

Minutes of the ASB 40th Annual General Meeting

Performing Arts Centre, Redmaids' High School

Tuesday January 9th 2024 at 7.40p.m

Committee members:

Henry Alpass (HA), Mary Alpass (MA), Frances Brown (FB), Lin Cobb (LC), Kate Floyd (KF), Liz Jarvis (LJ), Susan Merelie (SM), Jinx Newley (JN), Jan Read (JR), Debby Sandow (DS), Suzy Sibley (SS), Keira Stobie (KS), Stella Victory (SV)

1. Welcome (Miss Susan Hampton, President)

Good evening and welcome to the 40th AGM of the Arts Society Bristol. It is good to report that events are back to normal after the disruption of the COVID years. It has been a memorable year with the highlight being the hugely successful National Conference held in Bristol at St. George's in May. Credit must go jointly to past Chair Henry Alpass, who dealt with preliminary details, and to present Chair Kate Floyd for her thorough research, planning and organisation. Committee members gave stalwart support ensuring the smooth running of this important event.

We have enjoyed a varied lecture programme and also several events where members have shared their experiences of recording at Stapleton Parish Church and the intricate work completed by the Heritage Volunteers at Bristol Cathedral. A residential trip based in Nottingham with a carefully planned programme of daily visits was much enjoyed by a number of Members as well.

On behalf of the membership, I express my warmest thanks to Kate, our excellent Chair, and to her committee for achieving so much over the past year. Well done and thank you!

2. Apologies (KF)

Philippa Boyland
Frances Brown
Gish Hobbs
Liz Jarvis
Susan Merelie

104 Members had been registered at the venue by this point and so the meeting was declared quorate.

3. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of 10th January 2023 (KF)

These had been made available via the ASB website for the specified period prior to the meeting. No matters arising or amendments had been received, and there were no comments from those in attendance. Therefore, the Minutes of the last meeting were accepted as approved without comment and will be signed by the Chair.

Proposed: Maureen Dickens

Seconded: Jinx Newley

Agreed with one abstention.

4. Chairman's Report (KF)

Arts Society Bristol has had another busy and successful year- and one of change. The biggest organisational change has been Henry Alpass stepping down from his role as Chair, having steered the society through the extraordinary time of the COVID epidemic and out into sunnier days.

As our President has mentioned, our biggest activity of the past year was hosting the National Conference in May, which would not have happened were it not for a conversation between Henry and Florian Schweizer, the Chief Executive of The Arts Society, on his previous visit to Bristol. It was suggested that Bristol would be a great place for a conference and St George's an idea venue, which is exactly what Henry made possible. I also want to thank him for his years of hard work and the members of our very able committee who supported him. I am now benefitting from their enthusiasm and knowledge too.

We have had, as usual, a diverse range of lectures, all of high quality. The Arts Society process of choosing lecturers is the great strength of this organisation and, in the last year, we have learnt about seascapes, Queen Victoria's jewellery, some of the National Gallery's famous pictures, Rabindranath Tagore and, most recently, the origin of the Monopoly Board, with the summer party in June giving us live music on medieval woodwind instruments as well.

Outings and activities

Last spring, we visited Kelmscott Manor and Fairford Church and in October we went to Nottingham and the East Midlands. This was a trip of contrasts, from the stately Belvoir Castle to the mining village of Eastcote, the birthplace of D. H. Lawrence.

In November we held our new Members' coffee morning at Holy Trinity Stapleton, the church we are recording, with the finished report to be added to the Victoria and Albert Museum's data base of over 2000 parish churches.

We do live in a great city and in preparing for the conference I looked anew at the arts opportunities this city offers us. We very much want to continue to take advantage of all of this which is right on our doorstep, so we have now added an annual trip to St George's for a lunch time concert as part of our programme, alongside an exclusive tour of an exhibition at RWA last February and a ceramics Study Morning at the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery to come shortly this year.

We continue to support financially two local charities: Happy Mondays at RWA and Expressions art sessions run by Milestones Trust at a studio in Fishponds. We aim for the Gift Aid we claim on your subscriptions to go to these charities. In addition, our Heritage Volunteers continue meet every Monday at Bristol Cathedral to restore and renew the textiles.

Finally, our society is thriving in a changed climate in which some Arts Societies are not. We have stabilised the number of Members at around 200, but need to move forward from this

base to ensure continued financial security. We are working to raise the profile of The Arts Society in Bristol because, several years after the rebranding from NADFAS, the logo is still not widely recognised. So, tell your friends and bring them along to a lecture. In this new world in which the way people use their leisure post-COVID has changed, we need to show that meeting together, learning about and celebrating the arts is above all fun.

5. Treasurer's Report and appointment of External Examiner (SV)

The full report was displayed for those attending the meeting and had also been published on the Society's website for the specified period prior to the meeting.

As described in previous years, the society's reserves had increased substantially in the 2 years or more to June 2022, due to the changes in activities during the COVID restrictions. We took the decision that we should use the excess reserves generated in that period to stimulate the return to normal activities and to retain our membership numbers. We therefore held subscriptions at the same level throughout. As expected, we incurred a deficit in the year to 30th June 2023 and are currently running one to June 2024, and these are gradually reducing our excess reserves. Everything is evolving much as planned but we are now reaching the point where we will need to bring our annual income and expenditure back into balance so that we don't reduce the reserves below a sensible level. I am therefore recommending that we raise subscriptions across the next 2 years from July 2024, more details on which will follow shortly.

The signed accounts for the year ended 30th June 2023 were then outlined.

During this time, a deficit of £2017 (two thousand and seventeen pounds) was incurred and the total income was £16,205 (sixteen thousand two hundred and five pounds). The majority of this was Subscription income of £9,224 (nine thousand two hundred and twenty two pounds), together with Guest donations of £582 (five hundred and eighty two pounds) and Gift Aid of £1,432 (one thousand four hundred and thirty two pounds), the total of which was less than for the previous year due to a reduction in membership.

Income from Study Days and the Summer Party were shown separately, but they more or less equal the expenditure on these activities.

Miscellaneous income included a generous £50 (fifty pound) donation from Peter Stoppard and donations collected on the RWA study day, all with a view to supporting further Community Arts projects.

Costs totalled £18,222 (eighteen thousand two hundred and twenty two pounds), the most significant of which were lecturers' costs of £4,360 (four thousand three hundred and sixty pounds) and lecture room hire at £2,980 (two thousand nine hundred and eighty pounds), which were both back to a normal level as all lectures were delivered in person, so they were higher than for the previous year.

Another cost, essential to the provision of lectures, was the Arts Society Services fee of £3,714 (three thousand seven hundred and fourteen pounds). Our excellent lecturers are all sourced through the Arts Society, which also supplies online material, and holds our database.

Our Community and Young Arts awards totalled £1150 (one thousand one hundred and fifty pounds). This included a donation to the RWA Happy Mondays art project for autistic children of £350 (three hundred and fifty pounds) net, after a £250 (two hundred and fifty pounds) contribution from The Arts Society, and a donation of £550 (five hundred and fifty pounds) to the Milestones Trust Expressions project which uses art to help people with learning disabilities and mental health problems. We held a coffee morning at Henbury Church at which talks were given by our Church Recording Group about the church's features and artefacts which they had studied for many years, and we donated £250 (two hundred and fifty pounds) to the church to fix their gutters to prevent further water damage to the church interior and its contents.

Miscellaneous costs appear relatively high because they include the purchase of a computer, which was realised by using a generous donation. This was shown as income in the accounts for the previous year.

The balance sheet showed that we started the year at 1st July 2022 with exceptionally high reserves of £25,344 (twenty five thousand three hundred and forty four pounds), but, by 30th June 2023, the deficit for the year had reduced our reserves to £23,327 (twenty three thousand three hundred and twenty seven pounds), which is still relatively high.

The forecast for the current year to 30th June 2024 shows, on the income side, that membership has very slightly increased this year compared with last year, so our major source of income is likely to be only slightly more than last year. Excluding any miscellaneous income, which is unpredictable, I have therefore arrived at total income of £15,900 (fifteen thousand and nine hundred pounds) compared with £16,200 (sixteen thousand and two hundred pounds).

It is difficult to predict costs part way through the year, but I estimate that these will be slightly higher than last year, at about £18,600 (eighteen thousand and six hundred pounds) compared with £18,200 (eighteen thousand and two hundred pounds), giving rise to an estimated deficit for the current year to 30th June 2024 of £2,700 (two thousand and seven hundred pounds).

We started the year with reserves of £23,300 (twenty three thousand and three hundred pounds), so we are likely to end the year at 30th June 2024 with reserves of about £20,600 (twenty thousand and six hundred pounds), which is higher than our pre-COVID level, but not by a wide margin.

We have not increased subscriptions for the past 7 years, the last increase being in 2017. Costs are continuing to rise and I now recommend that we increase the annual subscription from July 2024 by £5 (five pounds), from £47 (forty seven pounds) to £52 (fifty two pounds) as I think it would be irresponsible not to start to close the gap between annual income and annual expenditure.

To explain further, attention was drawn to a forecast for the subsequent year to 30th June 2025 which included subscription income at the increased rate of £52 (fifty two pounds) per Member and assumes that the number of Members stays stable at about 200.

Income from subscriptions would therefore rise by £1000 (one thousand pounds), and Gift Aid would probably rise too, though there is not an exact correlation because it depends on how many Members give us permission to claim gift aid. I have therefore estimated income of £17,100 (seventeen thousand and one hundred pounds).

Expenditure may well rise but here I have used an estimated figure of £18,700 (eighteen thousand and seven hundred pounds) which would give rise to a deficit for the year of £1,600 (one thousand and six hundred pounds).

As mentioned previously, reserves brought forward at July 2024 are estimated to be £20,600 (twenty thousand and six hundred pounds). After deducting the potential deficit of £1,600 (one thousand and six hundred pounds) for the year to June 2025, estimated reserves carried forward at June 2025 would be around £19,000 (nineteen thousand pounds). It is generally regarded to be good practice to hold reserves equivalent to one year's expenditure, and this figure just exceeds annual expenditure, estimated to be £18,700 (eighteen thousand and seven hundred pounds). The increase of £5 (five pounds) from July 2024 is therefore the minimum necessary to keep our finances healthy by the time we reach June 2025.

Projections beyond June 2025 will depend on our membership levels and other decisions on costs. If membership stays the same at around 200 members, and costs remain similar, then a further subscription increase will need to be considered in a year's time, but the exact amount of increase will depend on membership levels and costs which will be better known at that stage.

A breakdown of how annual subscription was spent was then outlined for the current and forthcoming year, assuming an increase to £52 (fifty two pounds) per Member.

This year, the costs of the lectures, which comprises lecturer's fees £23 (twenty three pounds), room hire £16 (sixteen pounds), and fees to the Arts Society £17 (seventeen pounds), total £56 (fifty six pounds) – so the cost of lectures is currently £9 (nine pounds) more than a subscription. Our administrative costs, less guest income and other miscellaneous income, total a net of £5 (five pounds). Gift Aid and awards more or less balance out. For the current year, the deficit per Member is therefore expected to be about £14 (fourteen pounds) in total.

For 2024-25, the subscription is shown as £52 (fifty two pounds), with perhaps a little more Gift Aid, so the deficit per Member is expected to be £8 (eight pounds). If we are able to recruit more Members for 2024-25 then the costs will be spread further and the deficit per Member will decrease.

These deficits are projected to be covered by excess reserves up to June 2025, but thereafter we will very likely need to raise subscriptions again to ensure that we break even on an annual basis.

I am extremely grateful to Barry Wilkinson for having acted as our Independent Examiner for the year to 30th June 2023. This is an essential function to check that the figures all appear to be reasonable, and Barry has done this for a number of years. He has very kindly agreed to act again as Independent Examiner for the year to 30th June 2024.

Questions were then invited from Members.

Are the reserves currently held in an interest yielding account?

It was confirmed that they were.

The committee then recommended that the signed accounts for the year ended 30th June 2023 be adopted by the society.

Proposed: Peter Simpson

Seconded: Suzy Sibley

Agreed unanimously with no votes against or abstentions.

The committee also recommended that Barry Wilkinson be appointed to the position of Independent Examiner for the year ending 30th June 2024.

Proposed: Jinx Newley

Seconded: Lin Cobb.

Agreed unanimously with no votes against or abstentions.

Thanks were extended to SV for continuing to ensure the Society's financial records were kept in such meticulous order and a plea was made for anyone interested in taking over the role of Treasurer to contact the committee.

6. Election of Committee members (KF)

Members were informed that for each post only one candidate was standing for election.

Election of JR as Membership Secretary.

Proposed: Henry Alpass

Seconded: Lin Cobb

Agreed unanimously with no votes against or abstentions and warmly welcomed to the committee.

Election of HA as Joint Foreign Tours Secretary, with a wonderful tour to Nice already organised for the society in 2024.

Proposed: Jinx Newley

Seconded: Heather Fry

Agreed unanimously with no votes against or abstentions.

Re-election of Susan Merelie as Community Arts Secretary, to continue her excellent work co-ordinating the society's charitable support.

Proposed: Mary Alpass

Seconded: Debbie Sandow

Agreed unanimously with no votes against or abstentions.

Election of Lin Cobb as Vice Chair, although, as she already holds numerous vital roles, the committee are still seeking someone to actively shadow the Chair, without any expectation to automatically step into this role in the future.

Proposed: Stella Victory

Seconded: Trevor Scantlebury

Agreed unanimously with no votes against or abstentions.

7. AOB (KF)

No other resolutions were proposed in person at the meeting or prior to it via e mail.

Therefore, it was assumed there was no other business and the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.10pm p.m., thanking all those present for attending and suggesting an earlier starting time in 2025.

8. Date and time of 40th Annual General Meeting (KF)

Tuesday 14th January 2025 at 1930.