

Astley Ainslie Community Trust - AGM 2020

Run as an online meeting using Zoom video conferencing software.

Date: 3rd December 2020 at 6.45 p.m.

1. Welcome

Akiko Kobayashi spoke to welcome all participants to the AGM, held online in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Amendments to the Constitution

Nathan Bower-Bir introduced the proposed amendments already published on the AACT website. Two thirds majority required to pass.

Those in **Block A** were tabled in response to the pandemic to allow for the change in timing of this first AGM and to permit general meetings to be held online. (Passed by 26 votes with none against, out of 29 present.)

Those in **Block B** concerned the election of the executive committee – electing seven members then allowing the committee flexibility to select a chair, treasurer and secretary and respond to any mid-term changes, allowing co-option of four additional persons rather than two, and redefining the quorum. (Passed by 23 votes with 1 against, out of 31 present.)

Those in **Block C** clarified the arrangements for general meetings – to allow special general meetings under largely similar terms as the AGM, with the same quorum requirement, and to allow the chair to invite associates to attend and speak but not to vote. (Passed by 24 votes with 1 against, out of 31 present.)

3. Election of the Executive Committee

Akiko began by introducing those members of the current committee present, and Nathan then introduced the election process.

Nominations for the new committee had been received as follows:

Stuart Buchanan – nominated by Akiko Kobayashi, seconded by Sara Stevenson.

Mike Hall – nominated by Jonathan Silvertown, seconded by Akiko Kobayashi.

Tim Orr – nominated by Julia Bouvy, seconded by Stuart Buchanan.

Maggie Carson – nominated by Willie McGhee, seconded by Enid Forsyth.

William Moyes – nominated by Akiko Kobayashi, seconded by Nathan Bower-Bir.

Sara Stevenson – nominated by Stuart Buchanan, seconded by Jonathan Silvertown.

Only six nominations had been received out of the seven allowed. Stuart Buchanan proposed that all candidates should be elected in a single vote, and this was seconded by Julia Bouvy. Simple majority required. (Passed by 29 votes with none against.)

Nathan congratulated those elected and thanked those who are stepping down.

4. Treasurer's Report

Mike Hall presented his report, referring to projected slides and to the papers already posted on the AACT website. He mentioned AACT's bank and collection accounts, the grants AACT has been awarded and has claimed or is in the process of claiming. He summarized the source of donations AACT has received, then briefly the sources of funding for the feasibility study currently in progress, including the part played by contributions pledged by supporters. He explained that because of the time since the opening of AACT's first account the report included summary tables for two successive time periods. In the first, most of the turnover related to the community visioning days in early 2019. In the second, for the year to 31st October 2020, a larger sum had been received than spent. Although AACT's bank balance was currently healthy, this would be less true once anticipated payments had been made after the end of the reporting period, and our long term funding base was not assured.

5. Progress Report

(a) Communications

Tim Orr referred to the report posted on the website and highlighted what AACT has tried to do to ensure communications in the past year, in the difficult context of the Covid-19 pandemic. He referred to the AACT Vision Framework. He emphasized the importance of social media channels, particularly at the moment, and asked for assistance from any people with useful skills. He mentioned the films produced by Written in Film and efforts being made to promote the Leaves journal. He referred to the Vision Framework of AACT on the website, and spoke of the importance of exploiting all channels to persuade decision makers and others that a community trust is the right way to go ahead for the Astley Ainslie. Finally he expressed the wish that more face to face communication will be possible in the coming year.

(b) Feasibility Study

Akiko spoke about the Invitation to Tender and the appointment of consultants for the feasibility study which would form the basis for an asset transfer required for the Astley Ainslie site. She then mentioned the applications for funding from the Scottish Land Fund and the Architectural

Heritage Fund and our approach to supporters to contribute to the funding shortfall.

(c) Community Engagement

Stuart Buchanan presented highlights of our pre-Covid community engagement activities in 2019.

Akiko expressed thanks to Judy Paul and Jonathan Silvertown for their work planning and running our Nature Day in August 2019.

(d) Leaves Journal

Julia Bouvy spoke on behalf of Sara Stevenson about the development publication and use of the Leaves journal.

(e) Trees

Maggie Carson spoke about the developments related to the trees on the Astley Ainslie site, both the specimen trees and those which have self-seeded which are all part of our vision. She referred to recent felling of trees and the tardy application of established planning procedures to assess the work to be done, and mentioned the statement from the council's arboricultural officer that the contract carrying out the tree work had been contacted and the work would be stopped immediately. She mentioned other contacts including social media efforts made. She indicated she would be encouraging people to befriend a tree, part of a process that has already started, in order to keep us all aware and to monitor its state.

(f) Plans

Akiko mentioned the prospective restart of meetings between AACT, the Astley Ainslie Community Engagement Group and the NHS, as well as the Place Brief for Astley Ainslie which is the responsibility of the city council planners. She noted our plans to obtain legal support shortly and plans incorporate (change our legal structure in time to submit an asset transfer request. She finished by emphasizing AACT's dependence on the support of volunteers.

Questions from Members

In the absence of any questions submitted by members in advance, Tim advised that a set of Frequently Asked Questions had been put together, and would be on the website with answers the following day. A question was submitted through the chat function about the previous community visioning days and Mike and Akiko contributed responses covering the general scope and the financial aspects. Akiko noted particularly that all the costs were funded by a Scottish Government grant.

The formal proceedings of the AGM then closed.

After a short break, a presentation was provided by the consultants led by Oliver Chapman Architects, on the draft conclusions of the feasibility study. (A summary of this is available separately **and a recording of it may be made available via the AACT website.**)

An opportunity then followed for discussion in separate breakout groups. We have since received some feedback – thank you for this. We would welcome any further comments via secretary@act.scot or by replying to any email you have received recently from AACT.

Finally, Akiko and Willie brought the evening's proceedings to a close.

Presentation by Oliver Chapman Architects

Oliver Chapman introduced the partners in the team of consultants and their previous work.

Mike Harrison looked at the landscape aspects of the value Astley Ainslie and the need for new ways to support the maintenance of the green space.

Oliver Chapman then identified the key features of the different parts of the site and how these relate to the previous character of the area.

He moved on to explain the focus of much of the feasibility study on Zone 2. He also introduced three potential scenarios which they used to analyse possible impacts on the site: a market driven baseline scenario, a green space only scenario, and a balanced community-led and partnered scenario.

Hazel Allan compared the financial and other characteristics of the three scenarios. The baseline scenario, with estimated land and development costs of £22M and £304M respectively, might include up to 850 housing units and lead to a profit to developers of £53M, with limited community influence. The green space only scenario has limited revenue generating opportunities and would likely not allow much community influence over or enable community benefit from the built environment within it. The recommended balanced scenario, including up to 630 housing units, with similar land purchase costs of £22M and an estimated development cost of £222M while maintaining and enhancing the green space, could be the largest community-led development in Scotland, but it would require very significant investment in the community's own capacity to take it forward and would require a credible organization to deliver it.

Michael Collins looked at principles they had followed in developing the balanced scenario: how best use could be made of the existing assets on the site, including the landscape and its built heritage. They considered it was best to limit new development to areas currently with buildings present, and develop the green infrastructure through the site linking to adjacent areas and including a new community hub at Canaan House in the core of the site. They identified the possibility for a new health and wellbeing village in the southern part of the site, with possibly slightly larger buildings, away from the more sensitive areas. This would prioritize retention of the butterfly blocks and an extension to the science block. Listed buildings elsewhere could be sensitively converted, with suitable extensions, within their existing parkland setting. Sites with other buildings or ones now marginally occupied could be locations for new sensitively developed housing built to the highest environmental standards and related to the new green infrastructure.

He then went on to look more closely at Zone 2 in the northwest of the site, a diverse area with access at two points, which was the focus for detailed study for the purposes of the SLF funding. It is suggested that this could accommodate such features as an intergenerational care facility based on the Millbank Pavilion, forest school, community gardens, creative enterprises and a new key building

on the car park site, with everything being designed around the theme of 'living with nature'.

Oliver Chapman then spoke about the latest anticipated timescale for the key process steps. The feasibility study will proceed into a more detailed stage including development of a social enterprise plan, to be completed by spring 2021. The City of Edinburgh Place Brief for Astley Ainslie is likely in spring or summer 2021 after further public consultation. The last currently known target date for the marketing of Astley Ainslie by the NHS was sometime in the first half of 2021.

Hazel Allan then outlined the conclusions reached by this stage, that a community-led vision is possible and that various needs can be anticipated as indicated below.

1. Develop community capacity to undertake a very significant development over a number of years
2. Work in partnership with other providers
3. Understand the risk appetite of the community and funders
4. Consider models of governance and delivery
5. Attract investment finance
6. Gain political support

She expressed the view that we may perhaps benefit when it comes finding partners and investors from a greater understanding of the climate challenge, the need for sustainability and good social outcomes, and of the benefits of community than were current five years ago. The prospect of new funding and investment finance schemes becoming available may be improving. What we are trying to do goes to the heart of the Scottish Government's sustainability agenda.