

**FRIENDS OF RYE HARBOUR NATURE RESERVE**  
**MINUTES OF THE 44th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**Held at Winchelsea Beach Village Hall on**  
**Saturday 24th September 2016**

Number of members present: 71

The Chairman opened the meeting at 2.31pm.

**1. Apologies for absence:** Alan Martin, Alf & Iris Simpson, Audrey Wende, Robbie Gooders, Anne Yates, Anita Davie, Mary Barnes.

**2. Adoption of the minutes of the 43rd AGM held on 3rd October 2015.** Copies of the minutes were displayed on the notice boards in the hall prior to and during the meeting and had been available on the website [www.rhnrfriends.co.uk/news\\_337185.html](http://www.rhnrfriends.co.uk/news_337185.html). Nicki Frith wished to put on record that a statement in the Chairman's report at the previous AGM mistakenly attributed to her efforts made by the late John Gooders. The minutes were then approved as a correct record and their adoption carried unanimously by a show of hands.

**3. Matters arising from the minutes.** There were no matters arising.

**4. Adoption of the Committee's Report for the year.** The Chairman referred those present to his Chairman's Report that had already been published in the Friends latest newsletter and wished to provide an update to that report. He particularly wanted to raise public awareness of the benefits of what the Reserve has to offer. He wanted to ensure that we improve the visitors experience and attempt to get them more attuned to the environment and wild places. The importance and relevance and impact of big open spaces, the fresh air, the sights and sounds. He stressed the need to attract younger people and to promote the fact that the Reserve is a safe place to bring small children. Experience of places such as the Reserve can have a long lasting, maybe life long effect on the young.

Concerning the proposed Visitor Centre he described the long process of design and the necessary attention to the smallest of details as the build should stand the test of time and we need to get the design right. We are gradually getting there but it was imperative that we get the access, the accommodation and facilities, the views and the building's appearance as good as it can be so as to entice the majority of the 250,000 visitors per year that we receive to come into the Centre. We particularly want to entice the general visitor who may not have a particular interest in the natural world. He highlighted the amount of work that is being put into the project, mentioning specifically the Project Board that had been set up.

He paid tribute to the Layton legacy of £1million plus that had provided the impetus for the project to go ahead. A fundraising officer has now been appointed by SWT.

The eventual installation of the two cabins as a temporary visitor centre was still awaited. The delays are largely due to the difficulties of achieving connection to water and mains electricity.

Lucy was now on maternity leave and expecting twins in November. The Chairman paid tribute to the skills Lucy brought to all aspects of her work. She had put together the programme of events for next year before she went on leave. In her absence Linda Wren would be covering her responsibilities.

The Chairman mentioned that the committee are still looking at the Friends Constitution to ensure that it provides for all our needs as regards provision of sufficient skills and resources for the size of projects that we are now instigating. He would welcome anyone with relevant skills to "come forward".

The Chairman mentioned a number of other new projects. A professional photographer skilled in the use of a drone had been engaged to achieve some film of the Reserve from angles never before seen. The photographer had produced some amazingly beautiful aerial footage of the Reserve.

A memorial to a Canadian airman who crashed near Castle Water had been set up using stone from the site of Smeaton's Harbour and the engraving skills of James Tomlinson.

We will be producing a new map of the Reserve for sale to visitors. The design had met with much approval.

It is also our intention to produce a book of photographs of the Nature Reserve, its form and its wildlife. Likely cost would be £15 and it should be a great present or souvenir of a visit.

The adoption of the Committee's report was carried by a unanimous show of hands.

**5. Approval of the Accounts for the period 1st April 2015 - 31st March 2016.** In presenting the accounts the Treasurer explained that because of the size of the Layton bequest it had been necessary to involve the services of outside accountants that had meant that the accounts printed in the newsletter had been rushed through. Copies of the amended accounts would be available to all who wanted a copy after the meeting. Ian Rumley-Dawson raised a question concerning the stated value of 2 Watch Cottage presented in the accounts, guessing that the true value would be many times that value and was concerned to ensure that the insured value was more aligned to the market value. The Treasurer was able to confirm that the insured value had been suitably increased. Ian also asked about general publicity for the Reserve. Barry replied that he was planning a series of articles in the local press and noted that the SWT Chairman Tony Whitbread had been able to talk to our local MP Amber Rudd about the Reserve. There being no further questions the adoption of the accounts was proposed by Nicki Frith, seconded by Ian Rumley Dawson and approved by a show of hands.

At this point Membership Secretary Pat Bonham had a few words to say about subscriptions. He announced that the renewal rate thus far in the year had been 91% and offered to take any outstanding subscriptions from any unpaid member in the hall. He wished to encourage the take up of Standing Orders as a preferred method of payment and had supplies of the necessary forms with him if any member wished to change to that method of payment. For those members who pay income tax Pat reminded the meeting of the benefit to the Friends provided by completion of a Gift Aid declaration that enabled the Friends to reclaim from HMRC 25p on every pound that a member paid as subscription.

**6. Election of Officers and Committee for 2015 /2016.** The election of Officers and Committee members was taken en bloc being proposed by Ian Rumley-Dawson and seconded by Ken Bird and Melvin Smith and carried by a unanimous show of hands. The Chairman paid tribute to retiring committee member Mike Slavin, who had now moved away from the area. Mike had provided many years of really substantial input to the work of the committee.

**7. Re-appointment of Independent Examiner Michael Russell.** The Treasurer announced that Mr. Russell was happy to continue and his re-appointment was proposed by John Barnes seconded by Liz Blackwell and carried by a show of hands.

**8. Any other business.**

Some small changes to the Friends Constitution had been drafted and included in the newsletter details about the AGM. A new additional clause included a requirement that voting should be by a show of hands at Annual General, Extraordinary and Committee meetings unless a poll was demanded by not less than 55% of the members. Agreement to the additional wording to paragraph 17 and the new paragraph 18 was proposed by John Barnes and seconded by Ian Rumley-Dawson and duly agreed by the members present.

Melvin Smith asked whether the Constitution included a specification of what would be considered a quorum at these meetings. John Barnes said that at a committee meeting the quorum is four members. The question of a quorum at an Annual or Extraordinary meeting needs to be discussed.

A question was raised as to whether responsibility for the execution of the Visitor Centre project would be a named officer of the SWT. John Barnes, as one of our representatives on the

Project Board, explained the duties and responsibilities of the Project Manager, who had been recruited by SWT. Barry Yates informed the meeting that responsibility for Health and Safety on the Project lies with SWT Chief Operating Officer Elvin Bourne.

John Barnes raised a question about the Ramsar site designation and Barry said he would cover that in his presentation after tea.

Robin Harris asked whether it would be possible for a "round robin" email system to remind members of up and coming events. This idea would be looked at. Kenneth Bird volunteered the services of his online Rye News to achieve such reminders if required.

A question as to how we publicise the Reserve was made by a lady who had worked at RSPB Dungeness. Barry explained whilst there are many possible sources for information about the Reserve on websites etc. it was difficult to achieve real advertising at a sensible cost and any such advertising needs to cost effective.

The meeting closed at 3.18pm.

After the official business of the meeting Reserve Manager Barry Yates enthralled those present with an excellent illustrated presentation about latest developments on the Reserve and was able to show some of the fabulous drone film footage of various parts of the Reserve that had been referred to during the AGM.