

LIVERPOOL 2008

Minutes of the National Trust
Annual General Meeting held at
BT Arena and Convention Centre,
Liverpool
on Saturday 1 November 2008

Chairman: William Proby

Present: Laurie Magnus (Deputy Chairman), members of the Board of Trustees, members of the Council, the Director-General, members of the Senior Management Team, staff and some 610 members of the National Trust.

1. Welcome and introduction

The **Chairman, Sir William Proby**, welcomed members to the Arena and Convention Centre in Liverpool, and in particular welcomed his successor, Simon Jenkins, who was in the auditorium. Holding the AGM in Liverpool brought back fond memories of the diverse variety of Trust houses and landscapes in the North West, and it was interesting to see the remarkable regeneration in Liverpool.

He explained that the green spaces debate had been launched at the previous year's AGM to discover the views of Trust members and the wider public on this important topic. The response had been overwhelming; the vast majority welcomed the issue being raised and thought the National Trust had an important role to play in protecting and looking after green spaces, particularly woodland, wildlife areas and parks. Many thought the Trust should work in partnership with other organisations and local authorities to raise awareness of how important green spaces were to national well-being, and that it should share its expertise with others. The Trust also realised that it could do more with its own green spaces, but accepted its approach would vary from place to place according to the circumstances and the need. Issues considered within the debate included the role of acquisition and the use of restricted covenants. Most importantly, there was strong recognition of the importance of the beauty of the landscape to people's lives with many feeling that the spiritual benefits of the countryside were not sufficiently valued.

As a result of the debate, the Chairman said that the Trust would continue to stand up for everyone's right to have regular contact with nature and access to green spaces. A publication in the spring would highlight the value of local green space and demonstrate the Trust's important role in this area. The Trust would be working with other organisations and local authorities to share expertise and would be doing more with its own green places, such as improving access and ensuring that they were maintained to the highest possible standard. In a period of economic downturn and austerity the Trust believed people would place greater value on access to the countryside, which did so much to uplift and inspire lives. This went to the very heart of what the National Trust was about, and it was right that the Trust should remind itself of its importance to the nation.

Reflecting on the last five and a half years, the Chairman noted the many changes that had occurred, particularly in how the Trust was run, establishing the new Board of Trustees and developing a new role for the Council. The Trust's finances had been transformed which placed the Trust in a stronger position to face the economic downturn and

enabled it to carry out its obligations to its properties. The financial improvements had come from an increased membership of a further 500,000 members, the extraordinary generosity of thousands of people who continued to give legacies, and the tight control of costs; however, in the current economic climate the Trust could not be complacent. This improved financial stability had allowed the Trust to launch a new strategy with its focus on engaging supporters, improving conservation and environmental performance, investing in its people and financing its future. There had been a number of wonderful acquisitions such as Tynesfield, Wembury Point, Godolphin House, Croome Park and Divis Mountain. The Trust also continued to receive amazing generosity from donors, with examples such as Simon Sainsbury's garden at Woolbeding and the recent gift of Historic House Hotels.

There had also been a number of challenges and tough decisions to make. For instance, in High Yewdale in the Lake District the Trust had decided to amalgamate land on farms that had been donated by Beatrix Potter – a controversial decision but one required to enable the farms to survive. A few years back, there had been major IT problems which have fortunately been resolved. More generally, the increasing influence of climate change was affecting properties, with many instances of flooding, such as those experienced at Calke Abbey and Blickling Hall.

The Chairman's one regret was not having enough time to visit more properties. With his wife he had managed to visit many wonderful places and had always come away inspired by them and the wonderful job that the staff and volunteers were doing. The National Trust was gaining greater recognition for the vital role it played in the general well-being of the nation and was appealing to a wider audience. The Trust had a very exciting future and was well-placed to weather the economic storm, as what it offered would be even more valued in difficult times.

The Chairman concluded by saying what a great honour it had been to lead the Trust. It had been demanding, sometimes frustrating, but ultimately hugely rewarding. What had been achieved had only been done with the incredible support and dedication of the staff and volunteers, the membership and the wider public. He wished his successor the best of luck and, on a personal note, thanked his wife, Merry, acknowledging the huge debt he owed for her support.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held in London on Saturday 3 November 2007 were approved by the meeting and signed by **the Chairman**.

3. Annual Report and Financial Statements 2007/08

Fiona Reynolds, Director-General, opened her remarks by thanking William Proby, personally, and on behalf of staff and volunteers, for his enormous efforts as Chairman and looked forward to working with Simon Jenkins. The recent economic events had shocked and affected many people but had also helped to focus attention on what really mattered, the real things in life: a walk in the countryside, time to talk to each other, a beautiful view, and memories. These were things that Trust members wanted and which the Trust offered, an offer that would become more important and enable the Trust to perform even more of a public service than it had in the past.

The Trust sought through its strategy to inspire people through extraordinary places and by giving them a sense of real connection, a hands-on involvement. Examples included the production of a podcast tour by a youth group at Speke Hall, and the low-carbon living project at Wallington. The Trust was championing local food, such as Gibside's Larder, Stourhead's farm shop, and farmers' markets at Lacock and Sissinghurst. It was connecting with thousands of young people who loved Cornwall's beaches but had no idea that the coast was only as beautiful as it was because the Trust had been looking after it.

Fiona Reynolds thanked all the staff and volunteers who helped the Trust deliver these activities and achievements. In particular she thanked the volunteers from the Heswall Association, the Lake District Members' Club, Liverpool Centre, Southport & Formby Association and the Merseyside National Trust Volunteers' Group, who were helping with the AGM. Members would be aware that the Trust's staff worked hard but it was their passion that made the difference and was the reason why things happened in the Trust; a good example was the staff's response to the Great Green Leap Day in which they spent the day at home undertaking green activities. The Trust was not a top-down organisation telling people what to do – it thrived on the inspiration, passion and commitment that bubbled up through staff, through local communities, through volunteers and through properties.

A living example was the current effort to save Seaton Delaval Hall. There was huge local support for the Trust to acquire this extraordinary place, a wonderful Vanbrugh mansion with

green open space and a real chance for culture-led regeneration. The Board of Trustees had made a £6.9 million commitment towards an endowment for Seaton Delaval Hall, but only if a further £6.3 million could be raised. Members were encouraged to support the fund-raising activities to save Seaton Delaval Hall. It was an opportunity to touch people's hearts with the things that really mattered, the simple pleasures of life which were becoming increasingly rare. The Trust offered a more hopeful, meaningful future, a chance to be part of something better.

The Chairman formally moved the adoption of the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2007/08.

Laurie Magnus, Deputy Chairman, formally seconded the adoption of the Annual Report and Financial Statements. He introduced his comments by reminding members that the Trust's finances depended on taking a long-term view whilst being able to adapt to a changing world. The world of business and finance had changed dramatically since the accounts had closed in February, when the results showed a further improvement in the Trust's financial performance. Overall income had increased, with legacies reaching £58 million, commercial activities contributing £21 million, membership subscriptions exceeding £111 million and net gain over 23%.

This improved financial performance provided the Trust with more resources for capital works programmes and major acquisitions. Over £90 million was spent on projects such as new visitor facilities at Anglesey Abbey and Polesden Lacey, and major works at Knole. Acquisitions such as Seaton Delaval Hall could not be contemplated without the financial results that had been achieved and which enabled the Trust to help finance this unique opportunity.

The period of William Proby's chairmanship had seen a huge turnaround in the Trust's financial fortunes. During the past five years, the general fund operating contribution had increased from £4 million to over £21 million and the net gain from below 15% to over 23%. That success was a tremendous achievement for the staff, volunteers and members alike. In particular it had enabled the Trust to repay the staff's hard work by improving their remuneration after it had fallen behind rates in comparable organisations.

There were challenges ahead. The Trust was an independent charity with perpetual obligations and needed to be able to pay its way whatever the state of the economy. The Board could never ignore the scale of the Trust's liabilities which included inadequate endowments for large properties such as Knole, Kedleston, Erddig, Castle Drogo and Ickworth,

a conservation backlog of at least £157 million and environmental compliance costs which were estimated at £20 million.

The Trust would not be immune from the current economic environment. Sales in the Trust's restaurants and shops were already down, falls in the stock markets had pushed the pension scheme deficit to over £70 million compared with the surplus of £6 million shown in the accounts, and the stock market decline had substantially reduced the value of the Trust's investment portfolio. The Trust could not therefore be complacent about its recent financial success.

The Trust was not a wealthy organisation as most of its 600,000 acres, 10,000 buildings and a million precious objects were owned inalienably, forever, and could not be sold or even given away. The Trust had to cover the cost of their upkeep and meet the running expenses of the Trust in a sustainable way. The current strategy, with its focus on environmental improvement, conservation excellence, greater local empowerment of staff and volunteers, a minimum net gain target and, above all, positive engagement with people, was the key to the Trust's ongoing financial resilience.

In conclusion, the Deputy Chairman believed the Trust was up to these challenges, provided it remained true to the passionate dedication of staff, members, volunteers, tenants and the public at large, held its nerve, and remained focused on its well-tested financial disciplines. He commended the accounts to the members.

The Chairman thanked the Deputy Chairman for presenting the accounts before announcing that Laurie Magnus had earlier that week been presented with the Octavia Hill medal for his outstanding contribution to the Trust. Laurie Magnus had played a key role both as Chairman of the Finance Committee and then as Deputy Chairman of the Trust in overseeing the improvements in the Trust's finances.

The Chairman then invited questions on the Annual Report and Financial Statements from the floor.

The first question was from **Cherry Lavell of Cheltenham**, who asked about the risks associated with the recent acquisition of the three Historic House Hotels – Hartwell House, Middlethorpe Hall and Bodysgallen Hall.

Andy Copestake, Director of Finance, explained that the three houses had been a very generous gift along with a thriving business to pay for their upkeep. The Board of Trustees and Senior Management Team had ensured that

prior to acceptance the gift had been properly evaluated and treated as a normal acquisition. External experts were engaged to undertake the legal and financial due diligence processes which were completed successfully. The Trust had also arranged guarantees and options to mitigate the various risks, and remained confident that the three hotels and business would continue to be successful.

Before introducing his question, **Robert Clark from Central London**, offered his thanks to the retiring Chairman and in particular for the manner in which he had presided over AGMs since 2003 and introduced the informal question and answer sessions. Robert then asked why the Ordnance Survey Explorer series maps had ceased to show the full extent of National Trust land?

Peter Nixon, Director of Conservation, acknowledged the thanks expressed to the Chairman, to which he added the thanks of the Trust's staff. The reason the new 1:25,000 Explorer series maps did not show National Trust ownership was due to an obligation for Ordnance Survey under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act to show all land open to public access. Distinguishing between land ownership and open public access had proved too complex. However, following discussions, Ordnance Survey had agreed to include a National Trust oak leaf logo for each of the Trust's properties and an indication of the facilities available. Trust property would continue to be shown on the Landranger series of maps.

The Chairman then read a question from **Mrs van Blankenstein of High Barnet**, who asked whether the application form for membership of the National Trust in the Handbook could be in larger print, have more space for filling details, use stronger paper, have a wider left margin for tearing out, and be more attractively presented.

Sue Wilkinson, Director of Marketing and Supporter Development, sympathised with the views expressed and explained that the problem was a balance between space and cost. There were already many competing items that the Trust wanted to include in the Handbook and magazine. Adding one or two pages to the Handbook would cost tens of thousands of pounds. The Handbook was due to be revised in 2010 and the review would take into account the views expressed to see what improvements could be made.

Caroline Spratt from Woodborough submitted her question via the web-chat and asked what would happen if the Seaton Delaval Hall appeal was not successful and what would happen to the donations?

David Ronn, Regional Director for Yorkshire and the North East, restated the Board of Trustees' position that unless £6.3 million could be raised the Trust would be unable to proceed with the acquisition. In this situation the future for Seaton Delaval Hall would be very uncertain, and it was probable that the estate and hall would be broken up and disposed of piecemeal. To date there had been over 20,000 individual donations and the wishes of the donors varied concerning what to do with their donation should the attempt to save Seaton Delaval Hall fail. About a quarter had indicated that they would like their donations returned, a further quarter had not expressed a view and almost half would like the funds to be retained in the region. If the Trust was unable to acquire Seaton Delaval Hall, this funding would be available within the region and the Trust would need to respond to the significant local enthusiasm this appeal had generated.

Another web-chat question was submitted by **Des McConaghy from Hillsborough, County Down**, regarding the new visitor centre at the Giant's Causeway. He asked if all the local planning issues had now been resolved; what the total cost to the Trust for work and abortive work related to the centre since 2000 was; and what would be the starting date for construction of the centre?

Simon Murray, Director of Operations, explained that since a fire in 2000 the visitor centre at the Giant's Causeway had been housed in temporary buildings. It had taken an inordinate length of time to resolve the various planning and other issues, but this was due to the complex ownership of the whole area in which there were Council and private interests as well as National Trust ownership. The Government in Northern Ireland and the local Council were now supporting a project to build a new visitor centre which was being led by the National Trust. The whole project was likely to cost in the region of £18 million, of which the National Trust would contribute £4 million; to date the Trust had spent about £300,000. A decision on the final planning application was anticipated in December, and if things progressed smoothly, building work could commence towards the end of 2009.

Rodney Legg from Wincanton, Somerset, questioned whether the Trust was letting down its benefactors and donors? There used to be a definitive list of acquisitions, gifts, names of benefactors and dedications published in what was known as the 'Green Book'; this book had not been reprinted since 1997. Rodney Legg also cited an example of some donated land used as a nature reserve where the information displays did not recognise either the donor (Mrs G W Hodgkinson) or the dedication (in memory of Sir Winston Churchill) associated with the gift.

Sue Wilkinson, Director of Marketing and Supporter Development, agreed that benefactors were incredibly important to the Trust and were highly valued, and she was sorry that this message was not communicated as well as it should be. Regarding the 'Green Book', the information to update it would be pulled together during 2009 but any future publication was likely to be web based, as only a small number of requests for a hard copy had been received.

Helen Heraty from York, queried the continued use of a cobbled courtyard (designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument) outside the Trust's Treasurer's House in York as a car-park for staff and visitors to the property.

David Ronn, Regional Director for Yorkshire and the North East, explained that he had previously been in communication with Helen Heraty over parking and access issues at the Treasurer's House. Parking at Treasurer's House was under constant review. The Trust sought to encourage more people to visit properties by non-car transport all the time, and at Treasurer's House no one came by car because there was no visitor car-parking area. Of the volunteers and staff who worked there only about 10% brought their cars.

The last question came from **Virginia Parker from Cotham, Bristol**, via the web-chat. She asked why admission rates were not included in the 2008 Members' Handbook?

Sue Wilkinson, Director of Marketing and Supporter Development, explained that this issue was similar to that previously discussed regarding the Handbook. To keep costs down, attempts were being made not to increase the size of the Handbook. Since members could visit properties for free, it was felt that this information could be removed to make room for more information about coast and countryside properties, and to put in more photographs. The 2009 Handbook would not include prices but these could be obtained from the Membership Department or on the website. For future editions the Trust would review the feedback it received on this issue.

The Chairman thanked all the speakers for their questions and invited members to vote by a show of hands on the resolution to approve the adoption of the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2007/08. There was an overwhelming show of hands in support and no request for a poll. The resolution was passed by a show of hands.

4. Appointment of Auditors

The resolution to appoint PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP of 31 Great George Street, Bristol, BS1 5QD as auditors for the next year was proposed by the **Chairman** and seconded by **Laurie Magnus, Deputy Chairman**. The resolution was passed by a show of hands.

5. Members' Resolution

that the Trust's governing body ensures sustainability is central to all of the Trust's decisions

The resolution was proposed by **James Mackay from Warwick**, who opened his remarks by explaining the need for urgent action to address the trends in temperature and sea-level increases associated with global warming. The direct impact of climate change on the Trust's properties and the indirect impact on wider society made change essential. The Government had committed to reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 80% by 2050 and change was required now if this target was to be met. The Trust was already setting a positive example and was ideally placed to influence other decision-makers. Despite the very positive steps already taken within the Trust, a number of more difficult decisions needed to be faced. These included: the balance between the landscape and the atmosphere typified by objections to wind turbines; the balance between the Trust's financial results and sustainability objectives typified by increased carbon emissions from visitor car travel; and unsustainable building on greenfield or greenbelt land. The resolution was entirely within the spirit of the Trust's long-established ideals and sought for rigour in their practical application.

The resolution was formally seconded by **Robert Clark from central London**.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, **Adrian Phillips, Trustee**, strongly supported the resolution and suggested that whilst the National Trust may not have invented the word, sustainability had been at the heart of its work since the Trust was founded. The challenge for the Trust was to be a sustainable operation in terms of conservation of its properties, the people it worked with and the finance it needed; these were all central to the Trust's strategy. The commitment to sustainability required the Trust to engage in the wider debate about the environment and the effects of climate change on its land and buildings, and it had done so. The Trust had opposed certain airport expansions, was leading the way in practical demonstrations of sustainability through cutting-edge environmental design, renewable

energies and land management. The Trust was also involved in helping to protect green spaces from development and enable the spaces to be enjoyed by all. The Trust was not against all development and allowed some very limited development on its own land, but again set a positive example through the high standards of sustainability that it demanded. The Board of Trustees welcomed the resolution and encouraged members to support it.

Anton Buckoke from Bristol felt that whilst the Trust recognised the serious impact of climate change and was working hard to address the issues, it was sending out a mixed message by allowing the continued advertising of air travel in its magazine. He called upon the Trust to stop accepting advertisements which promoted air travel.

Frances Robertson from Westbury-on Trym, Bristol, asked via the web-chat how the National Trust was working with its trade union, Prospect, to promote the sustainability agenda and how had it found the experience of developing union environmental representation?

Mr J D Davis from Newbury, sought to strengthen the resolution by asking for sustainability to be subject to simple, comprehensive quantitative analysis and definition. On a more specific point he asked the Trust to take action to reduce the use of nitrous oxide in artificial fertilizers, a very damaging greenhouse gas.

Peter Nixon, Director of Conservation, summed up on behalf of the Trust and addressed a number of the issues raised during the debate. He reiterated that the resolution was welcomed by the Trustees and staff, acknowledging that the issue of sustainability raised a number of challenges and paradoxes for the Trust, such as the high percentage of visitors coming by car and the green energy of wind turbines versus their visual impact on the countryside. The issue of air travel was another example where the Trust would like to see a reduction in the associated use of fossil fuels but recognised that many people, including Trust members, used air travel. The Trust needed to be careful not to preach or tell people how to manage their lives and therefore was conscious of censoring particular advertising. That said, the Trust was seeking to reduce the amount of air travel advertising.

In relation to the point raised about working with Prospect, the Trust recognised the need to work with Prospect, but it was important to engage with staff to ensure the Trust had good sustainable practices; the Great Green Leap Day previously mentioned was such an example.

The Trust was also introducing quantitative measuring to help reduce its environmental footprint, particularly in regard

to total energy use. Another major challenge in the future would be the supply and quality of water. With some 43% of water in England and Wales draining next to or through Trust land, the Trust would have a significant role to play.

The Trust recognised that nitrous oxide was one of the most damaging greenhouse gases. Through its Whole Farm Plans the Trust was encouraging its 2,000 farm tenants to use sustainable land management practices. These included the use of alternatives to artificial nitrogen fertilizers where possible or, when they had to be used, the adoption of good practice to prevent nitrates leaching into watercourses or evaporating.

The Board of Trustees and staff supported the resolution but recognised the challenge to implement its aims. Part of this would be to engender a debate in a similar vein to green spaces, and the Trust could be the catalyst in helping to provide real and creative solutions.

Robert Clark opened his conclusion by thanking the Trustees and management for their careful appraisal of what has been said during this debate. He then referred to the Cliveden House development which, although an example of sound environmental building, was not fully sustainable as it required access by car following the withdrawal of the local bus service. The debate had heard how through individual projects the Trust was reducing its energy consumption and carbon emissions, but it still needed to do more. With the Copenhagen conference on climate change just over a year away, it was now time for the Trust to start tackling the bigger challenges referred to during the debate. By supporting this resolution the Trust could start to make the change.

The Chairman requested a show of hands and, despite overwhelming support in the meeting, called for a ballot so that the views of the wider membership could be expressed. Members were asked to complete the green ballot paper headed 'Ballot paper for the Members' resolution to ensure sustainability is central to all of the Trust's decisions' and hand it in at the end of the meeting.

6. Members' Resolutions

that the 'new village' development at Erddig is scrapped and any money needed for the upkeep of Erddig Hall be taken from the Trust's £350 million annual operating budget

and

that those people responsible for the decision to develop land at Erddig in Wrexham be removed from the National Trust

The Chairman explained the arrangements for resolutions 4 and 5, both of which related to the development proposals at Erddig in Wales. The resolution would be introduced by the proposers, following which the Trustees would respond. This would be followed by a single debate, summing up and a separate vote on each resolution.

The resolutions were proposed by **Mr Marc Jones from Wrexham (Wrexham)**, who outlined the planned development of 223 houses on a greenfield site on the edge of a small former mining village of fewer than 1,200 homes, a development being led by the National Trust. The Trust's role was being questioned as the development was not considered to be sustainable, had ignored local wishes (a local referendum had voted against the development) and was in danger of damaging the Trust's reputation. Furthermore, the Trust had misled its own members by failing to mention the current public access to the land, and by the assertion that Erddig did not generate enough income and needed the development to safeguard its future. The membership was urged to support resolution 4 and stop the development.

The Trust's response to the resolution, that the development was required to meet local housing needs, was also challenged. As a member of the Wrexham County Council Planning Committee, Marc Jones stated that there was no local need for this unaffordable housing, and the original planning submission did not contain any affordable housing. Affordable housing was only incorporated into the plan when the Trust was forced to and then only by increasing the total number of houses. The Trust's approach to this development threatened to undermine the goodwill it had generated in safeguarding the natural environment and thriving communities, and opened the Trust up to the charge of hypocrisy by saying one thing and doing the opposite. The membership was asked to support resolution 5, a motion of no confidence, to ensure that members could trust the Trust.

Resolutions 4 and 5 were seconded by **Mr Arfon Jones from Wrexham (Wrexham)**. He began by stating that resolution 5

was a no confidence motion in the management of the Trust due to their mixed messages regarding conservation and being perceived in the Wrexham area as being hypocritical. His motivation for joining the Trust had been his admiration for the Trust's aims of protecting heritage and conserving green spaces for future generations, but now he questioned the Trust's commitment to these aims and its conflicting messages. Examples included the Chairman's 2007 AGM speech on the development of green spaces and a recent press release where the Chairman referred to working in partnership with communities to protect green spaces. Reconciling words with actions was difficult and was the reason the Executive of the National Trust stood accused of hypocrisy and double standards. In particular the Director for Wales was criticised for reneging on an agreement to abide by the outcome of the local referendum and continuing with the planning application.

The supporters of the resolution had lost confidence in the senior management of the Trust to act in the interests of the membership and for the greater good. Support for these resolutions would reaffirm the Trust's role, to conserve and protect. Members were asked to consider whether they joined the Trust to become property developers, and if not, to support the resolutions.

Mr Charles Gurassa, Trustee, responded to both resolutions 4 and 5 on behalf of the Board of Trustees. He opened his comments by stating that the sale and development of part of the Erddig estate was consistent with the National Trust's role as a conservation charity. The planned development allowed the heart of the estate to be declared inalienable, thereby protecting it for the benefit of local and wider communities. Declaring land inalienable provided permanent protection against inappropriate development, but also meant that the Trust took on a permanent commitment to its future conservation management. When the Erddig estate was gifted to the Trust by Philip Yorke, a small part of it was identified as being suitable for future sale or development to provide funds to help with the conservation of the remaining majority of the estate. All the net proceeds of the development land at Erddig would be invested to provide a major contribution to the estate's annual long term income and contribute towards the current annual average funding deficit of £300,000.

The requirement for developing this land had been established through the local planning system and a public inquiry. The Local Community Council supported the development, which included 25% affordable housing, a new community hall, a contribution towards a new classroom, a shop and tea-rooms, the creation of five public open spaces, improved footpaths, a new cycleway linked to Erddig, and the planting of many hundreds of trees.

The Trust recognised that housing development would rarely be universally welcomed, as demonstrated by the local referendum. However, the democratic planning process had identified a need for housing in this area.

The Trust continued to be a leading force in protecting open spaces but recognised that there were times when development was necessary, such as at Erddig, and in these cases needed to ensure that any development was appropriate, sensitive and sustainable.

The decision to sell this specific land for development was taken in full accordance with the Trust's conservation and governance policies and its responsibilities as a charity. Members were urged to vote against both of these resolutions.

Mr Nick Wightwick from Wrexham, Chairman of the Wrexham National Trust Association and volunteer at Erddig for the last sixteen years, provided some background to the costs associated with maintaining the estate. In 1973 Philip Yorke had sold some land to create an endowment fund, but recognised future funding might also be required and earmarked parcels of land for development should the need arise. In the last ten years there had been two major emergencies costing in excess of £200,000 and the fund needed to be replenished. The Trust was being misrepresented in the press and on television and members were urged to reject the two resolutions.

A question was taken from the web-chat from **Alan Wick from Wrexham** who asked how potential future benefactors could be confident that the conditions of their bequests would be honoured and respected, in letter and spirit, given the proposed development?

Ms Beatrice Williams from Wrexham queried the Chairman's statement that one of the aims of the Trust was positive engagement with people, when the Trust was embarking on a housing development which was so unpopular with locals. The development had been very badly received by local people, possibly because in many villages around Wrexham there were hundreds of empty new houses.

Mr Ramsey Hertzog from Coal Aston near Sheffield was appalled by the thought that any National Trust member involved with Erddig should be removed. Furthermore, he felt the resolution was a meaningless exercise as the only method of discharging a member of the Board of Trustees was if they had acted in a peculiar way, and there was no mechanism for removing a member of the Trust.

Mr Martin Hookby from Nelson provided an insight into the state of Erddig before it had been given to the Trust. He had had lunch at Erddig with Philip Yorke, who was a

delightful man but lived in a house with half a million pounds' worth of silver, no electricity, no alarm and no telephone. It was likely that if the Trust had not taken the house and estate, the estate would have been broken up. Members needed to accept that there must be endowments at properties and were urged to support the management of the Trust and vote against the resolutions.

Mr John Droog from Wrexham had lived close to Erddig for the last 25 years and had been a member of the Local Community Council for the past eight years. The Local Community Council had been consulted by the Trust but, as it could not legally challenge the outline planning permission, it had adopted a stance of negotiating to maximise the benefits to the village. He believed that the proposed development would benefit the local community through the availability of affordable housing and the improvement to the overall standard of housing stock, and he rejected any criticism levelled against attracting people from outside the Rhostyllen area. He explained that the community referendum previously referred to, had no binding ruling, that 84% of people either expressed no opinion or were in support of the development, and at the subsequent local elections the vast majority of councillors had retained their seats. He urged members to vote against the resolution stating that there was no local appetite for a continued battle, that efforts were being made to live with differences and work together for the benefit of the community, and the proper way forward was to rely on the democratic process through the Wrexham County Borough Planning Committee.

The Chairman read a web-chat comment from **Mr Peter Bate from Minehead in Somerset**. He asked where in its original format and constitution did the Trust have the authority to be involved in speculative housing development?

Mr Iwan Huws, Director for Wales, introduced himself to the meeting and pointed out that the resolution was directed at him. He explained his previous experience in running a Welsh planning authority and knowledge of the planning process, before stressing three main points. Firstly, the development had followed the democratic process. It was not visible from the house at Erddig and did not compromise his own or the Trust's values – he did not join the National Trust to become a property developer. Secondly, Erddig was an under-endowed property with a shortfall of £15 million which was not available from other sources; so the Trust needed to raise this income through investment land. Finally, the Trust's position on Erddig was consistent with the Chairman's green spaces debate, was not hypocritical and, given the need to support 1,000 acres of inalienable green space already at Erddig, was an appropriate development.

Mr Peter Nixon, Director of Conservation, summed up on behalf of the Trust. He had picked up on two main themes in the debate: concern that the Trust was becoming a property developer and concern that the Trust was not keeping faith with its donors' wishes. Mention of developments at Erddig, Stamford Brook, Dunham Massey and Cliveden could give the impression of a development trend within the Trust. However, he was emphatic that the Trust was not becoming a property developer as a principal activity. Only a tiny proportion, 21 hectares or less than 0.01%, of the total 252,000 hectares of land in our ownership currently had been identified as having potential for housing.

He then told members they could be absolutely confident that the Trust was keeping faith with donors' wishes. Philip Yorke's deed of gift was available for viewing and made specific provision for parts of the estate to be sold by the Trust as it saw appropriate. Ideally the Trust would not want, nor would Philip Yorke have wanted, to develop the land, but contrary to the proposer's view the Trust did not have the funding from current sources to meet the long-term maintenance needs of Erddig or to fulfil its responsibility to the 1,000 acres declared inalienable. Where the Trust had allowed developments to proceed, it had applied rigorous criteria to ensure the Trust kept faith with its principles, and as a result these developments had achieved recognition and awards for their environmental sustainability.

In conclusion, **Peter Nixon** stressed that the present developments were not a slippery slope into property development, that they accorded with the donor's wishes and were in-line with the local democratic planning process. He asked members to vote against the two propositions.

Summing up on behalf of the proposers **Mr Marc Jones** addressed three issues raised during the debate. One of the aims of the resolutions was to remove the people who were failing to listen to members and local people as officers of the Trust and not as members of the Trust. With regard to the granting of initial planning permission by the local Council, it was passed under a discredited planning regime, which had overshot its housing targets by 40% and did not show regard for local need or sustainability. Opposition to this development sought to address the overshoot, have 50% affordable housing and restrict development within current settlement areas. The opposition was not an anti-English stance as had been suggested, it was about sustainability, the local community being expanded beyond all necessity and houses that were unaffordable for local people.

In conclusion **Marc Jones** stated that in taking the Erddig development forward the Trust had made a mistake, a

mistake that could be corrected if members voted for resolutions 4 and 5.

The Chairman requested a show of hands for resolution 4 and, despite a majority of those present in the hall against the resolution, called for a ballot due to the importance of the resolution. Members were asked to complete the yellow ballot paper headed ‘Ballot paper for the Members’ resolution asking for the development proposals at Erddig to be halted’ and hand it in at the end of the meeting.

The Chairman requested a show of hands for resolution 5 and, despite a majority of those present in the hall against the resolution, called for a ballot due to the importance of the resolution. Members were asked to complete the apricot ballot paper headed ‘Ballot paper for the Members’ resolution asking that those people responsible for the development proposals at Erddig be removed’ and hand it in at the end of the meeting.

7. Elections to Council

Evelyn Taylor, The Secretary, announced the results of the postal ballot for the election of members of the Council in the order that the candidates appeared on the voting paper as follows:

Richard Haslam	20,556	Elected
Wendy Bundy	9,605	
John Farley	26,010	Elected
Julian Green	2,382	
Michael St John Parker	19,048	Elected
Colin George	17,697	Elected
Janet Watson	8,959	
Sophie Scruton	23,742	Elected
Simon Timms	24,448	Elected
Cynthia Burek	10,750	
Claire Large	11,052	
Graham Wall	5,003	
Susan Balerdi	6,285	
Andrew Turner-Cross	5,410	
John Nicholls	4,211	
Graham Wiltshire	1,135	
Richard Cuthbertson	10,930	
Peter Bourhill	5,262	
Peter Chapman	3,274	
Henry Keswick	6,408	
Ian Rowat	22,329	Elected

The Chairman congratulated those who had been elected to the Council and thanked all 21 who had stood.

8. New Chairman

The incoming Chairman **Simon Jenkins**, expressed how honoured he was to be taking over the Chairmanship of the National Trust and paid tribute to William Proby, Laurie Magnus and Fiona Reynolds for the astonishing work they had done over the last few years to put the Trust in such wonderful shape.

During the preparation for his new role, he was pleased to find that the genius of the National Trust was still genial. It was extraordinary how over the years the Trust had sustained a very delicate balancing act between different pressures; it was both the house and the countryside, the farm and art, a business and a charity. Everything about the Trust seemed to encompass all that was best about Britain. A hugely encouraging thing about the Trust was its ability to work through difficulties and controversies, such as that day’s debate on Erddig. This ability would be important to the Trust as the country entered a difficult period. However, the Trust tended to do quite well in recession: people did not go abroad, they stayed at home, and wanted to know what was worth seeing and doing at home. The Trust had a real opportunity to show people that holidaying in Britain was about the National Trust.

The National Trust represented a sort of Britain that people felt they ought to be a part of, and the Trust needed to tell people that the Trust and the values it represented were their values. It was part of a sense of identity with Britain, it was part of a sense of belonging, it was not just national, it was also local. In their heart of hearts all Britons were members of the National Trust, they just weren’t paying their subscription yet.

The Trust was moving into a new era, from a period when it was primarily about saving, guarding and protecting, to an era when it was about presentation and participation. It was going from being simply a conservationist organisation to being about making its buildings and properties really work for people, inviting them in and telling them why it mattered that these places were preserved, and making them a part of their ordinary daily lives.

The National Trust was going to be central to the politics of the environment, and this was going to be central to the politics of Britain. The Trust had got to find a way of playing a part in that debate without getting involved in controversy which was not its business. A huge chunk of the environmental debate did concern the National Trust. The Trust’s mission was not to play politics but where an issue affected the Trust, it would go into battle legally, and there would be plenty of battles to fight.

In conclusion, Simon Jenkins suggested that the values the country wanted from the Trust were the values Octavia Hill and the others who founded it had in mind. A common criticism of the Trust was that it had become too bureaucratic, too centralist, too big. The Trust had to find a way of making the National Trust both national and small, whilst retaining the values it was set up with. He felt passionately that beauty was not subjective, it was objective. The National Trust was about the beauty of buildings, the beauty of landscape, the beauty of art, the beauty of nature, and the Trust's job was to defend that beauty through thick and thin, and he was looking forward to doing that with the help of the Trust's members.

9. Conclusion

The Chairman concluded the meeting by thanking attendees and reminded members to vote as they left the hall with the results to be announced at 3.55pm. He also expressed his thanks to the two sign language interpreters and stenographer.

10. Result of the Ballots

Resolution 3

That the Trust's governing body ensures sustainability is central to all of the Trust's decisions:

	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstain</i>
Specified	29,667	1,267	17
Discretionary	8,052	0	0
Total votes	37,719	1,267	17

Resolution carried

Resolution 4

That the 'new village' development at Erddig is scrapped and any money needed for the upkeep of Erddig Hall be taken from the Trust's £350 million annual operating budget:

	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstain</i>
Specified	14,380	14,139	64
Discretionary	2	8,019	
Total votes	14,382	22,158	64

Resolution not carried

Resolution 5

That those people responsible for the decision to develop land at Erddig in Wrecsam be removed from the National Trust:

	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstain</i>
Specified	10,156	16,781	24
Discretionary	2	8,176	
Total votes	10,158	24,957	24

Resolution not carried

If you require this information in alternative
formats, please telephone **01793 817988**
or email **agm@nationaltrust.org.uk**

© 2009 The National Trust
Registered charity no. 205846

The National Trust
Heelis, Kemble Drive, Swindon SN2 2NA
www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Typeset by Blacker Design (4944)
Printed on 100% recycled paper