

# The Blackheath Village Society

## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the Village Hall on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2009

### Apologies for absence:

Patricia Allen Peter Barlow Jan and Paul Cope Steve and Helen Drewitt Graham Hayward Jane and Neville Hunter Penny Kirkwood The Rev. Ian Scott- Thompson
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### 1. Welcome:

Nick Harrison, the chairman of the Society, welcomed those attending and invited them to record their name, telephone number and email address on the sheet that was being circulated at the meeting to ensure that the Society's records were kept up to date

### 2. Minutes

The Minutes of the AGM held on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2008 were agreed to be a true record of those proceedings and the Minutes were signed by the Chairman.

### 3. Chairman's Report

The Chairman referred to the attached written report which had been circulated prior to the meeting and proceeded to highlight the following items:

(a) Following the re-structuring of the BVS committee at the last AGM the new committee has worked very well over the year and there has been nearly 100% attendance at each committee meeting. The chairman thanked the officers and other members of the committee for their support and hard work during the past year and also thanked all villagers who had in many different ways contributed to the well-being of the village during the year. Particular praise is extended to the organisers of the church murals' appeal whose fund raising efforts has achieved outstanding success.

(b) The 2008 Fair was again a spectacular success due to the hard work of Dave Grisley and his supporting team of volunteers but thanks is also extended to the many villagers who have contributed to the success in many different ways. It was emphasised yet again that the Fair is effectively the only source of revenue for the Society and the organisations supported by the

Society. Details of the donations made by the Society after the 2008 Fair are set out in the Chairman's report and it is pleasing to see that, despite the fact that substantial donations have been possible, the Society has been able, as a result of careful financial planning over the last few years, to set aside sufficient funds to cover the organisation of the next Fair and other contingencies.

Burns & Webber have indicated that they are, understandably, unable to continue their sponsorship in the current economic climate and efforts are being made to find alternative sponsors. In the meantime, Burns & Webber were thanked for their loyal support to date

(c) The Chairman explained briefly why, for the various technical reasons explained in more detail in the attached report, the BVS committee had come to the conclusion that it would be beneficial to change the Society's financial year and the date of future AGM. Whilst this is strictly a matter for the committee under the BVS Constitution it is felt that the village should be asked for its informal approval. The result of the change will be that the next financial year will run from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2009 and the next AGM will take place in June 2010.

The proposal was approved unanimously.

(d) The Chairman also explained briefly why, for the various technical reasons explained in more detail in the attached report, the BVS committee were considering a revision of the Society's governing documents. Various options were being considered and the committee would report further to the village in due course after consultation with the Charity Commission. It was intended that the new body(ies) would retain charitable status.

(e) Flooding and verge erosion continues to be a problem. The current state of play is described in the attached report and it is hoped that significant progress can be made this year. The BVS intends to keep this issue under close review. In the meantime, Steve Brockwell, Graham Hayward and Nick Morris were thanked for their unstinting efforts on behalf of the village

(f) The email database has been an enormous help in ensuring that the village newsletter and other information is disseminated quickly and efficiently. This is now the main means of communication but efforts will still be made to ensure that those who do not have email are kept advised

(g) The increasing number of village events is gratifying and is to be encouraged. Thanks was extended to all those who had organised such events. It is clear in particular that the village Christmas parties (for children and adults) are extremely popular and the intention is to make them an annual event from now on. The chairman thanked Alistair Taylor and (Harriet Side) for their hard work in this regard.

The Chairman invited questions at the end of his presentation but there were none.

#### **4. Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer Patrick Venning referred to the documents and independent examiner's report (copies attached) which had been circulated before the meeting. The accounts have been prepared in a non-technical and reader-friendly fashion and the documents include a three year comparison of income and expenditure which indicates that the Society's funds are in good order. However, the Treasurer warned that although the 2008 Fair had been particularly successful, this cannot be expected year on year.

The bulk of the Society's funds are now held by CCLA Investment Management Ltd ("Churches, Charities and Local Authorities") - a Charity Commission approved non-profit taking fund - but approximately £600 is held in bank current and deposit accounts. With the agreement of the Hayward Family, the War Memorial Fund, which had previously been held in a separate account, has now been amalgamated into the Society's accounts in order to maximise the earning of interest.

The Treasurer confirmed that he was ready to answer any questions and, none being asked, proposed that the accounts be adopted. This proposal was carried unanimously and the independent examiner, Louise Healy, was thanked for her help in preparing the Treasurer's report.

The Treasurer also thanked his Fair cash team (Terry and Pauline Powles, Andrew Webster and Derek Pye) for their help in handling and counting the fair proceeds so quickly and efficiently during and after the Fair.

#### **5. Traffic Calming**

Nick Morris reminded villagers that they had confirmed at the last AGM that they wished the traffic calming joint committee to continue its work and to turn its attention to the continuing problem in Littleford Lane. The joint committee had gratefully received a donation of £3,500 from the BVS to enable them to do so but, following further work, it seemed to the joint committee that it would be sensible to tackle the problem in Sample Oak Lane at the same time. Therefore, efforts had been made to secure a similar grant from the Surrey Hills Partnership for that purpose and he was pleased to report that such grant had been confirmed in the last few days.

The Joint committee are now in a position to start work but believe that establishing the proposed pinch-points in Littleford and Sample Oak Lanes will not necessarily get rid of the problem at the cross roads. Therefore, the joint committee would appreciate an indication from the village whether attention should be given during the next stage of the traffic calming plan to the continuing problem at the cross-roads. One idea is to establish a four way stop scheme so that there is no automatic right of way from any of the lanes leading to the cross roads. The response from the audience to this suggestion after a series of questions and answers was mixed. Accordingly, the joint

committee will circulate a questionnaire around the village to canvass views more broadly.

Nick Morris also urged villagers to consider signing the pledge form which had been introduced 4 or 5 years ago in which a promise is made to drive at no more than 20-25mph through the village and to consider displaying a sticker to this effect in their cars. Copies of the pledge form and sticker can be obtained from him.

Nick Morris and the other members of the joint committee were thanked for their continuing commitment to the welfare of villagers and their families.

## **6. Star Energy**

Jonty Lord explained that Star Energy is interested in developing two separate gas fields under Blackheath.

The Albury 1 gas field lies some 600 metres below Blackheath and gas has been extracted from it for the last 20 years or so via the existing site in Albury Park. Most of the natural gas in this field has now been extracted and Star Energy now wishes to use the field for gas storage. Star plans that the gas will be transported by pipeline out towards Send where Star Energy plans to build a gas plant near H.M.P.Send.

However, Star Energy has now postponed all its plans to store gas in the Albury 1 field until at least the end of 2009. So whilst notice had been given in the BVS December newsletter that Star Energy might seek permission from villagers to store gas under their properties, it was now highly unlikely that this would happen until Star Energy decided to proceed further with their Albury 1 storage plans. Jonty also explained that, whilst the payment to householders which might be offered by Star Energy in due course, should they decide to proceed with their storage plan, is likely to be negligible, Star Energy is, in any case (i.e. in the case of a householder's refusal of the offer), likely to be able to obtain a compulsory purchase order which would give them the necessary clearances to proceed. Jonty also explained that whilst safety concerns had been initially expressed about plans to store gas under pressure in Albury 1, Star Energy has now confirmed that gas will not be stored at pressures which will exceed that under which the existing reserves have been kept for millennia. The experts are therefore of the view that the planned storage does not cause any safety issues for the residents of Blackheath.

The second, 'Albury 2', gas field lies over 1,000 metres below Blackheath and Star Energy wishes to carry out appraisal drilling to establish whether there are commercially viable gas reserves in it, and also whether this field, too, is appropriate for gas storage in due course. Whilst Star Energy wished initially to carry out this appraisal drilling from Blackheath Common, they have now decided, after vociferous local opposition to their original proposals, to carry out the drilling ('horizontally') from their existing site at Albury Park.

Therefore, villagers living in Blackheath and its environs should not see, feel or hear any drilling activity. The appraisal drilling is currently planned to start from Albury Park in April 2009. It is the Albury 2 appraisal drilling results (and its consequences) that we, as a village, need to continue to be vigilant about, since the full scope of the Albury 2 project will not be clear until those results have been interpreted by Star.

Jonty and the other members of the liaison committee were thanked for their continued diligence in protecting the interests of the village and villagers.

## **7. Village Well**

Paul Brodie reminded the meeting that this project had initially been suggested as a means of demonstrating to the village that the village Fair can bring a tangible benefit to the village and that the questionnaire that he and Dave Grisley had circulated around the village had demonstrated that the proposal had the backing of most villagers. He and Dave were grateful for the support and donation received from the BVS which had enabled them to progress the project. Detailed plans had been drawn up to replicate the well as it had been in the past and they now had the necessary planning approvals. Enquires had revealed that it was better to build the well offsite and then transport it to the site. Quotations had been received which indicated that the cost of doing so was in the region of £9,000 plus VAT.

Discussions were continuing with the BVS as to how best to finance the cost. One proposal was to link the building of the well with the building of a real “twinned” well in a similar-sized village Guatemala which currently has no water supply, and to establish a fund to which residents would be invited to donate to support both projects simultaneously. There was support for this idea in principle, however it was emphasised that the details remained to be worked out and that it was contemplated that any contribution from BVS funds to the cost of the Blackheath well would be made separately, as the constitution of the society permits its funds to be used only to benefit causes in Blackheath and the immediate vicinity

## **8. Committee Business.**

The Chairman explained that, under the new Constitution, the three committee members who had served the longest were required to stand down but were entitled to stand for re-election. The three members who were required to stand down are:

Paul Brodie  
Dave Grisley  
Richard Williams

Each of the three had confirmed that they were ready to stand for re-election and no other name had been proposed. In the circumstances it was proposed that all three should be re-elected. This proposal was seconded from the floor and, consequently, all three were re-elected for a further term of three years.

## **9. AOB**

Paul Brodie advised that the management of the village website would now be in the care of Simon Jones. Simon was thanked for agreeing to take this over and Paul was thanked for his work in designing and administering to date a facility which had proved to be very useful both for villagers and visitors.

The Secretary, Richard Williams, expressed the heartfelt thanks of the committee and the village at large to Nick Harrison for the hard work, dedication and commitment which he continued to demonstrate as Chairman. A presentation was made to Nick as a token of the village's appreciation and esteem.

## **10. Future Dates**

31<sup>st</sup> January: Carlo Curley at St Martin's Church

25<sup>th</sup> April: Ball at Barnet Hill

Richard Williams  
Secretary