

**MINUTES OF THE NINETEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF
THE ULSTER ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE SOCIETY,**

**Held at The Old Museum Building, 7 College Square North Belfast
on Thursday 23rd February at 7pm.**

The Chair was taken by the President, Mrs Primrose Wilson, 28 members and guests were present.

The President welcomed members to the Annual General Meeting of the Society

1. Notice of Meeting

The notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

2. Apologies

The Hon. Secretary read the apologies received from, Mr. Doug Black, Mr. Gregory Berry, Mr & Mrs L Mackie, Miss Rosalind Hadden, Mr Christopher Slator, Ms Letitia Pollard, Ms Lydia Inglis, Mr & Mrs Tom Atkinson, Mr Jeremy Wilson, Mrs Demelza Hurley, Mr Joe Fitzgerald, Dr Paul Harron, Mr Eddie McParland, Mr Adrian Huston Mrs Karen Latimer, Mr Stephen Craig and Professor James Stevens Curl

3. Minutes of the Eighteenth AGM held on 24th February 2016 at 7pm.

The Chairman asked if there were any requests for amendments. As there were no amendments the meeting agreed and accordingly the Minutes were signed by the President.

4. Hon. Treasurer's Report

The President asked Mrs Rosie Ford–Hutchinson to report on the Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2016

Honorary Treasurer's Report for the year to 31 December 2016

I have pleasure in presenting this report as the Society's Honorary Treasurer. Firstly I have to report that the Society's net worth has decreased by 4% to £132,404 but Income rose by 16% to £142,679. Events income fell by 14% to £20,485 but showed a net profit for the year of £7, 485 this being mainly the result of the successful trip to Northumberland. Publications sales rose by 584% as we had our new Young & MacKenzie book published in the autumn. There was a fall in membership income by 3% Buildings at Risk income amounted to £20,873 and Heritage Lottery Fund income to £31,428.

On the capital side the stock of books fell in value by £216. Office equipment fell by £667 as no new office equipment was capitalised during the year and there were no disposals. This figure is the depreciation figure for the year.

The tax free yield from our Charifunds as at 31st December remained a very healthy 4.62%.

Deferred income for the year amounted to £72,327 of which £46,680 relates to the Andrew

Lloyd Webber Fund, £13,341 relates to the future Buildings of Co Down book, £9,970 to the Heritage Lottery Fund Transition and £2,336 being our contribution to the repair of the vernacular cottage on the north coast.

We are also in receipt of a legacy of one thousand pounds from the late John Cowdy one of our long standing members.

The Society has made significant progress in 2016 towards living within its means but more remains to be done in the areas of membership retention and recruitment and book sales. The loss of the Belfast City Council core funding grant in March was a significant blow and we need to address this.

I would like to put on record my thanks to all office staff who have helped me in the past year and I would also like to thank all the committee members who have worked hard to generate funds through events and new publications. I would particularly like to record my thanks to Nikki for bringing in substantial project income over the past year.

*For and on behalf of the Committee
R Ford-Hutchinson
Honorary Treasurer*

The President thanked Mrs Ford–Hutchinson and commented that the Society is deeply appreciative of the work she has done.

Mr Brian Stewart of the accountancy firm, Ross Boyd then addressed the meeting. He told those present that Ross Boyd are working on upgrading the accounts and this is going well. He echoed the Treasurers concern over the loss of core funding.

Questions.

A discussion about core funding ensued after a question by Mr Edward Wilson. It was concluded that the Society should never be reliant on core funding and the business model that worked 10 to 15 years ago is no longer realistic. Tribute was paid to the Chief Executive for all the hard work she has done bringing project work into the Society and this is likely to be the model going forward.

There being no further questions the President asked that the accounts be adopted.

This was proposed by Mr Edward Wilson and seconded by Mr J Clarke and agreed by the meeting.

5. Committee's Report

Dr David Johnston, Chairman, presented the committees report on the Society's activities since the last AGM.

Committee report for the year to 31 December 2016

President, Ladies and Gentleman,

It is once again my pleasure to bring the report on the activities of the Society over the last year - and what a year it has been!

We have had President Trump, Brexit and an unexpected local election – and meanwhile the UAHS has undergone our own Transition process, we have moved premises and not to be out done we have had a new President too!

Sir Donnell Deeny stood down as President of the Society at the EGM in November and as we thank him for his generous support over so many years we also acknowledge his recently announced elevation to the Court of Appeal as a Lord Justice. I am sure you would all want to join me in wishing him well and I will write on behalf of the Society to congratulate him.

Sir Donnell is clearly a hard act to follow but we are fortunate to have someone of the stature and caliber of Mrs Primrose Wilson to take on the mantle of President. As I said at the EGM Primrose needs no introduction in any forum across these islands that is concerned with the build heritage.

Thank you, Primrose for agreeing to take on this role and continuing your long support and service and dedication to the cause of the precious shared asset that is our built heritage.

Yet again the past year has been a particularly busy one with the usual activities of the Society ongoing. We have already heard from the Hon. treasurer about the financial situation which remains a challenge.

As ever we are indebted to our office staff who have underpinned all our activities and taken forward the work of the Society. I offer them all my sincere thanks.

Mrs Esther O' Sullivan looks after office management. Miss Leah O'Neill, stood down as our Heritage at Risk Officer earlier in the year and we wish her well. Her role was taken over by Ms Connie Gerrow who continues to make an impact despite a significant cut in funding and resultant reduction in time and resources for this important role.

Mrs Philippa Martin has become a valued part of our staff team working as a planning and outreach officer. This post was part of the HLF funded transition project and will shortly come to an end, so I would take this opportunity to thank Philippa for her sterling work and assistance over the last months which have been integral to all that has been achieved.

Eva McDermott has also joined the staff and helped coordinate some of our activities, not least our move here. Thanks Eva – it all ran very smoothly.

We were also fortunate to have a number of volunteers who were a tremendous help during the year. Sincere thanks to them all.

Ms Nikki McVeigh, our chief executive has completed her second year and just as I said last year, it has once again, not been dull.

Nikki's dynamic, enthusiastic and determined approach has been central to taking the Society forward during the last year and in particular her efforts to work with members and committee to move the transition process forward have been fantastic. Added to this a premises move and seeking funding in the current climate, Nikkis efforts have been nothing short of heroic.

We have suffered a reduction in the funding for the Heritage at Risk position and also lost some funding from Belfast City Council.

However the team have focused on income generation and, ably led by Nikki, were successful in undertaking consultancy work for the Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership building on previous work with the Mourne Heritage Trust.

I think it is worth highlighting the developing partnership and consultancy role that is evolving based on the unique and desirable skill set we offer.

Nikki and John Anderson, our recently appointed vice chair, lead the application for the development of an online or mobile recording and reporting app from the Building Change Trust, Social Innovation NI Fund and I am delighted to announce that as a result of their successful bid, the Society will receive support to the value of £30,000.

Primrose and the team organising the 2017 Cross border Summer School have also been successful and secured very significant funding from Derry & Strabane District Council as

well as Donegal County Council.

And last but not least Nikki led a consortium that achieved funding from the Andrew Lloyd Weber Foundation to bring the UK wide Heritage Angel Awards to Northern Ireland. I should say that the Historic Environment Division contributed £10,000 additional 'start up' support to this so, Ian please convey our thanks to all concerned for this essential support.

The committee and officers group continue to give generously of their time and knowledge. I greatly value their support and I would like to pay tribute to their contribution to all that the Society achieves.

As part of the transition process the committee will be smaller and a number of members have taken the opportunity to stand down this year. They include

Mrs. Iona Erskine Andrews,

Mr Trevor Edwards,

Mr Adrian Huston

Dr Murray Power,

Mr Gregg Woods.

Between them they have each given many hours of dedicated service and on your behalf I want to thank them for all their hard work and support over the years. I should say that we are not letting them escape entirely and that there will be opportunities to serve on sub committees but in the meantime we say thank you once again.

And so to the sub committees.

The publication committee oversaw the production of Dr Paul Harrons wonderful volume on Young and Mackenzie which, following a very successful launch and significant media interest has proved very popular - A book that is describes as both scholarly and entertaining! Well done to everyone involved not least of course Paul.

I should say that a cocktail of funding, from among others, the Ulster Scots Agency and the then NIEA made this book possible so thanks to all of them.

Eager as ever, the publication committee are already fundraising and working on the next publications.

Primrose Wilson and her colleagues in the Events committee have been as industrious as ever and there have been many enjoyable occasions during the last year but the highlight among many highlights was the visit to Oxfordshire led by Karen Latimer which was greatly enjoyed by all who attended.

The Society was also actively involved in the European Heritage Open Days events and also with the assistance of Dr Andrew McClelland produced the thought provoking "Belfast – A changing city" display that was launched at the Public Records Office before travelling around selected Belfast libraries covering all areas of the city.

We have a number of events planned for our 50th anniversary year including another Summer School in June which will involve Derry and Donegal. We will also have a high profile Heritage Angels Awards evening in the Opera House in November and consequently our planned dinner will be moved to the Spring of 2018. There will be lots on offer and hopefully something for everyone – so do watch the website for details.

The Conservation, Planning and Policy committee chaired by John Anderson has been very active this year.

As I said last year they have been navigating the somewhat uncertain waters of the new planning procedures and the passage of time has not made the route any clearer. In fact there appear to be multiple routes depending on which council area you are in. However we continue to work at developing relationships with the councils.

John and other volunteers have had a busy time working closely with Nikki and Philippa to coordinate responses and comment on issues as well as attending a number of meetings, all of which helps raise the profile and appreciation of our built heritage. Campaigning and lobbying at central and local government level is a hugely important aspect of the Society's role and we thank everyone involved for their support.

I also want to highlight that the office receive and respond to innumerable requests for advice, support and information and an important part of this is our Heritage at Risk or BHARNI role.

BHARNI is a partnership between ourselves and the Department of more than 20 years duration that has been both innovative and productive in caring for our most vulnerable buildings at risk.

The primary aim of BHARNI is to identify structures which are at risk, raise awareness and act as a catalyst for their reuse. Associated with the BHARNI register are a range of publications such as "The directory of traditional building skills" which aim to heighten public awareness and provide information. The partnership between NIEA and the Society has resulted in over 200 buildings at risk being revitalised.

Many of these rejuvenated buildings provide wonderful examples of how our architectural heritage has the potential to be at the centre of reinvigorated and cohesive communities bringing benefits that were not anticipated and that go far beyond business plans.

As I have said we suffered a 50% cut in funding for this partnership which has resulted in a considerable reduction in the ability to maintain activity however we continue to seek funding and build partnerships.

While talking about reduction in funding I want to spend a few moments highlighting the ongoing limitation of listed building grant aid.

Listed building grant aid represents excellent value for money for government in that for every pound invested a further seven pounds is added from other sources. Clearly this makes sense in purely financial terms but perhaps more important are the benefits to our environment, our sense of wellbeing and our wider economy. Put simply this funding is key to allowing many projects across the Province to happen and full reinstatement must be a priority.

The built heritage is a finite resource, it is an asset in its own right and it has the potential to be a powerful tool for social cohesion and economic regeneration. Investing in our built heritage has physical, psychological and social benefits for everyone in a Northern Ireland, whether they realise it or not.

Importantly this is true not just in the short term but also in the long term.

Any reduction in support for our precious built heritage will have real and significant implications.

But to end on a positive note, Nikki our Chief Executive and John Anderson were in Dublin this week on behalf of the Society to receive a Special Recognition award from the Industrial Heritage Association of Ireland.

(Dr Johnston presented the award to The Chief executive for display)

The UAHS is the lead independent voice for the promotion and protection of Ulsters built heritage, focused on encouraging regeneration for the benefit of people and communities. We are a not for profit organisation with a 50 year record of achievement and working in partnership.

During that time, your Society has been in the vanguard of campaigning, protecting and highlighting the importance of the unique asset that is our built heritage - the streetscapes and countryside, the towns and villages that form the backdrop to our lives and on which we hang our memories of times past and our hopes for years to come.

While happily such value and potential is increasingly being recognised significant risks persist and so it is vital that the UAHS remains as relevant and effective as it can be. There has of course been change over the last 50 years but our core activities and values will remain the same.

It is said that “we do not inherit the land from our fathers but we borrow it from our children.” So as we move into our Golden Anniversary year and reflect on the last 50 years there is much to be proud of in the legacy that has been handed on but also every reason to look forward to the next 50 years with optimism.

We have a great foundation on which to build.

Thank you.

Questions.

The President asked the Chair to explain why the Society has moved to the Old Museum. The Chair explained that the lease had expired on the Donegall Pass premises and as Hearth the other tenant there was also moving a new site had to be found. The Old Museum building offered the opportunity to use an historic building and also the chance to work with another society, The Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society.

There being no further questions the President thanked Dr Johnston for his report.

7. Retirement from Committee

Following the EGM on 23rd November 2016 and as part of Transition process a number of Committee members are taking the opportunity to stand down at this time.

They are:

Mrs. Iona Erskine Andrews,

Mr Trevor Edwards,

Mr Adrian Huston

Dr Murray Power,

Mr Gregg Woods.

No additional nominations have been received and due to the previously mentioned Transition process it was agreed not to fill the vacant seats on committee at this time.

8. Election of Members and Officers of Committee

The Committee for 2017 therefore was declared as Dr David Johnston (Chair), Mr John Anderson (Vice-Chair), Mr Sean Hagan (Hon. Secretary), Mrs Rosie Ford-Hutchinson (Hon. Treasurer) Mrs Karen Latimer, Mr John Edmund, Mr Alastair Rankin, Mr Marcus Patton Mr Stephen Craig and Mr Terrence Reeves-Smyth.

9. **Appointment of Examiners**

The Chairman took as the next item the Appointment of Examiners. Mrs Rosie Ford-Hutchinson reported that the accountancy firm of Ross Boyd limited have provided an excellent service and therefore proposed that they be reappointed as the Society's examiners. This was proposed by Dr David Johnston and seconded by Mr Simon Bridge and agreed by the meeting.

10. **Any Other Business**

None

11. **Guest Speaker**

The President introduced the guest speaker, Mr Jeff Sloane from the Historic Environment Division who gave an informative talk on the work of the Division.

There being no further questions the President thanked members for their attendance. The meeting concluded and those present were invited to adjourn for refreshments.