

RED BRICK BUILDING

COMMUNITY • ARTS • EDUCATION • ENTERPRISE

MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON 28th July 2021

Board Members attending:

Rory Weightman; Paul Eavis; Tim Knock; Tom Clark; Rachel Inman; Geri Laithwaite; Tom Clark; Gill Locke Meeting chaired by: Rory Weightman - who began by introducing those present.

Shareholders Present:

Chris Black; John Mitchell; Malgosia Chelminska; Solange Zamora; Simon J Bennett; Helen Bennett; Geoffrey Hill; Rosemary Bradley; Martin Stanley; Jo Waterworth; Ramona Belcher; Tanya Dawson; John Carter; Phil Sharratt; Morgan Pandolfino; Stephen D Ross; Liz Pearson; Annelise Franck By Zoom: Nic McGerr; Peter Smith

Volunteers Attending:

Rosie Shaljean (minutes)

RBB Team Members present:

Bonita Everson; Rob Poizer; Katherine Clarke; Willow Mondaye; Chris Ross; Colette Rosser

One Member of the public attending: Linda Catherine Eszterhazy Klein Steer

1. Apologies received:

Gabby Hawes and Bev Smith

2. To approve minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held on 20th January 2020

These were unanimously approved, and there were no matters arising

3. To receive and approve the Chair's annual report

He reported that this has been a difficult year for the Red Brick project, for in common with other community projects and social enterprises, we have had to face the negative impact and uncertainty of Covid19 lockdowns and restrictions. Inevitably our programme has been severely compromised with cancellations and postponements of many events, courses, activities and bookings. Thankfully, financial pressure has been in part alleviated by grants from Power to Change, Mendip Council and Somerset County Council. Most staff have spent the year on furlough or part furlough. The building had to be closed for the first lockdown in March. The building was then adapted in accordance with government safety guidelines including increased cleaning, protective screens, ventilation and a new locking system so tenants were able to access their workspace when they needed to.

A phased re-opening began in May with tenants beginning to return, but bookings and community events were not able to resume until September. Board meetings were conducted by Zoom.

However the wonderful Community Garden was able to operate and thrive through this period, offering much needed respite for community health with volunteers able to feel safe and engaged. Our thanks go to Bon Everson, community gardener, for her dedicated work.

Another debt of thanks must go to Robin Howell and his team who kept the Building C project alive at this time, beginning repair and renovation work on what is now renamed The Life Factory, starting with the tower and “The Bridge” art installation. In August the Towns’ Fund board initially approved our application for £250,000 from the Accelerator Fund for the first phase of work which included restoration of the first two bays of the building for a youth zone, work space and toilets. In October we received the grant and work began in earnest, recruiting labour from the neighbouring community with a completion date of April 2021.

At the beginning of October we tendered an expression of interest with budget costs of £1.6 million for the restoration of the remainder of the building with potential occupancy for youth provision led by Katherine Clarke and Glastonbury Media Studio led by GFM. Glastonbury community leaders were invited to a closed working site visit on 26th September with teams and tours from The Life Factory, Zigzag, The Baileys Building (BIRT), Bridie’s Yard and Bridie’s Mound. The event generated much interest and helped spread the story of the Beckery Village and its constituent projects.

It has to be said that the Life Factory project caused some painful internal conflicts. The working group taking charge of it wanted a complete separation from the Red Brick Building, a move that was opposed by a majority of the Board of Directors who argued that this was impractical. Happily this was resolved in 2021 with all agreeing to remain as one project and to work together to fulfil our shared aims.

Life slowly began to return to the Red Brick in September with terrace and garden events, GFM live and Wells Jazz Collective. Albeit limited by Covid restrictions, classes and workshops were able to take place - yoga, tai chi, ballet fitness, dance medicine, Sufi sound streams, health and wellbeing events, which continued for the second re-opening after the December lockdown.

We are proud that, despite the difficult climate, we have been able to support our tenants and the impressive array of small enterprises operating from the building. Initially we were able to give all tenants a rent holiday and the some rent reductions.

In November we successfully applied for a “business cluster” grant from Somerset County Council which enabled us to appoint Beverley Smith as Enterprise Co-ordination on a six month contract of 13 hours a week, beginning in January. Despite having to work remotely for the most part Bev has done great work in supporting tenants and has also taken on 3 hours a week for volunteer co-ordination.

As always we remain grateful to our financial sponsors, to the Glastonbury Trust and to Martin Stanley and Tom Clark for their continued support. In particular we owe a huge debt of gratitude to the Glastonbury Trust for their decision to make their historic loan into a grant.

We are excited by the development of The Life Factory enabling us to expand and fulfil our aspirations for a dedicated youth zone, media centre and support for our neighbouring community. There will be challenges as this development takes shape with the perceived necessity to look at staffing needs, financial sustainability and to be “investment ready” with rigorous governance of the different parts of the project.

Despite the Covid restrictions that have marred this year, I think we can look to the future with optimism in the confidence the project will be able to further its aims of community

engagement and to continue to provide a dynamic and inclusive space, to be a catalyst for community empowerment through arts, education and enterprise.

A new Facilities Manager will be appointed soon.

The meeting thanked Rory for his commitment and hard work as Chair.

4. To receive the accounts for the period April 2019 - March 2020

Colette Rosser introduced herself to the meeting as manager of the finances at Red Brick Building. She started by welcoming Gill Locke the proposed new Treasurer, who brings a wealth of experience to the board of directors, and spoke of looking forward to working closely with Gill over the coming years.

In previous years these accounts would have been presented to shareholders within a year of the financial year end, but these are not normal times.

The accounts for the year ending March 2020 show a stable financial position – broadly in line the results of the previous financial year. RBB achieved a surplus of just over £19,000, however the coronavirus had a small negative impact on the results of the year as we started to experience cancellations on Events and Room bookings from early March 2020.

Although we are here to review the previous year's accounts it would be remiss not to address the huge financial impact that the pandemic had on RBB during the year to March 2021. The board took the decision to offer tenants a rent-free period while the centre was closed (March to June). Some tenants very generously carried on paying their full rent or part of their rent when finances allowed despite not being able to access the centre. Planned room bookings and events had to be cancelled in line with government guidance. However during these very difficult times there were many inspirational things to focus on.

CR thanked all the board of directors and staff for their hard work in keeping things moving and providing very welcomed support and advice despite the technical hitches experienced at some of our Zoom meetings. Grants were identified to help alleviate some of the financial pressures of the lockdown as well as funds received to enable us to carry out the works needed to make the centre Covid secure for returning tenants, users and visitors. Most staff were put on furlough from the end of March 2020. The Community Garden stayed open throughout the pandemic, providing a safe space and lifeline to the lonely and vulnerable. A major achievement was gaining the Accelerator fund via Mendip District Council for the renovation of Building C or The Life Factory. Despite the very tight time constraints placed on the spend of the grant, Robin, Rob and the whole team working on the building made amazing progress - quite often in appalling weather conditions. A great inspiration and a major achievement for the whole of the community.

CR expressed thanks to all investors and many supporters who have enabled RBB to come through these very difficult times.

5. To receive the resignation of the following directors:

Geri Laithwaite and Rory Weightman

Also Tim Knock, who will retain his Executive position, but will no longer be a Director

6. To vote on the following nominations to the Board:

Philip Sharratt (who has agreed to act as interim Chair), Tanya Dawson and Gill Locke - The meeting unanimously approved these nominations.

7. To authorise the board to re-appoint and set remuneration of the accountants Maxwells. This was unanimously approved.

8. Updates on previous reports

Phil Sharratt summarised the progress that has been made with the Life factory (Building C), and the Community Farm, as follows: Redbrick are leading on two projects that have been submitted to Government for Towns Deal funding. Mendip Council, who are the responsible body, submitted proposals for 12 projects across Glastonbury ; three in the town centre and nine in Beckery Village, including the two being led by Redbrick.

£23.6m of funding has been approved by Government and Heads of Terms have been signed. All projects have to now undertake a Business Case phase which is to be submitted by March 2022, with funding for successful projects arriving June 2022

The Life Factory (Building C)

The Life Factory project is to make watertight Building C to create a community-led learning, skills development and enterprise centre for those less engaged with the labour market, including a dedicated youth area.

The Life Factory received £250,000 Accelerator Funding and has made watertight the first pitch and space beneath adjacent to the community garden. Phase 2 will allow works to progress for the remainder of the building.

The Business Case process will include a refresh of the community consultation conducted 7 years ago when application was made for outline planning permission to confirm provision continues to meet community need.

Once completed it is anticipated the building will contain the following facilities, learning and skills zones:

- Woodwork and carpentry workshop
- Ceramics workshop
- Metalwork workshop
- Textiles workshop
- Recording Studio
- The Arts Zone including workspace for artists, performance and dance areas
- The Youth Zone with technology learning areas, breakout rooms and youth cafe
- Community laundry, showers and toilets (*completed phase 1*)
- Community Cafe catering for learners and affordable hot meals for community members (*ie catering for school children during holidays and those experiencing food inequity*)

It is also planned that there will be a commercial climbing wall to generate income to fund the Youth Zone and ensure youth provision is financially sustainable.

Bridies Farm

The owner of Northover Farm, immediately behind Redbrick and adjacent to Bridies Mound, has expressed an interest in selling the farm (*totalling 17 acres of which around 15 acres is alluvial pasture*) and the grade 2 listed farmhouse with associated farm buildings to the community.

After consultation with local community growers and Glastonbury based food growing and food equity groups, it was decided the farm could provide the opportunity to create an agroecological research, training and demonstration centre on the alluvial wetlands of the Somerset Levels, growing high-quality food and other produce that will help to alleviate food poverty and build a more resilient food system for the town. The farmhouse will be converted into a training and seminar facility where academic and qualification based learning can be complemented with physical implementation of knowledge gained directly onto the land.

The project will draw on Glastonbury's rich rural heritage, learning from a past that allowed the Glastonbury Abbey Manor to become the richest in England at its dissolution through recognition of the wealth of natural resources that wetlands have to offer and establishment of a diverse local agrarian economy. The project will enhance this understanding by utilising Permaculture design principles to implement modern regenerative farming practices, experimenting with growing techniques to identify those best suited to the natural environment found across the Somerset Levels and diversify income streams from the variety of yields produced.

As far as we are aware, this proposal is unique and could be of national importance to ensure the potential small-scale community level food production on wetlands across the UK is maximised, explore how to mitigate and adapt small-scale agricultural systems, community farms, growing projects and individual food growing activity to climate change, halt biodiversity loss and enhance the natural environment, implement micro-scale water management systems, improve food security and reduce poverty through learning and knowledge transfer, acquisition of new skills and the creation of sustainable livelihoods for disadvantaged residents.

The project will create a reciprocal knowledge exchange activity, sharing with other local growers, farmers and food producers, thus helping to mitigate poverty and disadvantage across Glastonbury by supporting the retention of existing employment and the creation of new jobs, land based skills development and community volunteering opportunities, increased opportunity for land based therapeutic activities, and a visitor attraction that will bring people together to celebrate the natural environment and Glastonbury's rich food heritage.

9. Any other Business/ Open discussion

Katherine Clarke reported that following last year's AGM, local young people had been canvassed about what they would like to see offered to them at the Life Factory. There was a good response with positive suggestions, many of which will be in place upon completion of what will be a youth-led project.

There was a discussion regarding the cost for individuals wishing to become shareholders in the Red Brick Building, and ways to make this more affordable, such as joint membership, or membership at nil cost. The meeting agreed that the rules should be changed.

Chris from the ZigZag building asked for support for his proposed project to improve the current car park, with the installation of shipping containers which could be rented out, with car parking spaces underneath. In view of the success of the recent Sunday Market he stressed the importance of building upon this as a community facility. The Chair suggested that this matter will be discussed by the Board at the next meeting.

Linda Catherine Eszterhazy Klein Steer introduced herself and spoke of the frustration she has recently experienced in her efforts to be involved with the Life Factory Music Studio. She has equipment she would be willing to share, though not to donate, to the project. She also expressed her disappointment that she has been unable to use the facilities in the Life Factory. It was agreed that she would meet with Bonita Everson in the Community garden the following day to discuss the matter.

Chris Ross who works at the Red Brick Building as a cleaner spoke of the urgent need to provide support and advice to people in the community experiencing mental health problems, especially in the current situation. He stressed that such help should be clearly signposted and advertised, to raise awareness of what is available, since part of the issue is that people don't know who to turn to, or where. Rachel Inman informed the meeting that there is a Drop-In session in the Morland Room at the Red Brick Building every other Tuesday, but it was agreed that word must be spread about this. The meeting closed at 19.00