



DIRECTORS' REPORT TO 1ST TRUST AGM MON 21ST SEPTEMBER 2015

Welcome

Directors would like to welcome Exeter St James Community Trust Ltd founder member/shareholders to the Trust's first Annual General Meeting. Some, but not all, are also Exeter St James Forum (ESJF) members. If you have not yet applied to become a shareholder we welcome you as a non-voting observer and hope you will decide to join us later.

Background

The Trust has been set up in order to realise projects which were identified by the community in the Neighbourhood Plan which was approved by a ward referendum and adopted by Exeter City Council in the summer of 2013 – the headline project being the revitalisation of Queen's Crescent Garden. Projects such as this need a body corporate to take responsibility for property or leases and ideally that body needs to have charitable status in order to apply for grants and donations. Following advice from Wessex Community Assets ESJCT Ltd was set up as a registered society, previously called a Community Benefit Society, regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, under the provisions of the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. The Society was incorporated in July 2014 and in December was granted charitable status by HMRC.

The inaugural Board of Directors - Di Boston, Aylwyn Bowen, Robyn Connett and Paul Layton – were elected at the first shareholder/member special general meeting in January after which the Board invited Harry Temple to join as an appointed Director.

The Trust now has 204 shareholders and has raised £3,500 of shareholder capital.

Since January

Since our first shareholder/member meeting the Board has taken the following actions:

- written in favour of keeping St James ward intact to the Boundary Commission regarding its recommendations for the City and County ward boundaries;
- agreed with the Forum to provide a joint newsletter for the ward – the first edition of *About St James* was circulated in May and the second edition will go out in advance of Freshers' Week at the University in September – many thanks to all our volunteer distributors;
- agreed in principle, following a request from allotment holders at St James Park station, to take on the lease for the site from Network Rail under certain conditions – at the time of writing we are very near to signing that lease;
- encouraged the continuing work of the Queen's Crescent Garden Project Group – the Garden is looking much better thanks to the regular mowing and other maintenance work of volunteers throughout the spring and summer.

Most notable has been the Trust's successful planning application to Exeter City Council, for change of use of Queen's Crescent Garden from private to public open space to support the community aspirations for the Garden, which was submitted on 29 May and granted on 22 July. This consent was necessary prior to the commencement of the compulsory acquisition process. We are indebted to LDA Design for *pro bono* preparing the application and thank all those members who wrote in its support.

And, if you have been to John Lewis recently, you will see that the Trust is one of the potential recipients of financial support through the green token scheme – we hope Trust and Forum supporters will remember us when shopping at John Lewis.

Directors

The rules of the Trust require a third of Directors to stand down at each AGM, those standing down being those who have held office for the longest. As we all started at the same time it has been decided that Aylwyn, Robyn and Harry will stand down on this occasion and each will seek re-election for a further term.

Tasks Ahead

We have been fortunate to have had advice and support from Keith Biggs of OTB Eveling, solicitors, in working on the Heads of Terms agreement for the proposed lease for Queen's Crescent Garden between ourselves and Exeter City Council once the Garden has been compulsorily purchased by ECC. While the Council is working on this the Queen's Crescent Garden Project Group will focus on the preparation of a further planning application that the Trust will be required to submit for Phase 1 of the Masterplan.

Diane Boston (Chair), Paul Layton (Secretary), Robyn Connett, Aylwyn Bowen and Harry Temple