

One World Link

Minutes of Annual General Meeting

Held 29th November 2014 - Dale St Methodist Church Leamington Spa

1. **Welcome:** The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked our distinguished guests for coming along.
He also thanked Dale St Methodist Church for their support throughout the year in providing rooms for our meetings free of charge.

2. **Attendance:** 22 members
In addition there were 2 distinguished guests:
Cllr John Knight –mayor of Leamington Town Council
Chris White - MP

The list of attendees is filed with the minute book.

3. **Apologies:**
Ron Stone
Andy Smith
Margaret Watkins
Jenny Bailey
Sarah Campbell
Bill Evans
Prof. Franklyn Lisk
Cllr Moira-Ann Grainger
John Myers
Neil & Helen Warwick
Liz Garrett
Jane Knight
Gail Farr
Julia & Malcolm Fry
Sue Gallagher
James Knight
Mota Singh
Felicity Smith

4. **Minutes of AGM held 2nd November 2013**

Copies had been distributed prior to the meeting. There were no issues with the minutes. Adoption was proposed by Matt Western and seconded by Chris Davis. This was passed unanimously.

5. **Matters arising** – There were no matters arising

6. **Presentation** – Day of the African Child – Rachael Cliff

Rachael talked about the impact of the visit of the 3 teachers from Bo both on the schools in Leamington and on the visitors themselves. She talked about arranging a visit to a hospital at very short notice and the way that the visitors took everything thrown at them in a very relaxed way.

The actual day of the African Child was organised by Liz Garrett and Katy Traynor. Over 400 children took part all of whom were totally engaged. The impact of these events is amazing. The children have a real sense of friendship with the children in Bo. Currently the children in Warwick are feeling very concerned about the impact of Ebola and are looking to help when they can.

7. **Accounts for year ending March 2014**

Ian displayed the accounts as examined and passed by our independent examiner. A copy is attached to the minutes.

Ian thanked Andy Crump for all the work he has done again this year examining our accounts. The accounts were found to be sound.

Ian explained that our income for the year had been £17,710 and our expenditure was £20,286 we therefore had an excess of expenditure over income of some £2,576. Currently we have some £34,000 in our account.

There was a question from the floor as to the difference between travel costs and travel and subsistence costs as shown on the slide. Ian explained that Travel was the cost of people going to Bo and travel and subsistence costs were for visitors from Bo.

There was a request from the floor that in future the slides shown should include the similar amounts received/spent in the previous year so a comparison can be made. This was agreed.

Adoption of these accounts was proposed by Janet Alty and seconded by Matt Western. These were passed unanimously.

8. **Chairs Report**

“This has been a difficult year for all associated with Bo. The problems created by the terrible disease of Ebola have caused a great deal of personal tragedy within Sierra Leone as a whole as well as within Bo itself.

The disease has become the defining characteristic of the year, at least from May onwards as the world gradually woke up to the increasing disaster. I will return to that later.

However, it is also important to focus on the positives of our relationship this year. The Link remains strong and we have seen many initiatives still during the last 12 months or so.

Last year at the previous AGM we had the Mayor of Bo with us during his stay in Leamington. We developed our friendship and working relationship and we know that the link remains strong in Bo and the relationship between Bo OWL and Bo Warwick is held in high regard throughout the City.

Why is that? It is because of the sort of organisation that we are – focusing on long term friendship and partnership. Thirty years plus of involvement between us counts for a great deal and we have an equal partner organisation in Bo OWL with whom we work together closely as equals, share experience and, where we can, provide skills and expertise that Bo organisations can pick up on and develop themselves

That all still continued throughout 2014, despite the Ebola problems.

So what has happened during the year? A number of contacts and initiatives have taken place:

- A visit from three Bo teachers in early Summer as part of the “changing Classrooms” initiative who visited their partner schools in Warwick District
- A very successful Day of the African Child celebration at St Patricks School – attended by the Bo teachers – no less than 500 children in excitable attendance
- Rebuilding of a wall at the Paul School for the Blind in Bo – financed by Rotary and the UK Blind Association and facilitated by the work of OWL
- Development of ideas for the refurbishment and improvement of the Centre In Bo, particularly looking at the potential of solar power.
- Waste project – a very major scheme in partnership with DFID, managed on the ground by WHH in which OWL is providing specialist technical support. Despite the current situation, the project is continuing and having a significant impact on the cleanliness of Bo Streets
- Individual contact between Bo Owl and Warwick OWL members continuing through a range of channels

However, some things have had to be put on hold this year:

- 2nd stage of the Local Government project. I was to visit Bo in December with two colleagues from Warwick District Council to assess the potential for further partnership working with the Bo City and District Councils This has been put on hold for now, but will take place when practicable.
- Teacher visits next year to/from Bo. With the current situation and with all schools being closed, this is being put on hold for next year. It is intended to return to organising visits later

- It was intended to have visits to Warwick from Bo Owl Committee members. This has now been delayed.

In relation to the current Ebola Crisis itself, we have been in contact with our colleagues and are receiving updates on numbers affected. It seems as though Bo itself has not been as badly affected by numbers of actual cases as other areas, though there are still many instances of individual and family tragedy as a result of the disease. However, civil society is badly affected, schools are closed, economic activity is significantly reduced and higher prices are making life difficult for many.

So what can OWL do? This is an unprecedented problem, knocking back one of the least developed countries in the world. We want to help and have commenced building up an Ebola emergency fund, but we also want to make sure that help goes where it is most needed. The message we are receiving is that in Bo at least clinical care and response is reasonably well catered for. However, there is a great deal of wider need as direct consequence of the disease.

The advice we have had is that we should be concentrating our efforts on the reconstruction that will be needed in the aftermath of the defeat of the disease. At that time, when the world's attention may well have moved away, there will be a great need to support devastated families, orphans and others seriously affected by the crisis who desperately need assistance to survive.

We propose to use our Ebola Emergency Fund in this way and will be receiving specific advice from our colleagues on this. So far the fund stands at approximately £1700 and we are very grateful to all who have contributed. We are very grateful also to the Mayor of Leamington who has very generously made OWL one of his charities to support during his Mayoral year and the funds that we receive from his activities will also go towards the Ebola Emergency Fund.

In summary, it has not been the best of years for Sierra Leone and Bo, but the OWL link remains strong and is just as important in bad times as in good.

It just remains for me to thank all the OWL committee members for their work in keeping the link going forward and all the Owl Members and supporters who have helped to develop this remarkable and enduring friendship. Thanks to all."

9. Mayors Charity

Cllr John Knight, Mayor of Leamington Spa gave the meeting an update on his charity fund. OWL is one of the beneficiaries of this fund this year. The chair thanked Cllr Knight for his very generous support and told the meeting that it was intended to use the money to help our friends in Bo to recover from the current Ebola crisis and to help restore some normality to life in the town when the medical situation improved.

10. Election of Chair:

Alan said that John Archer had agreed to stand again as chair. Several members of the meeting expressed their thanks to John for his excellent management of OWL through last year. The re-election of John Archer was proposed by Phil Clarke and seconded by Chris King. This was passed unanimously.

11. Election of officers:

Alan Moss explained that Cat Moody who was Membership Secretary had resigned. Paul Atkins had agreed to become Membership Secretary and become an executive officer. This was proposed by Chris King and seconded by Mair Evans. It was passed unanimously.

The proposed remaining officers are therefore:

Vice chair – Jane Knight
Chris King
Treasurer – Ian Baylis
Secretary – Alan Moss
Communications Manager – Kip Warr

It was proposed that these officers be elected en-bloc by Janet Alty and seconded by Alan Bailey. This was passed unanimously

12. Election of Trustees

Julia Fry had resigned as a committee member this year.
Phil Clarke had agreed to become a committee members and Trustee.
This was proposed by Margaret Begg and seconded by Chris king. This was passed unanimously.

In addition to the above the following have agreed to stand again as trustees

John McFarlane
Andrew Smith
James Knight
Ron Stone
Liz Garrett
Mair Evans
Cllr Matt Western

It was proposed that these trustees be elected en-bloc by Brian Austin and seconded by Alan Bailey. This was passed unanimously.

13. Presentation – Waste project in Bo – Glenn Fleet

Glenn gave the meeting an overview of the project which started with his first visit to Bo in 2007. The objective of the project is to develop the capacity of the City Council of Bo to effectively deliver a sustainable waste service to the local population.

He explained the progress to date with the main milestones being:

- Project started 2007
- UNDP monies secured Aug 2008
- GLGF funded planning visit November 2008, Project fully approved May 2009
- Bo Skip lorry and 8 skips delivered & micro pilot launched April 2010
- DfID support 12 month pilot
- DfID award £3.2m for a 4year project

The plan is to move the land fill site and update the facilities to enable composting and detailed sorting of the waste. Also to increase the level of recycling through the support of SMEs. He showed several examples of current recycling including tile making and production of small ruck sacs.

There was a question from the floor about whether waste tyres were recycle and Glenn reported that they were currently being made into sandals.

14. Presentation – primary Schools Linking – Brian Austin

Late in 2013 two schools in Leamington, St Patricks and Emscote Infants school applied to the British Council for a grant as part of the Connecting Classrooms programme to visit their partner school in Bo. In February 2014 this visit took place. The OWL committee also agreed that both Liz Garrett and Jenny Bailey should also take part in this visit to further reinforce the existing primary school links. The whole visit was very productive with workshops being held for the Bo teachers in maths and phonics teaching also the use of mind mapping as a tool.

Latter in the year 3 teachers from Bo came to Leamington to work with their partner schools here. This visit was planned to coincide with the Day of the African Child celebrations.

Brian reported that the primary school links are very strong although things have been put on hold since the summer due to the Ebola outbreak and the fact that the schools in Bo are no longer open. Schools in Leamington and Warwick are currently fund raising so that when the schools in Bo finally reopen they can help them to get back to their normal routine as soon as possible.

The chair thanked Brian for his presentation and closed the meeting at 3.45pm