



NOTE OF PROCEEDINGS - MEMBERS' MEETING 20 MARCH 2024

Board members were present to talk about some of the issues raised at the recent AGM. The Board had asked Charlie Raeburn (CR) head of the Club's, voluntary and social committee to co-ordinate questions.

Introduction

Carol Keith (CK) Chair, opened the meeting, explaining the format. Board members would speak on the Building Project and its funding, and communication by the Board. The General Manager would speak on the class booking system. There would be questions and discussion after each topic. This would be co-ordinated by CR.

The Building Project

CK spoke as follows:

You will all have seen the scaffolding going up around the building in recent weeks and perhaps heard the drilling.

As background, when Robert Robertson joined the Board, he, as a surveyor, recommended that we carry out a survey of the building every 5 years, so that we always have a rolling programme of planned works. So, in 2022 we went out to tender for the first survey, and the work was awarded to David Willis of CLWG Architects. He has worked with the Baths for many years and is an accredited expert in historic buildings.

That survey flagged up that our priorities should be the external stonework and roof of the building, and the electrical work. The Board chose to prioritise the external work. The reasons were- firstly, carrying out both aspects in one year would not be financially viable. And secondly, the electrical work will require us to close the Baths for a short period, and we did not want to do that, even for a week or two - so soon after the Covid lockdowns.

The next stage was, through our architect, to conduct a competitive tender exercise for the stonework and roofing. The best tender came from Davidson Stonework and Restoration - a company that David Willis had worked with many times, and so we were pleased with that. We decided not to proceed with the works immediately, as we looked at funding options. At the end of 2022 Caroline Docherty identified Edinburgh World Heritage as a potential grant funder. She will tell you more about that aspect of the work in a minute, so we negotiated with the contractor to hold his price for an end February start when the work on site began.

You will have seen that the scaffolding is a big and obvious part of the project. Over the course of the works, it will move right around the building to allow the contractors access. The whole project will continue until August. Of course, some of the work is noisy. The contractor has said that he will try to work around quieter classes when near the studio over the summer, so that they are not disturbed - where possible.

So - what is involved? The biggest part of the job is repointing of the external walls - the old mortar, some of it badly applied, will be knocked out, and the whole area repointed. You can

already see how good it is going to look if you walk down the steps at the side – there are areas where the mortar has been knocked out, and it's progressing well in fact the contractor has informed us they are a few days ahead of schedule.

Then we have the roof repairs – replacing damaged slates, and work to the chimney heads and rainwater goods. The stonework at the front of the building will be repaired and replaced where necessary, as will the south window metalwork and wood – which will be painted as well.

So – this is a big project, but it will leave us with a building in excellent condition externally for many years to come.

For those who cycle to the club, once the work is completed we will not be permitting bicycles to be chained up on the railings or on the stonework. however as you may be aware from the newsletter we are working with the Council to get adequate secure bike railings installed outside the building and I'll keep you up to date with that in the newsletter.

I am now going to pass over to Caroline Docherty and John Jackson to say a little about the funding of the project, and the EWH grant then I will ask Charlie to take questions on the project and funding.

Caroline Docherty (CD), legal and company secretary

When we originally had the external work costed in 2022, the Board had a discussion about the possibility of obtaining some sort of grant funding to assist with the costs, as they were pretty chunky, as you can imagine. It was a difficult project to do in phases, as such a big proportion of the costs is scaffolding, and there would simply be no point in paying for scaffolding twice over. Our architect was comfortable that there was no problem in delaying the works for long enough to explore grant funding options, and of course delaying in that way had the added benefit of giving us time to accumulate further reserves. In late 2022 I happened to meet the Director of Edinburgh World Heritage (EWH) at a function and had a lightbulb moment. I realised that they were the most likely funders, and indeed they come out for a preliminary meeting within a couple of weeks. It was clear from that initial meeting that they were keen to support us. Our building meets their criteria, and it's great for them to deal with a significant building in single ownership.

They did have one condition, and that was that we included masonry work to the north and south elevations in the initial project. If EWH are to get involved – they want to say a great looking building at the end. So, we re-tendered to include that work. Unfortunately, we hit EWH just at the time they were undergoing a reorganisation, but we finally got an offer late in 2023.

The grant that we were offered, and accepted, takes the form of what they call a re-cyclable grant. In fact, to anyone else – its an interest free loan, in our case of £100k, repayable in a oner after 10 years. So – the benefit to the Club is the cost of borrowing that sum over 10 years. John is going to say a little about funding the project overall, but I just wanted to explain the form that the grant takes.

EWH's legal requirements are pretty onerous. As someone who specialised in this area of law, I don't know whether that made it worse or better! EWH required a fixed security over our building – a standard security. As we have no other borrowings, we were able to give the

security, without having to involve our bank, or any other lenders. Incidentally, one of the benefits of the security is that it results in our title to the building being registered in the Land Register. It meant more legal work this time round but will make future dealings with the title easier. The second implication for the Clubs title is that EWH require what is called a conservation burden. This is a title condition that is registered against the title for ever. In our case it requires us to carry out regular inspections of the building, and that we allow EWH to inspect should they wish. Basically – they want to know that the funding they provide won't be wasted, but us neglecting the building in the future. Of course we were happy to agree to that, as it is simply good practice.

I will now hand over to John Jackson (JJ) Finance Director who will say something about the funding of the project generally.

JJ confirmed that following receipt of the subscription payments in January the Club's bank account balance was in excess of £500,000 credit. This is sufficient to leave us with a surplus after payment for the works and expected future bills during the year. It was noted that future electrical works would be needed but these will only be commissioned once the current works have been completed and the financial position reassessed at that time.

He also confirmed that although a sufficient buffer remained that planned works would deplete the Clubs resources considerably and the Board plans to ensure that we build up sufficient cash to repay the loan to EWH and to ensure that we have reserves for future works.

CR invited questions:

1. Will we be “squirrelling” away funds each year to cover the repayment of the EWH grant, and not leaving a problem for the future Board?

JJ confirmed that is exactly the strategy.

2. What is the contingency included in the contract awarded, and is it a fixed price contract?

CD: contingencies are included at 7.5%. This is felt acceptable, due to the nature of the works. The tender accepted is fixed price, on the basis of specified works.

3. How much will the electrical works be?

Robert Robertson (RR) director: We have not tendered that work yet, but the condition report obtained in 2021 gave a rough figure of £50k.

4. Will the dampness in the wall of the stairwell be fixed?

RR: Probably, but this cannot be guaranteed. The issue is that the building was built into a quarry face. Some dampness will be due to poor quality pointing, which is now being re-done, but other areas may well be something we just have to live with, due to the nature of the building's location.

5. On the electrical works – will the tangle of old wires in various locations be removed?

RR: Yes

6. Would there be merit in maintaining an historical record of the electrical systems as they currently are, before the works are carried out? This could be an interesting historical record.

RR: Yes – this is a good idea.

CR commented that keeping old pools such as ours in use is now considered to be a good sustainable option. This is very much the case in other countries. Looking at the UK, might there be a network of other old pools, with whom we could network and share ideas and best practice?

Class booking system

CR then suggested the meeting move onto the issue of the class booking system.

General Manager Paul Dunlop (PD) spoke as follows:

The problems - feedback from members and observations/stats

- Frustrated members who could not get booked onto a class at 6.30am but find the class on the day has spaces.
- Frustrated instructors that their classes were not fully attended.
- Members were not turning up to classes (“no shows”), after frequent emails and requests not to do so.
- Members were “blanket booking” consecutive classes, reserving spaces, or regularly cancelling classes; blanket booking/reserving a class being booking a class or classes (usually Strength or Pilates) and then cancelling the classes/class they did not want to attend.
- Large number of cancellations each month (see table in Annexe to this Note).

What we wanted to achieve

- To maximise class attendance
- To allow a wider range of members the opportunity to book into classes
- To reduce the number of no-shows
- To stop members from blanket booking or reserving classes
- To reduce the total number of cancelled bookings

How we wanted to achieve this

By putting a booking policy in place for members to follow, that is fair to everyone. This was:

- A member shall be barred from attending classes for a period of 7 days in the event that they are a “no show” for a booked class on 2 or more occasions in any 30-day period. A “no show” is defined as not turning up for the class without having cancelled, OR cancelling the class with less than four hours’ notice.

- A member shall be barred from attending classes for a period of 7 days in the event that they cancel four or more class bookings in any 30-day period

Summary

As you can see, the number of cancellations and members cancelling more than 4 bookings from March 2023 to Jan 2024 was very high. The numbers have reduced (Feb and the last 30 days) since the booking policy has been put in place and the average attendance for the “popular” classes has increased, showing that the booking system is working. I am still of the view that these are too high and hope to see the number drop further in the coming months.

We do not have any figures of “no-shows”, however from observation and feedback, this number has also decreased dramatically.

Some questions raised with PD prior to the meeting were as follows:

1. I cancelled in plenty of time for others to book a space, why should I have a strike against my name for this?
 - Without the policy in place and rules to follow, it will allow members to revert to blanket booking or reserving spaces, which I believe is not in the ethos of the Club.
 - It is very time-consuming to check each cancellation and subjectively decide whether they should be awarded a strike based on each cancellation.
 - You are allowed 3 cancellations before a sanction. This should give enough leeway to allow the odd cancellation of a class. If you are consistently cancelling bookings each week/month, then I would suggest changing your booking strategy and booking on the day of the class or only once you are certain you can attend.
2. Why were the “blanket bookers” not dealt with earlier or before a booking policy was made?
 - We were late to identify this, as the booking system only recently allowed us to upload a “cancellation” report.
 - Although taking advantage of the booking system and a lack of policy, they were technically not breaking any Club rules in existence at that time.
3. Members will be attending classes with injuries or when they are unwell, potentially risking their health and other members' health.
 - Members must be sensible and use their judgment with this. We would never advise coming to the Club while you are unwell or injured, for the sake of saving your name against a strike.

4. Why am I being punished for double booking a class or making a booking in error?
 - We had 150 members attend classes last month, so please be careful when using the booking system. It is frustrating for other members to have to wait for others to cancel a space is available.
 - You are allowed 3 cancellations before a sanction. This should give enough leeway to make the occasional mistake.
 - If you are continually making bookings by mistake or in error, please speak to a member of staff who can give you a “how to book a class” masterclass in less than 5 minutes.
5. Other Clubs do not sanction you for cancelling classes and only sanction you for no-shows, why are we different?
 - We are a unique private members Club with limited studio class availability and space. We therefore cannot offer the flexibility and class offerings of our bigger chain competitors. I believe this is why members were block booking and reserving spaces and why a sanction has been put in place - to stop reserving classes and consistent cancellation of classes. We had to put in a policy to tackle the specific issues we were facing.

CR then invited comments and questions:

1. I feel that the emphasis is on the wrong thing with this policy. How many blanket bookers did we have? How many members booked classes last month? How many were sanctioned?
PD: 31; 150; 6
2. This is clearly a big issue. The new system is clearly working. PD and the Board should be given credit for this. We should hold firm for a few months and see how things develop.
3. How are teachers paid – per class or by numbers attending?
CK: by class
4. I don't think it is fair to our General Manager to have to spend time speaking to individual members about this. How about we introduce a “name and shame” policy?
5. I am a Board member, and so I had early sight of the statistics, and was horrified to see my own figures. I am now much more careful about making bookings. The new system is working.
6. We are in a process – let's see how it goes.

7. I double booked, and then got an email saying that the class was cancelled. In fact this meant that my double booking was cancelled, not the class itself. This is confusing. Can the wording be changed?

PD – we will look at this – but members can be assured – if a class is cancelled, they will receive a personal email or call.

8. This is a lovely club. Let's keep it that way and not fall out over this issue. The situation is clearly improving.

CR then invited CK to speak about communication between the Board and members, which she did as follows:

Communication

Another topic raised at the recent AGM is how management and the board communicate to members and how members can raise issues and provide feedback to us.

Communication is vital at Drumsheugh so we strive to keep you all informed and engaged. Information is given to members by e mail via MailChimp, a monthly newsletter is circulated, we use social media and post notices on the notice boards in the hallway.

All relevant Club information is on the website, in particular the members' area accessed by a password. Paul updates the website regularly and in fact you may have noticed following the AGM we have made it clearer and easier for members to access information using click buttons.

So how do members engage with the Board and Management?

Paul our general manager, as our senior executive, is responsible for the operation of the Club and so all questions or feedback should be routed through him and he can be contacted by e mail, phone or in person conversations in his office. Any question or feedback from a member if required will be passed by Paul to me as Chair together with the relevant background and operational input. I or my fellow board members will discuss the communication with Paul and the appropriate response will be sent. Queries or feedback are also communicated to the Board in Paul's monthly manager's reports which are considered at our board meetings held every month.

The Board as members ourselves are always around the club and I think you'll find us approachable.

CR invited questions and comments.

1. I think the old system of a suggestion book was good. Can it be returned?
2. I think that the newsletter is very good, but I agree that the suggestion book should be returned.

PD: What we found was that in the last 18 months, before we ceased the suggestion book, it was just used for things like what flavours of crisps should be in the vending machine. CK: we will take on board the request.

Phones in the members' lounge

CK said that there was one final point that had been raised by email. A member had questioned the use of mobile phones in the members' lounge. CK confirmed that it was club policy that members do not make or receive loud calls when others are in the lounge.

CR wrapped up proceedings by mentioning the social programme which is growing. He encouraged everyone to speak to at least one other member present who they didn't know. He commented on how important Drumsheugh is. The world of sport and leisure is pretty bleak at the moment, with serious cuts threatening pools and leisure centres across the country. We need to treasure our club.

APPENDIX - STATISTICS ON CLASS CANCELLATIONS AND ATTENDANCE

	Total Cancellations	Highest number of cancellations (per member)	Members with 4 or more cancellations	Members attending classes
Jan 2023	194	12	17	110
Feb 2023	186	13	16	125
Mar 2023	322	14	31	118
Apr 2023	282	15	24	117
May 2023	282	12	27	122
Jun 2023	275	19	24	122
Jul 2023	217	20	19	119
Aug 2023	268	12	27	125
Sep 2023	249	15	25	128
Oct 2023	226	20	20	129
Nov 2023	325	24	31	127
Dec 2023	268	14	27	99
Jan 2024	221	11	18	114
Feb 2024	124	6	7	152
Last 30 days	97	5	3	144

Class Attendance Averages	2023	Since 22 nd Jan 2024
Yoga	10	11
Yoga	10	9
HIIT Pilates	10	10
Yoga	10	9
Circuits	9	10
Tai Chi	10	11
Strength 1	8	8
Strength 2	7	8
Strength 3	6	8
Body Balance	7	6
Pilates	9	10
Barre	5	7
Yoga	11	10
Pilates 1	11	12
Pilates 2	11	11
Pilates 3	9	11