

One World Link
Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting
Held 8th February 2022 – Online using Zoom

1. Welcome:

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting especially the Mayor of Royal Leamington Spa Susan Rasmussen. The chair also welcomed Margaret Lemoh from Australia, who is a founding trustee of the Bo Children's Hospital Trust, and Dr Wusu Sannoh, Chairman of Bo OWL with other friend from Bo OWL who had managed to join us. He explained that this was the 2021 AGM with regard to the formal part of the meeting however the updates given later in the meeting would cover activities to date.

The chair explained how the meeting would be run including the voting process and also the way people could ask questions.

2. Attendance

26 Members Plus

Dr Wusu Sannoh – Chairman of Bo OWL

John Sandi – Bo OWL

Francis Jusu-Bo OWL

Also other members of the BO OWL committee

Distinguished Guests

Cllr Susan Rasmussen – mayor Royal Leamington Spa

Margaret Lemoh – Founding trustee-Bo Children's hospital trust

3. Apologies

Janet Alty

Maureen Hirsch

Ian Bayliss

John MacFarlane

Derek Greedy

4. Mayor of Royal Leamington Spa Town Council – Cllr Susan Rasmussen

The mayor thanked the Chair for the opportunity to say a few words to mark the 40th anniversary of the link between our town council and the Bo city council. She said that she had previously had the opportunity to attend the Day of the African Child as deputy Mayor and until then she was not aware of the excellent schools links between Warwick schools and Bo Schools. The council continues to be grateful for the past work of Cllr Moto Sigh, who is sadly missed and who was a great supporter of OWL.

Having read the history of OWL, written by Jane Knight, she felt the link emphasised our interdependence and it also highlights that there is more that unites us rather than divides us across the world. She congratulated the people of OWL who had kept the link alive and active over the past 40 years.

The chair thanked the mayor for her support and the town council for the grant to mark the 40th anniversary. We are currently in discussion with our friends in Bo on how best to use this money.

5. Update from Bo OWL – Dr Wusu Sannoh

A major rehabilitation of the OWL centre was undertaken to upgrade the electrical system for the whole building. Solar power was installed to supply the 2 floors of the building. Unfortunately installation of the new solar panels has caused a severe leakage through the roof which has damaged most of the ceiling. The efficiency of the new solar system is still being assessed.

The walls of the centre have been painted both inside and outside. The current road works has created a lot of dust so the walls will need to be washed when the road works are complete.

Work was undertaken to secure the deeds for all the land that Bo OWL have an interest in. The land at the OWL centre site has been resurveyed and a proper conveyance secured. The land on the Kenema highway has been visited several times and arrangements made for a person in the village to take charge of the site. The bungalow has been rented out to a new tenant for a year initially. We also plan to rent out a small building as an office to an NGO serving children.

The Day of the African Child celebration this year was held at the centre and a zoom connection was set to contact UK schools. The tree planting project is ongoing. The Wangari tree of peace book has been donated to the schools

A team from Bo OWL and the district medical office have visited the Yemoh town clinic to donate all equipment bought using the legacy from Helena's aunt. Laboratory staff continue to complain that their salaries are not being paid by the Government.

6. Minutes of 2020 AGM (held 2nd February 2021)

Copies of the minutes were distributed with the papers for this meeting.

There were no issues raised and there were no abstentions or objections so the minutes were adopted unanimously.

7. Chairs report – Richard Hall

The Chair's Report is a review of the year covered by the AGM i.e. April 2020 – March 2021. Of course the main feature of that period was of plans postponed and meetings via Zoom. Plans for the Teachers Group to bring Bo Teachers to the UK in June had to be deferred, then deferred further, then postponed until further notice. However, plans remain and more on this from Liz Garrett later.

One visit which has taken place in the last year, although just into April 2021 was that by Johannes Mallah Jr. Johannes was able to visit Bo to see family. However, he spent a lot of his time whilst there, with Bo OWL, working on projects and he will talk about this later in the agenda. In relation to the health agenda the main thing of note last year was the receipt of a legacy from a relative of Helena White. You may have seen in the November Newsletter that this has been used to help create a laboratory facility at Yemoh Town Clinic. Although Helena White, our Health Link lead, has maintained contact with colleagues in Bo, engagement with health professionals in this country has been made almost impossible due

to the demands on our health service over the last 2 years. We retain hopes that we can. Johannes will mention the Yemoh Town Clinic project in his talk.

In 2020 we began to think about ways to celebrate OWL's 40th anniversary year in 2021. However, in the early part of 2021 it became clear that we couldn't put plans in place because of the Covid situation. Looking forward, we still hope to celebrate our now 41 years of existence. As most of you know, Leamington Spa Town Council have been involved with OWL from the start and they wish to mark the anniversary in some way. They have set aside a small amount of money and we are in discussions with Bo OWL as to how best to mark this milestone.

With regard to Planning and Local Government, at last year's AGM Phil Clarke talked about the Princes Foundation and the trialling of an online Planning Development Toolkit.

Although there has inevitably been a period when not a lot has happened, there is positive news looking ahead and Phil will talk about this project in a few minutes.

The Waste Management Project has been one of the main projects for OWL over many years now. However, with the project having been rolled out to other towns, there has been less involvement for OWL. Glenn Fleet and Derek Greedy have been ready to return to Sierra Leone, when needed and when travel arrangements allow. This doesn't mean that there is no future involvement. I'll leave it to John Archer to mention the up to date situation.

For quite some time Jane Knight had been working on the idea of ensuring that OWL material was properly archived for future reference. This work carried into 2021, with Jane and a group of other committee members, sorting through piles of paperwork and records etc. It was great news when Warwickshire Records Office agreed to place the material in their archives. The latest news is that this will now be available online. Congratulations to Jane and thanks for all her hard work in making sure that OWL now has archived records accessible to everyone now and in the future.

And finally thank you to our members and supporting organisations for continuing to support OWL. In particular Leamington Spa Town Council which continues to recognise it's link with Bo City Council and provides support for OWL. Warwick District Council have hosted many meetings and given their support in a number of ways in the past. With the merging of Councils proposed it is not clear how our relationship will be affected, but it is hoped that we can maintain some interest at District Council level in the future. Rotary Clubs in the area have been very generous over the years in funding projects in Bo, in particular Warwick Rotary. Thanks to them. Understandably they diverted funds in the last year, to helping people in the Covid crisis. We look forward to working together again in the future.

8. Presentation of accounts – April 2020-March 2021

The accounts had previously been distributed with the papers for this meeting.

Treasurer, Chris King gave a brief outline of the major expenditure and income over the year and said that the balance at the end of the period was £41k. Included in that total was the £3k legacy earmarked for setting up the medical laboratory at Yemoh town clinic.

There were no questions raised regarding the accounts

9. Election of officers

Secretary, Alan Moss explained that all the existing officers had agreed to stand for re-election. The proposal was to re-elect the following:

Chair	–	Richard Hall
Vice Chair	–	Phil Clarke
Treasurer	–	Chris King
Secretary	–	Alan Moss
Communications manager	–	Kip Warr
Membership Secretary	–	Anthony Wood

There were no abstentions or objections so the proposal was passed unanimously

10. Election of other trustees

Alan explained that all the existing officers had agreed to stand for re-election. The proposal was to re-elect the following:

John Archer
Liz Garrett
Mair Evans
Matt Western MP
Jane Knight
Paul Atkins
Helena White
Ian Baylis
Johannes Mallah Jr

There were no abstentions or objections so the proposal was passed unanimously

11. Updates by committee members

1) Visit to Bo – Johannes Mallah Jr

Johannes explained that the primary purpose of his visit was to spend time with his family however he was able to spend a very useful amount of time on OWL business also. This was welcomed by the committee here in Warwick as we had been unable to visit Bo for over a year.

During the visit he was able to support Wusu and the Bo committee and help with the report back to us on the upgrades taking place at the centre including the solar lighting.

He was also able to help with the setting up of the Laboratory at Yemoh town clinic and to play a role in the procurement of the equipment and the upgrade of the room.

2) Joint projects with Bo OWL – John Archer

John explained that the OWL centre in Bo had been the focal point in Bo for over 15 years now but that there several issues that the committee in Bo wished to address. John thanked Wusu for all the work that he and the committee in Bo had done over the past 12 months. The main achievements were securing the freehold title to the land that the centre sits on and also clarifying the situation with the ownership of other two plots of land. In addition the committee in Bo had managed the upgrade to the centre which included both external and internal decoration, and the upgrade to the electrical installation. John explained that

power from the grid in Bo had always been very fragile and that although there had been a small solar system fitted some years ago they mainly relied on a rather unreliable diesel generator for backup. As part of the centre upgrade it was decided to put in a new solar system that would cover both floors and provide much more capacity. This was now working. Unfortunately the fitting of the new panels had damaged the centre roof and work will be required to repair that urgently.

Following the upgrade a memorandum of understanding for the use of part of the centre by a company involved in training had been signed. They are yet to start operation.

Work is also required to upgrade the bedrooms and improve the showers and toilets.

Although the waste project, that had been rolling out across Sierra Leone had ground to a halt over the past year there were signs that things were starting up again. Glenn and Derek had been contacted regarding their willingness to continue their support as technical consultants. Currently they are giving this support remotely but they hope to visit again soon when the travel situation improves

3) Urban planning project – Phil Clarke

There had been 2 workshops held in Bo to help develop the urban planning toolkit, one in 2017 and another in 2019 which Phil had attended and had helped with the organisation. A successful trial of the toolkit was held in Bo in January 2020 but due to travel restrictions there were no outside visitors so the trial was organised and run successfully by planners from Sierra Leone. Based on the outcome of that trial the toolkit was formally launched by the Princes Foundation via a webinar in 2021.

A key part of the toolkit is to clearly mark land that has been designated for specific use and a good way to do this is to plant trees around the area. In Bo the District council have started to do this and they are also putting up signs to explain the designations. Further tree planning in Bo is planned for the future and is being discussed as a good way to mark the 40th anniversary of the link between councils.

4) Teachers group – Liz Garrett

3 committee members support Liz on the teachers group. Paul Atkins, Mair Evans and Kip Warr along with teacher's representatives from all the Warwick linked schools.

Unfortunately the teachers from Bo were unable to come to Warwick as planned due to the health situation so the part of the British Council grant will be handed back. However the British Council did extend the timescale of the grant until the end of 2021 and allowed it to be used for schools project work. The schools projects have continued to concentrate on global goals numbers 13 and 15 which relate to climate action and recycling. Children's work on these topics has been exchanged throughout the year.

The Day of the African Child celebrations in 2021 was held online and although everyone missed the opportunity to celebrate as a group the advantage was that many more children were able to take part. Also the Bo school were able to join us online at the end of the day.

Liz thanked John Sandi and Francis Jusu who organise the schools in Bo and also all the teachers in Warwick who enthusiastically continue to support the link.

12. Bo Children's hospital – Margaret Lemoh

Margaret was able to join us for the AGM from Australia and thanked everyone for the opportunity to be part of our meeting. The hospital was setup some 10 years ago and is funded by donations from the trust in Australia. It had been used by the government as a Covid hospital during the last year or so and it has recently started to operate again as a children's hospital.

The OWL health group have had one online meeting with the children's hospital group and Margaret is looking forward to continued co-operation as things start to progress after being on hold.

One of the biggest challenges facing the hospital is that of getting the government to start funding the wages of the staff. Work continues to achieve this.

13. Questions

John Myers was asked to give the meeting a quick update on the Bo blind school. He said not much had changed and that things were still very difficult as the school does not get full support from the government.

Johannes reported that a scheme was being rolled out to start paying hospital staff and teachers.

14. Meeting close

Richard thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for their continued support. He formally closed the meeting at 9.00pm