

RMT AGM Minutes - 2024

DATE	Thursday 13 February 2025
TIME	7.00pm – 8.00pm
PLACE	Ripon Workhouse Museum, Dining Room
CHAIR	Robert Ling
ATTENDANCE	Members & Trustees
QUORATE	The meeting was confirmed as quorate

Welcome and apologies for absence

Robert Ling opened the meeting and welcomed attendees. Apologies were not read owing to time constraints. Apologies were received from 11 members.

1. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 8 January 2024, were accepted.

2. Chairman's report – Robert Ling

The report highlighted the scale of change Ripon Museum Trust has recently experienced from the Covid-19 pandemic and the redevelopment programme. Robert Ling expressed his pride in the achievements of the Trust and, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, extended his thanks to all staff and volunteers for their work.

New Trustees will be recruited, with a preference for local residents. Robert Ling extended his special thanks to David Thelwall who, while being coopted as Trustee temporarily, is stepping down as Treasurer; he will be succeeded by Amy Stow.

3. Treasurer's update – David Thelwall

A summary of trading figures for the 2023/24 period were presented, with a summary of their implications. During this financial year, RMT invested £152,000 towards the development phase of the Inspiloss in this period was a planned loss due to the National Lottery Heritage Fund project. The trading surplus of £21,000 is an achievement.

The budget for the year was presented, with a trading summary which highlighted that the Trust has had its best year for admissions.

David Thelwall congratulated everyone involved in managing the NPO programme and the staff team for continuing to manage the risks of the organisation. He also paid tribute to the team for a phenomenal job, especially the staff team which 'by a country mile is the best we've ever had'.

Ripon Museum Trust, The Workhouse Museum, 75 Allhallowgate, Ripon, HG4 1LE

Tel: 01765 690799 Website: www.riponmuseums.co.uk

Company Ltd by Guarantee registered in England & Wales No 7465640

Registered Charity 1141462

Attendees were updated on the developments being made in financial governance and the National Lottery Heritage Fund project, with an acknowledgement of the realisation of the ambition of all parties involved in bringing it about.

David Thelwall ended with a reflection on the personal importance of his time at RMT.

4. Director's report – Alexa Vernon

Alexa Vernon revisited the goals she set in January 2024, all of which are achieved or nearly achieved. She outlined upcoming developments that will build organisational resilience. She summarised progress on each of the six activities undertaken for the Arts Council, the Fairer Futures project and accreditation.

Alexa Vernon extended her thanks to David Thelwall on behalf of the Trust and her personal thanks as well and presented him with a gift.

Alexa Vernon extended her thanks to the team, expressed her own appreciation of the people and vision of RMT and thanked all present for being part of the Trust's community.

5. Appointment of independent financial examiners

It was proposed that HPH Chartered Accountants of Harrogate continue to act as independent financial examiners. This was carried.

6. Election of the Board of Trustees

Rebecca Crallan stood down. David Thelwall retired but was coopted as Trustee. Robert Ling stood down and offered himself for re-election. Mandy Whitehead stood down and offered herself for re-election.

A member proposed Robert Ling as Trustee; a member seconded this. This was carried, including one proxy vote received by email in advance.

A member proposed Mandy Whitehead as Trustee; another member seconded this. This was carried, including one proxy vote received by email in advance.

Thanks were extended to Amy Stow for stepping in as temporary Treasurer.

7. Plans for the future

Alexa Vernon outlined the National Lottery Heritage Fund Fairer Futures project, with an emphasis on the redevelopment of Main Block.

Laura Allan outlined the activity plan to engage with new audiences and the reinterpretation of the Workhouse Museum. She also announced the launch of a new Collaborative Doctoral Award, which will prepare the way for the future redevelopment of the other two sites.

Freya Cox outlined plans for the new programme of activities, family trails and audience development procedures.

Freya Cox thanked two volunteers for their work on the costume store.

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Alexa Vernon outlined her objectives for 2025: to deliver the Fairer Futures project on budget and on time, to improve the offer to increase visitors and minimise the impact of Main Block's closure, to develop the staff team with new recruits and to continue to improve systems and procedures to improve institutional resilience.

8. Any Other Business

A member asked a question about the retail and refreshment offer across the museums. Alexa Vernon replied that the retail offer will continue and that while it is an ambition to provide refreshments, this is currently not a priority; other sources of income will be prioritised.

A member asked if the figures on family visitors at RMT compared with the national average set the Trust against comparable attractions. Alexa Vernon responded that the staff and Trustees are aware that RMT has great and currently unrealised potential to attract a larger number of family visitors. Robert Ling agreed that there is significant scope to increase numbers in this area.

A member observed that there was no RMT leaflet at the Ripon Inn and few at Booths on his last visit. Freya Cox replied that the new leaflet had arrived that day and that RMT's distributors should ensure leaflets were displayed at all relevant sites. Alexa Vernon added that there is currently no staff member running marketing. This sparked a general conversation about types of marketing media, including social media aimed at a young adult audience.

Richard Taylor asked about the closure period. The timeline and communications for this were discussed, with an emphasis on visits in the April and August holiday periods, additional programming in the other sites and marketing, with an emphasis that at present it is impossible to know what will happen. Richard Taylor asked how RMT will respond to this. Robert Ling emphasised the importance of highlighting what remains on offer at the Workhouse Museum (in Vagrants' Block and the Garden) rather than dwelling on the 'loss' of Main Block. David Thelwall observed that Vagrants' Block used to be a standalone museum. Alexa Vernon added that the Woodshed will be opened and the learning offer will be reshaped.

Richard Taylor suggested an exhibition explaining what the redevelopment will achieve and there was a discussion of the potential for hoardings to provide insight. Robert Ling suggested that the Board of Trustees needs to support the staff team in working on this and called for ideas from members. A member backed the idea of hoardings as an activity for visitors in themselves. Freya Cox acknowledged that while they know it is a challenge, staff currently don't know what will happen but that they will respond creatively when the time comes. Robert Ling closed the discussion on hoardings.

A member suggested a video tour to be created which visitors can watch while Main Block is closed as an alternative.

A member suggested holding court cases for adults similar to those for children at the Courthouse.

A member observed that the Courthouse heard civil as well as criminal cases. Alexa Vernon acknowledged the breadth of subject matter potentially available for interpreting the Courthouse.

David Thelwall also mentioned Bishop Auckland redevelopments.

A member asked if the Trust has an official photographer. This is Laura Allan's husband. Alexa Vernon said that photographs will be taken to create a record in the highly unlikely event of a catastrophic event. However, the collection will be put into storage and will be subject to the emergency and salvage plans.

9. Meeting closed

All attendees were thanked for coming and the meeting was closed.