

TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Monday, May 12th, 2025
Online, via Zoom, at 1500



In attendance: Michelle Ryan (MR, Vice Chair), Alan Simson (AS), Stella Bolam (SB), Rob Murison (RM), Sarah Armstrong (SA), Steve Westmore (SW), Sarah Kiss (SK), Keith Sacre (KS), Paul Barton (PB), Laura Ancell (LA).

Staff: John Parker (JP).

Apologies: Neil Davies (ND, Chair).

DRAFT MINUTES – NOT FOR CIRCULATION

1. Opening

1.1 Introductions and welcome

In ND's absence, PB agreed to Chair the meeting.

Attendees recorded for minutes as above

1.2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from ND.

1.3 Conflicts of interest

No conflicts of interest were declared

2. Finances

2.1 2025 Finance update

The latest financial figures for 2025 were circulated prior to the meeting and also considered previously by Finance & Governance Committee.

Questions and comments from Trustees:

KS asked if the Association was now in a position to start commissioning publications which might be of interest to the sector. JP confirmed that this is something we would be interested in exploring further and that if any Trustees had any particular suggestions for topics or authors then we would be happy to consider them.

3. Previous meetings

3.1 February 2024

SB proposed that the minutes of the February 2025 Board meeting be accepted as a true record. AS seconded, all in favour.

3.1 March 2025 Extraordinary Board Meeting

JP noted that the minutes of the Extraordinary Board Meeting would not be posted online due to the commercially sensitive nature of the discussion, which related solely to the Systems Project.

SK proposed that the minutes of the March 2025 Extraordinary Board meeting be accepted as a true record. AS seconded, all in favour.

3.2 Actions from previous Board meetings

JP provided an update on actions from the previous Board meetings.

- JP to ask Finance Team about adding a line about significant spend to the budget. DONE.
- JP to ask Finance Team if we can provide a diagram showing finances. DONE for cash flow, and included in CEO Report.
- JP to send Word version of the Complaints Procedure to SK. DONE 06/02/25.
- JP to add local government restructuring to the Risk Register, adding to risk of membership attrition. DONE 12/02/25.
- JP to send the Governance Policy to be designed and uploaded to the website. Hall ready to go, but holding back until Jason's workload clears. DONE 24/03/25.
- JP to have the Strategic Plan 2025-27 launched. DONE 05/02/25.
- JP to send the Publications Policy to be designed and uploaded to the website. Sent to Jason and Sarah Bryce on 11/02/25.
- ND and MR to discuss and circulate a proposal for a Skills Audit to the Board. JP followed up with ND and MR on 11/02/25.
- SK, ND, MR and JP to discuss what options might be available to make training and qualifications more accessible. JP followed up with ND, MR and SK on 11/02/25.
- JP to send out link and agenda for the next meeting. DONE.

4. CEO Updates

4.1 CEO Report

JP had provided a written CEO Report in advance of the meeting. Some key points:

- The main thing on the horizon is Arb Show, which is at the end of the week in which we have the May Board meeting. As ever, a vast amount of work has gone into this from the team and we are hoping it will be a successful show.
- Things are progressing well with our preferred Systems supplier and Board will be told more about this in an upcoming agenda item.
- The 2024 Audit is now pretty much complete and as ever we will be inviting the auditors along to speak to Board for approval of the figures.
- Our Malthouse tenant, JPR, has now moved out of the building and into their portacabins on the other side of the site. This means we still receive rental income and share the site, but now have the whole building. We are having some internal discussions about how best to utilize that space.

Questions and comments from Trustees:

KS asked about the revision of the AC Scheme and criteria for accreditation. Is tree planting going to be included in the revised Scheme as a standalone module? JP confirmed that yes, that was the plan – this is currently proposed as a module for the Scheme.

SB asked if a staffing restructure was required after Sarah Jackson left the Association. JP explained that this was not necessary because Sarah's direct reports were now being line managed by Emma Gilmartin.

SB asked why the ITI course was not currently being run. JP gave a brief summary of the current situation.

SW asked if our consultation response to the Planning Reform Paper was available to see. JP will check with the team and find out.

LA asked if we were in a position to build stronger links with Defra with a view to tendering for contracts to write documents, or add value to other documents which Defra are commissioning. JP and others explained a bit of the history of this but all agreed that this would be a positive step.

4.2 Complaints

JP provided an update on the status of complaints. We currently have two open complaints, both of which have been sent for review.

4.3 Risk Register

No recommendations had been made by F&G Committee for changing the Risk Register.

SK asked if RF10 (Staffing) should be a Medium risk or if it could be downgraded to a Low risk. PB and LA asked when the last staff survey was carried out, JP confirmed this was some time ago, around 2022. It was agreed that a new staff survey, using the previous one as a template, would be a good idea.

ACTION: JP to draft and send out a staff survey to the whole team.

5. Committee updates

5.1 Finance & Governance Committee

RM provided an update. The Finance & Governance Committee did not meet prior to Board because of unavailability and calendar clashes. However, email discussions have been had about the new Systems contract. The Risk Register and latest finances were also circulated for discussion.

5.2 Resources Committee

SB provided an update. This Committee is not working on anything specific at the moment but JP has confirmed that they will be asked to consider the revised Employee Handbook when it is ready, hopefully a draft will be available before the next Committee meeting dates.

5.3 Standards Committee

KS provided an update. Key items discussed were:

- Complaints, including a potentially significant complaint which we are expecting to receive in the coming weeks.
- The Draft Universal Appeals Procedure.
- Update to the AC Scheme, and the possibility of a working group to review it before publication (JP explained that the AC Assessor network was being consulted with, forming an informal working group for this purpose).

6. Items for discussion and agreement

6.1 Systems project - Contracts

JP provided an update that after months of work we are now at the stage where we believe we are ready to sign the contracts with our preferred Systems provider. These contracts have been reviewed in depth by the Project Team and our solicitor, and were shared with Finance & Governance Committee as well as being circulated to Board ahead of this meeting.

The purpose of this agenda item is for Board to discuss and decide whether or not to proceed with signing the contracts.

JP also noted that whilst ND is unable to attend this meeting, he confirmed via email earlier in the day that he supported the Board authorising JP to sign the contracts.

Questions and comments from Trustees:

AS queried one of the dates in the section relating to timescales, which appears to be a typo. *Post meeting note – JP has informed the Systems Project Team about this for it to be amended.*

AS asked about VAT and the final costs, and JP explained the situation.

PB asked if there would also be monthly fees to pay going forward, in addition to the set up costs. JP confirmed that there would be monthly fees but that these were comparable to other providers, and what we are currently paying, and has all been taken into account.

SA asked for an update about the data cleanse. JP explained that we are using Oomi to remove duplicated records before sending them to a third party for cleansing.

SA asked about the relationship with Oomi now that we would not be going forward with them as a partner. JP explained that Oomi decided not to submit a tender in the end, and that the working relationship remained positive.

MR proposed that Board should authorise JP to sign the contracts on behalf of the Arboricultural Association. KS seconded, all in favour.

ACTION: JP to sign the contracts with the preferred Systems provider as instructed by Board.

6.2 Skills Audit for the Board

This has been the subject of discussion for a while but is something which ND is leading on, so in his absence this agenda item was postponed until the next meeting.

ACTION: JP to speak to ND about the Skills Audit and add to the next agenda.

7. Any other business

SK is in the process of reviewing the Complaints Procedure.

SW asked if jobs had been allocated to Trustees for Arb Show, JP suggested these would be allocated when people arrived on site.

KS and JP provided a summary of the ongoing situation with regard to the Ely Plane, morphophysiology and the Association's involvement in that project.

JP reminded Trustees that the AGM would be at the end of August and that those Trustees with terms expiring at that AGM should notify JP about whether or not they are intending to stand for re-election.

8. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting will be on July 7th, in person at the Malthouse.

ACTION: JP to send out link and agenda for the next meeting.

9. Confidential items

- JP left the meeting.
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Meeting closed at 1617

Minutes to be circulated to all Trustees and posted online once approved at the next meeting.

Summary of actions

ACTION: JP to draft and send out a staff survey to the whole team.

ACTION: JP to sign the contracts with the preferred Systems provider as instructed by Board.

ACTION: JP to speak to ND about the Skills Audit and add to the next agenda.

ACTION: JP to send out link and agenda for the next meeting.