Minutes of the 2013 Winter General Meeting (138th Council Meeting)

The Annual General Meeting (138th Council meeting) was held on 3 March 2013 in the rooms of St William’s College, York. Representatives of 24 institutions and 20 individual members were present. The meeting was chaired by Dr Kate Pretty CBE, CBA President. Apologies were noted. The CBA Director and staff members were in attendance.

1. Minutes of previous meeting
The Minutes of the 137th Council meeting, held on 16 September 2012, were APPROVED. There were no matters arising.

2. President’s strategic overview
The President noted that she was now embarking on her last few months as President before she had to step down as a trustee under the rules of the CBA’s constitution.

She thanked all present who were taking part in the Future Role of Societies symposium as part of the CBA weekend event in York. It was seen as a vital re-examination of the ways in which local societies and groups can work together to advance their public benefit remit in an increasingly electronic age. It also illustrated the continued importance of the CBA in leading such discussions.

In terms of strategic overview, the CBA continued its multi-faceted work over a range of activities, ably led by the Director, despite having to deal with considerable economic challenges. Indeed it had started to experience some success in spreading income generation.

In the face of growing government public funding cutbacks for heritage services, it was more important than ever that the CBA worked closely with other heritage bodies to ensure commonality of purpose and maximisation of effectiveness and impact.

3. Director’s report on current and future activities
The Director noted that it would be vital over the next few years for heritage bodies to pull together to respond swiftly to opportunities and threats to archaeology and respond to change. As the lead body representing the public interest in archaeology, the CBA network working together with local societies could make a real difference.

The advocacy work of the CBA continued across a range of issues and through a variety of mechanisms. At Westminster the CBA worked with the All Party Parliamentary Archaeology Group to ensure that legislation was as effective as possible. In Wales considerable time had been spent giving input to the draft Heritage Bill. Issues continued to be investigated and reported through the magazine British Archaeology as well as the Newsletter and on websites. Listed building casework continued to be an important part of the CBA’s remit and this had been helped considerably by the successful launch of a new database management system – with information accessible to the general public.

Despite considerable financial challenges the range of work had continued. A newly restructured senior management team had been completed by the appointment of the Head of Engagement in the autumn. Outreach activity included the annual Festival of Archaeology which had grown considerably in recent years, resulting in over a thousand events in 2012 and with higher numbers (and better weather) hoped for in the summer of 2013. The Young Archaeologists’ Club continued to thrive – thanks to the hundreds of volunteers that operate its many branches across the UK. Thanks were also due to all those who had given generously to the Dig Deep for YAC Campaign which had raised thousands of pounds so far, although further fundraising would be needed in future years. A much appreciated grant from English Heritage had also help secure the Club’s immediate future.
A Heritage Lottery funded bursary scheme operated by the CBA meant that some 50 training placements were being hosted by partner bodies. These trainees would then be cascading their experience down to local groups and societies through a series of workshops. The CBA continued to provide information and guidance through its publications and websites.

The economic outlook remained highly challenging. A government spending revenue was due in the summer and it was thought that further significant public sector cuts would be likely. If so then the impact on bodies such as English Heritage would be felt for many years to come.

There was however some room for optimism in that additional revenue sources were being successfully obtained for the CBA’s work. Some additional grant income from a variety of sources had helped to offset the decline in funding from the British Academy. Considerable efforts were being invested in ensuring future growth in membership numbers.

New project work was planned so as to enable local societies and groups to engage more fully with planning in line with the Localism Act and to help with stewardship of their local heritage. Further detail would follow at the Annual General Meeting.

The Director thanked all societies who were taking part in the weekend event deliberations. A discussion paper seeking wider feedback on the future role of societies and groups in UK archaeology would follow.

5. Special Resolution

It was reported that many charities now use high profile media figures in the role of President, in order to maximise their public profile and support their advocacy and charitable aims. This in turn can then help drive membership recruitment – central to the financial sustainability of the CBA in the long term.

Trustees therefore proposed a change to the CBA’s constitution (the Articles of Association) to allow the appointment of an ex-officio President and to change the existing role of President (and Vice-President) to that of Chair (and Vice-Chair) of trustees.

A draft Special Resolution had therefore been circulated to all members in advance of the Winter General Meeting. It called for the simple substitution of ‘Chair’ for ‘President’ throughout the constitution. No governance role was envisaged for the new President and the role was therefore not required to be detailed in the revised constitution. The term ‘Vice-Chair’ would also be substituted for ‘Vice-President’ throughout in relation to the trustee governance role. The changes would have no impact upon the titles of the current Honorary Vice-Presidents.

There were also a small number of additional updates to the Articles which the CBA’s legal advisors recommended in order to fully bring the constitution up to date with the latest Companies Act.

The changes were intended to make the BA a more efficient campaigning body as a leading advocate for the historic environment.

Members voted to pass the Special Resolution.

8. Applications for membership

Council was asked to approve applications for affiliate membership from the following societies and bodies (requested membership of CBA English Group, CBA Wales/Cymru or Archaeology Scotland given in brackets):

Association for Portland Archaeology (Wessex); Dorset Diggers Community Archaeology Group (Wessex); Mercian Archaeological Services Community Interest Company (East Midlands) and Southwell Community Archaeology Group (East Midlands).

Council APPROVED the applications and welcomed the above bodies.
9. **Dates of future meetings**
The 2013 Annual General Meeting and Beatrice de Cardi Lecture would take place in London in October 2013. The 2013 Weekend Event would take place in Pembrokeshire as a separate event in September. Further details would be circulated to all CBA members in due course.

*Dr Pretty thanked members for attending and closed the Meeting.*