

Report to the Council

Date: 29 September 2015

Joint Arrangements and External Organisations: Royal Gunpowder Mills

Council Representatives: Councillor H Kane

Richard Wallace welcomed everyone to the meeting. He informed the members that Mike Lowe wished to resign as Company Secretary- so it was suggested to do the general business first and then split, so the board could discuss the options to fulfil the future vacancy.

The meeting was mainly a report / update on current situation by the Chief Executive, Andrew Coates;

- Everyone was keen to maintain the character of the site and bring back into use many of the buildings. There were still negotiations with PGL and there was no agreement signed yet.
- Regarding the environmental impact assessment, all studies were still ongoing. Ground contamination mostly relating to asbestos, was a worry at the moment. It was worth mentioning that the study on removal of the asbestos would be equally shared between PGL and Foundation.
- There were also topographical and bat surveys to be completed and as soon as they were completed they would be available to the public. The ecology of the site was under threat and some species (such as bee orchid) were no longer found, the deer had eaten plants that were thriving at the site. It was worth mentioning that there was a current deer management scheme in place at the RGM.
- The Environment Agency (EA) were concerned that the historic woodland was under threat due to the site drying out and through invasion of Sycamore. EA had allocated a grant in order to do a viability study to look into this. EA had a duty to look after SSSI so there may be further funding for action.
- Heritage Enterprise would like to bring back into use historic buildings; this only applies to 5 listed buildings.
- The Chief Executive has had discussions with senior members of the Lea Valley Trust who had a positive approach to critical mass in Waltham Abbey by the connection of the White Water Centre with a footbridge over the Flood Relief Channel.
- The filming on the site has exceeded target, the company had been working closely with the film companies.
- Visitor numbers had been very good and the VAQAS report (Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme) was also very positive.

- There had been a photographic exhibition over the summer in Walton House.
- Skill Force completed a team task on site helping with the wildlife walk.

All non-members left the meeting including the representatives of EFDC and WATC. Next meeting on the 12 September 2015

The meeting on the 12 September was very short due to the fact there was the AGM meeting to follow.

- The Chairman welcomed everyone present and informed the members that he would be moving to the North of the Country soon , so he would be retiring from his position as the distance between Scotland and London would not permit him to be “hands on”.
- The Chairman also explained that the public meeting which had been arranged for the 16 September had been postponed for a few weeks. The PGL would have an important meeting to discuss with their members if they were going ahead with this venture, as the financial implications due to ground contamination and other studies seem to be much higher than they had anticipated.
- The whole negotiations had been extremely complex. Subject to the different studies and the PGL meeting outcome there should be a public meeting on the 6 October 2015. Announcements to the media, shareholders and the public would be made available ahead of the schedule. The Chairman stressed the importance of the public opinion.

The representatives of the local authorities and other volunteers had to leave for the AGM meeting.