

# Shropshire Union Canal Society



## The Minutes of the 2025 Annual General Meeting of the Shropshire Union Canal Society

Limited held on Saturday 29 November at 11 00hrs.

Meeting held via Zoom video conferencing.

### Council members present online:

David Carter (DC) Chair; Steve Clews (SC) Vice Chair; Sue Ball (SB) Secretary; Clive Robertson (CR) Treasurer; Tom Fulda (TF) Restoration Project Manager; Pat Tolster (PT) Health & Safety; Barbara Cowie (BC) Trustee; Chris Hesketh (CH) Trustee.

### Ordinary members present online:

John Bannister; Chris Bushnell; John Cowie; Maggie Ellis; Andrew Greenwell; Ian Hendley; Michael Limbrey; EW Roberts.; Liz Tolster.

| Item |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| 1    | <b>Apologies for Absence</b><br>Apologies for absence received from Jean Barrett, John Dodwell, Richard Feeney, Graham Harris and Christine Palin.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 2    | <b>Reminder of procedure for the meeting</b><br>DC reminded attendees of the protocol for the meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Only 1 person to speak at any one time</li><li>• Mute microphones unless invited to speak by the chair</li><li>• State your name if called upon to speak</li><li>• The chair will call for proposers and seconders when required</li><li>• Voting will be by a show of hands</li><li>• Any member not present will not be able to vote</li><li>• Voting intentions should be made clear for the chair to see or hear.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 3    | <b>Adoption of the minutes of the 2024 AGM held on 30 November 2024</b><br>The minutes of the 2024 AGM were adopted. <b>Proposed: T Fulda. Seconded: I Hendley. Proposal carried unanimously.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 4    | <b>Matters arising from the minutes of the 2024 AGM.</b><br>There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 5    | <b>Reports:</b><br><b>a) Chair's report</b><br>Once more it is a pleasure to be able to report on a year of substantial progress for the society. This is due to the hard work of a large number of trustees, members and volunteers. As with all voluntary organisations the society continues to face challenges but we have largely been equal to these over the last twelve months.<br><br>Our Council presently has a full complement of Trustees to fill the Council roles of Secretary, Treasurer and Chair as set out in our governance documents. I am very lucky as Chair to be supported by a group of very competent and hard-working Trustees, some of whom have agreed to seek re-election later in this meeting. As with all voluntary bodies, the number of trustees/organisers/supervisors in the organisation is a major limiting factor in the society's activities and any so potential expansion of activities requires more of the above.<br><br>There are a number of big stories this year. One is that membership numbers are, for the first time in many years, showing a modest but steady increase. Over the recent past the society has worked hard to project itself as an organisation potential members would find attractive. This seems to be paying off. Last year we formed a Membership sub-committee to help our Membership Secretary, Richard Feeney, in his work. Its recent initiatives have included improved member benefits, special membership offers and of course more and better publicity. The latter includes use of both traditional and digital media, a presence at a number of canal events up and down the SU system (for which we must thank Sue Ball, Jan Johnson and Fred Barrett in |

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|   | <p>particular for the very attractive society stall), and of course the excellent society publicity leaflet. We now offer special membership deals to volunteers at both our restoration and enhancement work parties. The quick and easy application process on our attractive and informative website is also a major factor in our improved recruitment numbers.</p> <p>Our Communications group is now in its third year and its success may be gauged by the amazing increase in the number of 'hits' and 'followers' on its various channels. For example, our two Facebook channels have seen a 25% increase this year so far! The five social media channels, website, press releases, and Cuttings all use material stored on a common database and this is used in a pre-planned manner on the different channels. We are learning all the time how to harness the interest generated by social media. There is clear evidence however that social media is assisting in the recruitment of both members and volunteers.</p> <p>The Cuttings editorial team are to be congratulated on the production four very high-quality editions of the magazine during the year which I am sure are appreciated by members old and new. Cuttings goes from strength to strength!</p> <p>Our restoration work at Crickheath is now finished for the time being. During the year there have been two 'topping-out' ceremonies - one to mark the completion of the heritage wharf wall, and the second the finish of the channel lining and the towpath work in that area. Both tasks were been completed within the agreed timetable and funding from the Government's Shared Prosperity Fund. As a result, we were able to use the residual funding to deliver a further 130m section of the canal within the original timescale; a great tribute to Tom Fulda's project management. We were also successful in the second round of bids to the Shared Prosperity Fund submitted via CRT. Using this funding the channel work toward Schoolhouse Bridge has progressed, the design of the curves in the channel necessary to navigate through Schoolhouse Bridge finished, and work started on clearance of the canal in the direction of Waen Wen Basin. We have also moved our work compound to land adjacent to Schoolhouse Bridge, and now enjoy (for unpaid volunteers at least) luxury accommodation in the shape of a purpose-made welfare unit. And in the last few days the funding has enabled Waen Wen Basin to be cleared of trees using contractors.</p> <p>Restoration never stands still and planning is underway for two future areas of work. These are the Jubilee Bridge (the farm accommodation bridge at Crickheath), and the section of channel from Waen Wen Basin to Pant Basin.</p> <p>The enhancement group continues to be active at Ellesmere. The early months of the year were devoted to care of the trees and hedges we planted some years ago, and maintenance of the canal side furniture. The summer was spent afloat on the loaned CRT workboat doing towpath vegetation clearance and maintenance at various places between Frankton Junction and Bridge 55. It is very heartening that nearly every passing walker thanks us for our work. The other thing to report is that we now have a base within Ellesmere Yard to store our tools. Our thanks to CRT for this and the loan of the workboat.</p> <p>Finally, next year marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the society. Council has come up with a list of ideas and events for suitable celebrations. These include two boating events, walks, static and traveling exhibitions, and an anniversary weekend in November. The latter will be an opportunity to show off our work and have a bit of a party. We hope to welcome members and volunteers, past and present, VIPs and well-wishers. More details of all of the events will be released shortly. I hope that you are looking forward to these as much as I am!</p> <p><b>b) Treasurer's Report</b></p> <p>The full society accounts and report for the financial year ending 31 March 2024, approved by council, is available to view on the website and have been registered at Companies House and with the Charity Commission. The society has had good year financially with reserves increasing by £25k, largely due to a legacy received. However, it is expected that expenditure will increase markedly in the next financial year and is currently not backed by any immediate grant. Thus, next year may not look as attractive. Generally the society is in a very good financial situation currently.</p> |
| 6 | <p><b>Election of Auditors</b></p> <p>The Treasurer proposed the continuation of Morris Cook Accountants (Llangollen) as auditors.<br/> <b>Proposed: C Robertson. Seconded: S Clewes. Proposal carried unanimously.</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

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| <b>7</b>  | <b>Election of Trustees</b><br>Five trustees are due for re-election this year: D Carter, S Clewes, R Feeney, C Hesketh and C Robertson and all offer themselves for re-election. <b>Proposal for re-election en bloc: Proposed: C Bushnell. Seconded: M Limbrey. Proposal carried unanimously.</b> |
| <b>8</b>  | <b>Any Other Business</b><br>None notified. There were no items raised from the floor.                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>Guest Presentation – Wildlife on Canals by Jenny Spelling, Ecologist, Canal &amp; River Trust.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>10</b> | <b>The meeting closed at 12.39hrs.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |