



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

Monday 18 October 2021

The 57th Annual General Meeting of the Clapham Society was held at 8pm on Monday 18 October 2021 at Omnibus, 1 Clapham Common North Side SW4 0QW.

The Society's Vice-President, Julia Barfield, took the chair and welcomed members to the Annual Meeting. Thirty-five members were present.

1. Apologies:

None received.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting, dated 15 October 2019

Approved.

3. Adoption of the Annual Report for the year 2021

The Chairman of the Clapham Society, Annabel Allott, thanked Jennifer Everett, Membership Secretary, who had devised an improved format for the Annual Report which had been circulated with the September Newsletter (440). Reports had been submitted individually by each of the sub-committee convenors.

A member raised the issue of the Euro Hotel on Clapham Common South Side. Following numerous complaints about this hotel, he claimed that Lambeth Council no longer refers anyone requiring temporary accommodation to this Hotel, but Wandsworth Council is currently placing asylum seekers there. The local MP for Streatham, Bell Ribeiro-Addy, had recently been refused access. Mark Leffler commented that the owner of the Hotel is somewhat notorious locally and owns a number of properties around London. The operation of these hotels on South Side is certainly problematical. The hotelier regularly applies for permission to further extend operations on this site and has frequently undertaken building works without planning consent. Mark considered it to be outrageous that our MP had been refused access. Residents in the adjoining streets deserve every support.

Annabel Allott said it had been a privilege and a pleasure to have served as Chairman for the past 10 years. She added that the past 18 months or more had been difficult with the need for meetings to take place via Zoom. She thanked everyone who had helped keep the Society's activities going.

4. Adoption of the Financial Report & Accounts for year ended 31 March 2021

David Brown presented the Financial Report and Accounts, year ended 31 March 2021. He reported that the Society had made a small surplus during the year. Subsequent to the year end increased donations had been received and subscription numbers had also increased. Meetings had not taken place at

Omnibus due to the pandemic, resulting in a saving on booking fees for events, but the Committee had decided that Omnibus should nevertheless still receive support and a donation had been made. The Clapham Society will be added to the list of donors to Omnibus.

David reported on the success of the Clapham Society and Friends of Clapham Common Joint Summer Party. A sum of £1,165 had been raised in aid of Wild Clapham, a planting initiative on the Common.

David reported on the ongoing issue regarding major events on Clapham Common. There is a requirement for Lambeth Council to obtain Secretary of State permission prior to the enclosure of a large area for events on Clapham Common. The Society had contributed £2K towards the cost of legal advice sought by the Friends of Clapham Common (FCC), and David advised those present of the need to build up a Fighting Fund.

Adoption of the Financial Report was agreed.

5. Election of Officers and Committee Members for the year 2021-2022

The following were elected:

Chairman	Mark Leffler
Treasurer	David Brown
Legal Counsel	Daniel Dovar
Secretary	Gillian White
Membership Secretary	Jennifer Everett

The following **Committee Members** were elected:

Christine Armstrong, Ruth Eastman, Alison Macnair, Lee Roberts, Stephen Savage, Andrew Summers and Alyson Wilson

Martin Drury remains as President and Julia Barfield as Vice-President.

NOTE:

Subsequent to the AGM, **Alison Inglis-Jones** was co-opted onto the Main Committee.

6. Appointment of the Independent Examiner

Anna Long, FCA was thanked for her work during the past year and reappointed as **Independent Examiner**.

7. Any other business and announcements

7.1 Mark Leffler thanked the meeting for his election as Chairman of the Main Committee. He also thanked Annabel Allott for steering the Committee for the past ten years. Annabel had been a source of wise counsel during her term as

Chairman and could always find the right words to encourage and focus the work of the Society. She would be greatly missed.

Mark also expressed his thanks to Martin Pratt who was standing down from the Committee following the sudden and tragic death of his wife, Wanda.

He welcomed Alison Macnair back onto the Committee, and Lee Roberts and Stephen Savage as new Committee members. He added that it is possible at any time to co-opt members on to the Committee.

Mark said it is important to ensure the Clapham Society finances remain robust and referred to the issue previously raised by David Brown on the joint action of the Society and FCC in seeking legal advice regarding the inappropriate/illegal actions of Lambeth Council.

The Queen's Canopy is a tree planting initiative, inviting people to plant a tree for the Queen's Jubilee celebrations. Coincidentally, he said, it was launched shortly before the Joint Summer Party with FCC, which had raised £5K to invest in new trees for the Common.

Finally, Mark was very sorry to report on the sudden death of John How. John had been a very active member of the Society in the 1980s-90s and his involvement spanned over 30 years.

He reminded everyone that drinks would be available after the meeting and encouraged everyone to stay and socialise.

7.2 Ruth Eastman, Newsletter Editor and currently responsible for social media for the Society, addressed the members, wanting to ascertain how many were actively using social media. She was encouraged that a number of members positively indicated that they were and those who weren't would welcome learning more.

GW, October 2021

Talk by Andrew Summers about the Common Survey results after the formal part of the AGM

Andrew Summers, Common and Open Spaces and our representative on the Clapham Common Management Advisory Committee (CCMAC), reported on the Survey about the Common issued with the May Newsletter. Out of 800 members, responses had been received by only 100. He noted that the membership were not particularly active, especially compared with Friends of Clapham Common (FCC), but it was clear Clapham Common was popular with everybody.

The results suggested that some people use the Common daily and a majority use it several times during the week. There had been a lot of positive comments about the Common's expanse, vibrancy, mature trees, quietness and the encouragement for increased nature, more wilding and tree planting.

Andrew said there were more plans in the pipeline. CCMAC were to spend £1M focussed on access: new benches, improved paths, major improvement of paddling pool, provision of toilets and landscaping of the now-closed Windmill Drive. A feasibility study had been undertaken around the model boat clubhouse and the intention to turn this into a café. A new café may not be required following the success of the adjacent Megan's Café but there was no doubt that improvements were desirable on both the skateboard park and the basketball courts.

An increased involvement with FCC would result in more money, more volunteers, more enthusiasm. The Society's involvement extends beyond the Common, but Andrew's recommendation would be a willingness to establish a closer working relationship with FCC.

In terms of events on the Common, 67% thought there were too many, 37% thought it was just about right. Duration of events: 67% thought they lasted too long and in terms of size 67% thought them too big. Lambeth Council have a clear policy of commercialising Clapham Common and this did not just involve raising money. Lambeth likes to host large events.

It is important to note that Winterville would not be happening this year following lack of interest in the site offered (where the funfair and circus are located).

The only commercial event is proposed for next year. This will be one month in duration and held sometime between June and September, involving three concurrent weekends for which Secretary of State approval should be sought. Lambeth does not agree with this directive and regards it as irrelevant. The issue may result in a Public Inquiry.

Lambeth has promised to aim at a broader range of events on the Common. It is important to note that Lambeth received £600K from events, but only £60K was allocated to Clapham Common. Andrew feels strongly that this amount should be greatly increased, as the Common hosts larger events than other parks in Lambeth.

In the discussion period after Andrew's talk, Mark Leffler said that he regarded the 3.4-metre-high steel fencing around the events site as offensive. The proximity of the events site to the Underground Station is clearly the draw for event organisers. Yet Clapham Common Station is one of the most dangerous in London, with its central platform serving both directions. The risk of overcrowding during events results in partial closure, leading in turn to major inconvenience for residents and local businesses alike.

These points were strongly endorsed by Samantha Walker, who played a lead role in advising FCC on legal issues surrounding events, and in protesting against the enclosure of the events site in the summer. She had undertaken her own survey of local businesses following the August event. Her findings put in question the benefits to local businesses claimed by Lambeth.

Alison Macnair noted that the Survey had focused on events rather than other issues on the Common, such as paths, seating and drainage. She added that other parks (and cemeteries) in Lambeth have succeeded in accessing grants from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Andrew replied that Lambeth had previously indicated they would be employing someone specifically to apply for bids.

He added that there was no update on the proposed cycle path across the Common – which formed part of a Sustrans scheme. ML regarded this proposal, together with the closure of Larkhall Rise bridge to vehicles, which are both part of the Quietway 5 cycle route, as problematic, yet retaining high level support within Lambeth. *GW*

