

Wycombe Environment Centre AGM 9th July 2025
Wrights Meadow Community Centre, 7pm

Draft Minutes

Present

Glenda Barrett, Karen Bates (Trustee), Michael Bowker, Peter Cartwright, Kath Dunn, Fay Ewing, Ed Gemmell, Amanda de Grey, Ellen Hawes (Trustee), Maddy Howe, Sue Laight, Marion Lyon, Heather Morley, Anthony Murphy (Trustee, Chairman), Jean Peasley, Karen Prendergast (Trustee) Sushila Raman, Trevor Snaith, Pauline Spence, Peter Spence, Steve Strutt, Penelope Tollitt (Trustee).

Apologies

Lesley Clarke (Cllr), Marten Clarke, Sarfaraz Raja (Trustee) Tracey Huxley (Trustee), Caterina Dodaro (Trustee)

Following a welcome from the Chairman, the evening began with a presentation by four of the Trustees, focusing on the Circular Economy and how the Refresh Shop and associated activities helps to bring this about in Wycombe.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the previous AGM held 2nd May 2024 were available. The Chairman asked if anyone present at the meeting would propose them as a true record. Karen Prendergast proposed and Marion Lyon seconded. The minutes were approved as a true record.

2. Chairman's report and accounts

Anthony Murphy welcomed everyone, and remarked how a year can be a long time in running a small charity. This time last year we had two part time members of staff, and plans to submit a number of funding bids in order to maintain them and help our activities grow.

But now we have no employees. Very sadly we had to let them both go in the autumn, so we stand before you now as a wholly volunteer organisation. Some things have had to fall by the way, for example the library of things as we had wanted to do, and we are now looking at a more modest version at the moment focusing on things needed for small summer parties.

We are proud that we have been able to open the shop for 6 days a week, and we have a growing band of volunteers, both 'anchors' who open and close the shift, and 'drifters' who can come and go with much more flexibility. It is lovely to be developing what I like to refer to as a 'gravitational field', a community hub where we are bigger and better together.

We have held some very successful events under the heading 'creative and sustainable Wycombe', and from those open meetings came the idea of the Craft Jam,

which took place at the time of Frogfest - a rewarding day full of low-cost enjoyment for children and parents. Easily over 100 people came.

We have also been instrumental in helping get the Pride of Place Community Board project off the ground, bringing together - if I may, another gravitational field - all the different place and environment concerned groups.

The small Wycombe Environment Projects group is working in partnership with the Climate Cafe, to host PoP-in Coffee Mornings on Saturday mornings, to give us an opportunity to have climate related conversations with people who want to drop in.

Financially, we are now stronger, ironically, that we do not have staff overheads. Last year we turned over £18k, most of which was the shop, and our outgoings were about £20k. Making a loss is not a good thing, as it makes dependency on grants, and we can see that the basic business model is able to turn the shortfall into a surplus as we grow the business, that we can then invest in climate related projects.

Our strategy - as we have just outlined in the presentation - remains focused on the circular economy, with three strands to that:

- innovation, and, as a charity we are not afraid of using the word, enterprise - earning our own way as much as we can;
- community - building a growing sense of community with our wonderful volunteers and those who we support;
- And of course, environment - reducing waste, and carbon dioxide emissions from avoiding the need to make new things.

But there are two challenges. Now I think it was Mohammed Ali who said 'volunteering is the rent we pay for our room on earth', but it remains hard work, and we may be in a position to have a shop manager in the future, but for that we need money.

The second challenge brings to mind the Polar Bear on the iceflow - our iceflow is time and we are running out of time in the Chiltern Shopping Centre. Our focus is single minded on a premises, and not on a mean-while basis either, we need permanence. Looking back over the years of the Environment Centre we have had four different premises, and a period without any premises at all. We are in discussions and remain hopeful that we are fortunate in finding a suitable place to move into.

As you have just heard, we continue to develop the shop, its stock, and what we can do with it, and so turning to our finances, the accounts are for the financial year ending last May (2024). If you examine them you will see how much we brought in through trading, how much we were awarded in grants.

The plan remains to get to a position where the shop is self-financing, and any surplus can be ploughed into local environmental projects to help achieve the just transition that is so desperately needed. And as you can see we are close.

That's all I'm going to say, but of course, very happy to take questions.

There were no questions, but a comment was made that the Impact Report looks very professional, as indeed does all the material we produce.

The Chairman asked if anyone would wish to propose the approval of the accounts. It was proposed by Ellen Hawes and seconded by Karen Prendergast, and approved by the meeting.

3. Elections

- i. **Retiring trustees.** The constitution requires $\frac{1}{3}$ of trustees to retire each year. Trustees that retire are eligible to stand for re-election. This year the two longest serving trustees are Ellen Hawes (appointed 17th January 2023), and Tracey Huxley (appointed 14th February 2023). They are both willing to stand again for election. The Chairman asked the meeting if both could be taken together and invited members to propose their re-election. It was proposed by Maddy Howe and seconded by Kath Dunn. Their re-election was approved by the meeting.
- ii. **Resignations.** The Chairman reported that Suzi Jones had resigned from the board, but remained as an active volunteer. The meeting recorded its gratitude to Suzi for the work she has done especially in relation to branding.
- iii. **Election of new trustees.** Three new trustees had been co-opted to the Board since the last AGM. Karen Prendergast and Karen Bates were both appointed on 24th September 2024, and Caterina Dodaro on 24th June 2025. All three are willing to stand for election. The Chairman asked the meeting if they could be taken together and invited members to propose their election. It was proposed by Ellen Hawes and seconded by Peter Spence. Their election was approved by the meeting.
- iv. The Chairman asked the meeting if there was anyone who would like to take on the role of treasurer, or who could suggest who might be suitable for the role, to encourage them to join the team. We are also very open to other volunteers also joining the team.

4. Any other business

The Chairman invited any other business, but there was none. The Chairman therefore closed the formal part of the meeting.

After the formal part of the meeting, there was a workshop asking the question 'how do we make High Wycombe Creative and Sustainable.

Just before the close of the meeting, the Chairman revealed the results of the silent auction, and thanked everyone present for their generosity.

Photographs of the flip charts from the workshop.



