out by OSCR the regulator for charity trustees:

Andrew Smith- *Proposed* by Alana Ingram; *Seconded* by Nicky Brownrigg

Alison Smith- *Proposed* by Alana Ingram; *Seconded* by Nicky Brownrigg

Irene Taylor- *Proposed* by Ken Readman; *Seconded* by Janet Peattie

Dorothy Dolier- *Proposed* by Alana Ingram; *Seconded* by Barbie Paterson

Jacky Sherwood- *Proposed* by Veronica Davis; *Seconded* by Janet Peattie

Allison thanked members for their participation. Sub groups would be set up to cover activities such as events. Any members interested in helping on these groups should contact Chris Moore.

9) Handover and close of meeting

Allison then formally handed over the closing of the meeting to the new Chairperson, Chris Moore.

Chris thanked Allison for her commitment of time and energy to the group over the last 5 years. He said that she had shown quiet determination in leading the group. He noted that Allison would acknowledge that it had been a team effort, but she had led the team with her capacity for encouraging by example. Her enthusiasm and love for the garden had been inspirational. Allison would be very much missed but not gone and still very much in touch with Geilston.

Chris closed the meeting by thanking everyone for attending.

Chris Moore,

Secretary

28/3/2022