



Draft MINUTES 17th Annual General Meeting

Held on Monday 20nd June 2021 at 3.45pm
at Abbeywood Gardens, Chester Rd, Delamere, CW8 2HS

The papers for this meeting were circulated to Members by email and post, as appropriate, on 25th May 2022. These papers comprised an introductory letter from David Cash on behalf of the Council of Management, a Registration Form, the AGM Notice & Agenda, the Minutes of the 16th AGM and the Directors' & Trustees' Report and Financial Statement for the year ended 31st January 2022.

Prior to the meeting, attendees were given informative guided tours of Abbeywood Gardens led by Head Gardener, Simon Goodfellow, and his Deputy, Carolyn Jones. The various contrasting areas of the garden were a delight in the beautiful weather and were followed by afternoon tea, offering a welcome opportunity to catch-up with fellow members.

1.0 Welcome and Introduction

On behalf of the Council of Management, David Cash welcomed and thanked everyone for attending Cheshire Gardens Trust's 17th AGM 2021/22.

2.0 Attendance and Apologies

- 2.1 Fifty-four Members and guests were in attendance
- 2.2 Apologies had been received from five Members

3.0 Minutes of the 16th AGM held via Zoom on 2nd June 2021

- 3.1 The Minutes had been circulated by email or by post on 25 May 2022. No amendments were required. The Minutes were duly proposed as an accurate record of the meeting by Gordon Darlington, seconded by Kath Gee and accepted by the meeting.

4.0 Matters Arising

- 4.1 There were no matters arising.

5.0 Annual Report – Key Points

Council of Management

David Cash introduced himself as a member of the Council of Management (CoM).

There still remained a vacancy for the role of Chair, Ed Bennis having held that position for many years.

CGT owed Ed a huge debt of gratitude. Although he had resigned from CoM in September 2021, we are grateful that he still attends the meetings when he can.

David stressed that all Members are welcome to attend CoM meetings. Meetings are held via Zoom and also face to face in various venues across the county for the convenience of members. Meeting details can be found on the CGT Website calendar.

The meeting was reminded that Joy Uings had also wished to resign from CoM in September 21 after many years as Secretary and Treasurer and playing a lead role in the Caldwell Nurseries Project and the CGT Website. We are grateful that she agreed to defer her resignation until today so as to keep the number of CoM members at 7.

5.2 *Events*

The Events Group, lead by Margaret Blowey, continued to provide informative and entertaining talks available on line during the restricted covid period, but thankfully returning to popular garden visits through the summer months. These are all available to 'revisit' via Newsletter reports and on the Gallery page of the Website. Thanks were expressed to the Group for continuing to keep CGT Members informed and engaged.

5.3 *Research & Recording Group*

The thriving R&R Group continued its fascinating work, happily gaining four new members and expanding contacts in Bollington. The attention of the Meeting was drawn to a brief description of their considerable achievements on page 5 of the Directors' & Trustees' Report 31 January 2022, including being invited by the Cheshire West & Chester Heritage Officer and Cheshire Historic Environment to be involved in the Local Listing Project.

5.4 *The Caldwell Nurseries Project*

Planned improvements to the Website are still progressing and Joy Uings continues her research, aiming to produce a new book in due course..

5.5 *Conservation & Planning Group*

Often using the research of the R&R Group, the very small Conservation & Planning Group has reviewed 69 planning applications, commenting on 41 in the past year, assisted by some members with local knowledge. It is encouraging that the National Trust at Lyme Park has again contacted the Group for their contribution to pre-application discussions. However, with so few C&P Group members, this situation is unsustainable and it is concerning and disappointing that we have not engaged more members in this core activity of Cheshire Gardens Trust. Members were again asked to contact the C&P Group if they hear news of, or can give information on, proposed work to designed landscapes in their locality and/or to offer more regular involvement. Contact Barbara Moth or Sue Bartlett directly or via planning@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk

5.6 *Newsletter*

This continues to be a credit to Editor, Sue Eldridge who now has a Newsletter Support Group of five to spread the load. Members had been surveyed for their welcome comments on its content, length and layout. As a result, some changes are being made to widen its scope. Such input from members is greatly appreciated, including their content contributions. newsletter@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk

5.7 *Website*

Similarly, comments and contributions to the Website are very welcome. In conjunction with profile articles in the Newsletter, the Trust is trying to enlarge its

Website record of Public Parks which have become much more valued by the public during the 'lock-down' period. Photographs from members are also welcome to enlarge our collection. info@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk
We will be supporting Martin Slack, our Treasurer, to facilitate the increased use of payments by bank transfer for events and direct debit for membership.

5.8 *Bursary*

We are sad to lose from our Council of Management, Nick Lightfoot of Ness Botanic Garden. Nick has been instrumental in helping set up our Travel Bursary for horticultural students. Unfortunately, last year we were unable to make an award, partly due to travel restrictions, but we intend to investigate other ways to continue and broaden the scheme.

5.9 *Volunteers & Membership*

As previously stated, two members of the Council of Management are not standing for re-election. We are unable to continue with only five members without amending the Trust's Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Without the input of fresh volunteers, this puts an additional strain on maintaining our aims and activities, even though our general Membership numbers remain steady.

6.0 Financial Review and Accounts

6.1 Treasurer, Martin Slack, introduced himself to the Meeting and thanked Joy Uings for her excellent long-term work in that role.

6.2 2020-21 had seen a small shortfall in income due to continuing the free on-line talks. However, for a charitable organisation, the Trust is carrying a large surplus which the Council of Management wishes to address.

6.3 Martin was continuing with updating the accounting system, including the use of online banking to speed up the process and also encouraging the use of direct debit and bank transfer payments. Information on this will be circulated to Members and published in the Newsletter.

6.4 There were no questions from the floor and Martin was thanked for his contribution.

7.0 Elections to Council of Management

7.1 Ed Bennis then addressed the meeting to emphasise the position in which Cheshire Gardens Trust finds itself. Despite being one of the most respected and one of the larger County Trusts, thanks to the hard work and range of achievements of active members since its launch in 2004, CGT is now at serious risk of having to close.

7.2 As stated at the last AGM, the Trust became unconstitutional after September 2021 with the resignation of Joy Uings and Ed Bennis from the Council of Management. Now, with the additional resignation of Nick Lightfoot, its future really is at risk unless a minimum of two volunteers for CoM step forward.

Ed stressed that membership of the CoM is not a huge commitment of time. Meetings take place every 6-8 weeks on line or face to face, in Cheshire venues convenient to the members. Christine Wilcox-Baker and Tina Theis, both previous long-standing members of the CoM, emphasised that members are only obliged to do as much as they

feel able. General Members are welcome to attend CoM meetings to find out more about the work of the Council of Management.

- 7.3 However, no nominations or volunteers from the floor were forthcoming. Therefore, the Trust would have to close unless an amendment was made to the Memorandum and Articles of Association to reduce CoM's quorum from seven to five members.

No comments on this proposal were received from the Meeting.

- 7.4 (*Post Meeting Note:* We are pleased to report that Peter Young volunteered to become a CGT Trustee. This assists with our Council of Management quorum issues but we remain in need of additional active volunteers)

8.0 Other Active Roles within CGT

- 8.1 As had been stated at previous AGMs and again at this meeting, the continuing lack of fresh volunteers for active roles, still raises serious concerns about its future. It was hoped that the general Membership would consider contributing by contacting members of the Conservation & Planning, Research & Recording, Events, Newsletter and Website Groups directly or via their Group email addresses to be found on the Website 'Contact Us' link at the bottom left of each page.

Also, at info@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk

- 8.2 Barbara Wright, a long-standing member of the Research & Recording Group, stated that over 400 potentially important Cheshire sites had been identified by the Group, of which approximately 100 had been surveyed to date. A number of R&R Group members had had no previous experience of research but assistance and training can be given for this intriguing and satisfying work.

- 8.3 Conservation & Planning is another area where assistance from Members would be most welcome to contribute invaluable local knowledge of an individual's home area.

- 8.4 Even small roles help reduce the workload of other members. For example, a request was made for someone to circulate members by email with news and urgent notifications.

(*Post meeting:* Happily, we can report that Gwyneth Owen volunteered for this role)

Small actions can also add up, such as giving CGT membership to friends and bringing friends along to Events, including younger people.

9.0 Any Other Business

No other business was raised.

10.0 Thanks

- 10.1 Especial thanks were offered to Joy Uings and Ed Bennis for their long service. Margaret Blowey presented Ed with a gift of a framed map of the County Palatine of Chester by Robert Morden and flowers for his wife, Hilary – 'Behind every great man'. As Joy was unable to be present, the gift of a book token would be sent to her.

- 10.1 David Cash closed the meeting at 4.45pm with thanks to all attendees, the members of the Events Group for the organisation of the afternoon and to members of the various Working Groups for their continuing efforts and support of CGT.