

# Woodlands Community Development Trust

## Minutes of Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 22 February 2023, via Zoom, 6.30pm

**Present included:** Michael Weatherhead (chair), Janie Nicoll, Martha Wardrop (vice-chair), Clare Crawford (minutes), Yanru Zou, Tim Cowen (project manager), Jerry Hutchinson, Nuala Cook, Judy Jamieson, Xander Cloudsley, Ania Zielinska, Rosie O'Grady, Grace Franklin, Eo Stearn

**Apologies:** Mark Sadler, Colin Tsang, Fiona Hart (treasurer), Vicki Fleck, Sapna Agarwal, Jeevan Mann, Melissa Hernandez

### Welcome from the Chair

Michael Weatherhead welcomed all. He said that for him the highlight of 2022 had been the WO/CO Festival and seeing between six and seven hundred folk come to Woodlands to enjoy the market, the family zone, the wellbeing zone, the garden and the music zone on the events terrace. Towards the end of 2022 our Food Conference in St Silas Church showed the good work that the trust does but also the huge need that is out there and that there is work to be done with others to support systemic changes in our food and security. Those were just two events that showed that in-person connection, which he has learnt over his two and a half years or so with the trust, is so integral to what we do and why we have such a wonderful community in Woodlands. Michael thanked all the team, all the board and all the volunteers and said that WO/CO had shown them all working effortlessly together.

### Minutes of Last Year's Annual General Meeting

Michael said the minutes of the Annual General Meeting on 1 December 2021 are available on the website. They were proposed as a true record by Michael, seconded by Martha Wardrop.

### Introductions to the Board and Staff

Michael introduced and thanked those board members who were present: Martha Wardrop, who continues to be his super-capable and indispensable vice-chair, without whom he could not do the job; Clare Crawford, who has been taking notes diligently over the years and is a fount of institutional knowledge; and Janie Nicoll, who, with himself, is one of the newer members of the board. He also thanked those board members who could not be present: Mark Sadler, the only board member to have been born and still living locally; Colin Tsang, who is a tremendous help in our active transport and travel work; and Fiona Hart, our Treasurer, who is still the beating heart of the clean-up operations.

Tim Cowen said that in his over a decade with the trust he has really enjoyed working with the staff team. He introduced them in the order they appear on the website: Ania Zielinska, Finance Manager; Rosie O'Grady, the newest staff member, who is Communities Facilities Manager; Vicki Fleck, Garden and Green Space Coordinator, who was unable to attend; Xander Cloudsley, baker of lovely cakes and Community Food Worker; Eo Stearn, Bicycle-Anti-racist-Wellbeing-and-Everything-Else Events Coordinator who also helps with marketing; Judy Jamieson, Mental Health Support Worker for the Nurture in Nature project; Nuala Cook, Family Services Coordinator, who joined the staff team in April and has spent the year surrounded by babies; Jerry Hutchinson who works in the garden, in the lanes and in the café and is flexible in helping out across projects as needs change; there were apologies from Sapna Agarwal, who has been instrumental in our Anti-racism Library, from Jeevan Mann, who is our cook in the Community Café, and Melissa Hernandez, who is our new cleaner.

### Manager's Report and Presentation

With the help of photographs, Tim gave an account of the trust's fifteen months since the last AGM and looked a little into the future. Two pictures, one from the WO/CO Festival in the Millennium Park and a

more recent one from a Chinese New Year event in January, showed two joyful occasions but also change, demonstrating more work with families and anti-racism work and an increasing diversity in the profile of the people the trust works with. Many of the services that started during the pandemic have continued to thrive. Photographs showed Sapna at the Anti-racism Library in the Millennium Park and the Little Baby Garden Group enjoying the warm indoors of the Meeting Room. For the best part of a year and a half we were not able to meet indoors so it was great to continue that again along with the outdoor work. The Anti-racist Library has been particularly impactful in staking a claim to the Millennium Park and helping to turn it back into a civic space over the past twelve months. In April the Community Meeting Room reopened and is back to near normal levels of lets from the community sector but is definitely down on lets from the charity and third sector, perhaps reflecting the difficult economic climate and that a lot of charity activities are still taking place online. The Monday Baby Group started during the pandemic. Now there is a Wednesday Baby Group and a monthly eco-themed Family Group, that is growing all the time. The Wednesday Group started over the summer and is already full. Tim thanked Nuala for all her work in getting these groups off the ground. Funders have already seen the strengths of the connections, the support between parents and the benefits to child development. The Anti-racism Community Library is also a great success. The only one of its kind in Glasgow, if not Scotland, it is bringing to the community important conversations about racism, colonialism and inequality; its community and arts events have been particularly successful, and the partnerships it is bringing in benefit the trust by increasing diversity. In a tough economic climate that can often scapegoat racial harassment or hate crimes it is an area of work that is vital and of which we are very proud.

Food work continues to be a strong element of the trust's work. We had our community café outdoor on the terrace; we've been running a weekly Monday homework café with Queens Cross Housing Association, a monthly café in the Visibility premises, which we hope will go weekly from April, and the veg box scheme, which that day had had its busiest ever, with more than fifty households benefiting. The demand for food work grew as we came out of the pandemic and into the cost of living crisis. A new café was started in January. People were delighted to be back meeting indoors in the winter and also with the new venue of Flourish House, a little cosier than our previous venue, and we are working with the West of Scotland Housing Association who came into the neighbourhood over the summer. Café work has always been about the quality of the food so a big thanks to both the staff, Jeevan and Xander, and the team of volunteers who help them. A report, backed by the Scottish Government, on the impact of the veg box and how that integrates with climate work, and a second report by Helen Traill on the impact of our community café, were launched in November at the Food Conference. Despite that, an application for three-year funding from the Scottish Government was not successful, perhaps reflecting a lack of focus on climate work by the Scottish Government and a very competitive funding climate. We are continuing our food work with money from Virgin Money and a grant decision pending from the Lottery, but it is frustrating to have increasing demand at the same time as funding for food work remains short-term and a lot lower than it was a few years ago.

Judy's wonderful Nurture in Nature project, which started during the pandemic, continues, plugging some of the gaps in the NHS mental health services with a quick turnaround for appointments, meeting people flexibly and outdoors. A few quotes from the previous year's survey showed how Judy and the outdoor settings have helped people through hard times, to feel less alone and to improve their confidence and mood. Many go on to become involved with our other community work. A quote from one of our asylum-seeker bulb-planting volunteers shows the contribution to improving both physical and mental health volunteering can bring. The garden and green spaces are not only for growing food but also for people's health and wellbeing.

We are still doing our monthly clean-ups and huge thanks to Fiona who, due to work commitments and a conference, is unable to be here. She has been the driving force on the work at Carrington Lane, clearing mud and putting in gates. That was the first of a scaling-up project that we hope to repeat if there is more funding from Glasgow City Council for the lanes.

In June, a memorial garden to Esther Brown was unveiled. Ian Newton, a stone mason, made a beautiful job of creating a physical memorial, and as a trust we still carry an emotional or spiritual memorial for Esther in what we do. Directly arising from this, the Women of Woodlands Group, which

meets on a Monday, in 2022 ran activities such as drumming, woodworking and stress management, and held social visits and outings to support one another. At last year's AGM Shaina Western gave a presentation on the survey into the impacts of Esther's death on the community. One of the issues was safety, street lighting in particular. Nuala and Vicki have been working on an audit of street lighting, running personal safety training and trying to make better links with Glasgow University. They will be doing an International Women's Day event on 8 March. Lights in the Millennium Park were fixed just before Christmas, paid for from Esther's memorial fund with match funding from the West of Scotland Housing Association.

In 2022 the trust adopted a new mission statement to communicate better what we do. People know us from our projects but not necessarily our vision. Co-curated by board and staff, it helps in conversations with funders, particularly the last line about integrating social wellbeing with the environment. The full statement is on our website.

A ten-year garden birthday party had been planned for 2020, which had to be cancelled because of the pandemic. The WO/CO Festival was designed to bring a bit of joy back to the community after that and the horror of Esther's murder, and the result exceeded our expectations, especially the weather. It has been decided recently that it will be a biannual event and will be back in 2024.

After the challenges for staff of the pandemic and Esther's murder, 2022 was a better year, as a picture from a staff therapeutic whittling away-day in the Borders shows. We said a couple of goodbyes: to Katherine, who worked with us for five or six years and was photographed with her daughter on the day our community building was delivered, and to Kevin, our cleaner, who was always in so early that there are no photos of him. Vicki, our garden worker, who has been with the trust as long as Tim, will be leaving in April to spend more time in her hammock. We welcome Rosie, who has taken over from Katherine, and Melissa, our new cleaner, who is a Spanish speaker.

Tim illustrated what a tough funding climate the charity sector is going through by giving feedback from two unsuccessful funding applications where in one case only 19 out of over 150 applications were funded, a 12 per cent success rate, and in the second where we were not even able to get an eligibility call because they had only 10 or 12 grants and over 400 requests. The trust, however, is resilient in that we spread the risk across different funders, but even if all the half a dozen funding decisions that are due in February or March are successful, our grant income may go down around 30 per cent, to a level similar to before the pandemic. We do, however, have quite good reserves, and are generating income from non-grant sources, which will become more of a priority over the coming months, such as business sponsorship, revamping our Friends scheme and more direct appeals for community support, like the current Just Giving appeal for our Little Baby Garden Group. Since November we have been meeting the costs of the group from reserves and that morning the appeal had reached a third of its target, with Rosie and Nuala working on cute baby photos to push it to its limit. To sustain our level of work we are going to have to diversify, but we come from a good place. Non-grant income in 2022 was double that in 2021 but it is something we need to do more of if we are going to keep our services going.

We are working on designs for an outdoor classroom as we have money for the professional fees. There will be a small kitchen, a disabled toilet and a semi-sheltered outdoor space on the lower level of the terrace. It is a long-term project, and we will have to think of creative ways to fund it, but we learned from the pandemic the value of outdoor space and we recognise that we need better facilities for that site.

To conclude, Tim quoted a veg box recipient who when collecting his box takes time out in the garden: 'Thank you for being there. We love coming to the garden and sitting for a while in the calm and seeing the flowers and veg growing.' This shows the value of integrating social wellbeing and environment. We are very proud of what we do. It is a tough time for the voluntary sector, but we really appreciate the patience and understanding of our staff team who are on short-term contracts or waiting to know exactly what hours they will be working. We will get there, but we will need further community support and further fundraising efforts to keep us going.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Michael said that Fiona Hart, our Treasurer, had given him notes and that she had told him that 'The annual accounts for 2021 have undergone audit by Brett Nichols Associates and received a financially unqualified

opinion,' which in accountancy language means 'very good'. He gave huge thanks to Ania, firstly for her work on the audit but also throughout the year for her excellent financial management and legible and easy-to-understand reports for the board every month. As to the figures, these are different from where we are going in future because we are coming back from a pandemic 'high' in terms of income levels. Income for 2021 was quite high, over £300,000, an increase of 3.4 per cent on 2020, most coming from grants. The top four funders were the Climate Challenge Fund (Scottish Government), Glasgow City Council's Community Fund, the Scottish Government Fair Food Fund and the National Lottery. Donations, including from the Friends scheme, introduced only in 2021, were £3,000, a relatively small amount but, as Tim said, something that we can look at expanding in future, supplemented greatly by the response to the Esther Memorial Fund, which came to £9,000. Other income includes from the Community Meeting Room where lets took a hit during the pandemic but are starting to grow again. Donations are important and still in good health, which is helpful when a couple of big funding decisions have not gone our way. Our reserves policy is to maintain funds to support three months of running costs, including management and property costs. We will continue to maintain that buffer. On the expenditure side, our major cost related to staff and was over £200,000, up from £191,000. The trust employed five core staff, four project staff and additional sessional workers as individual projects required. During this period the trust was, and even though we are having to downscale our income a little, is still in good financial health, but, as Tim said, the charity sector operates in an increasingly competitive environment and funders' policies can change in response to societal factors, but the fact that the trust has values and a mission clearly laid out helps to ensure that whatever we go for, even if it is an evolution or a new development, for example the Anti-racist Library or the baby groups, they will sit within that vision of societal wellbeing.

### **Approval of 2021 Accounts**

Michael said the 2021 accounts had been approved by the board during 2022, and Tim said they are on our website. There is a time lag because of our auditing process. We have yet to start the audit of the 2022 accounts, but this should be done by July or August. The adoption of the annual accounts for the year ended 31 December 2021 was proposed by Michael, seconded by Janie Nicoll.

### **Appointment of Auditors**

Michael reported that Fiona Hart is happy to recommend that we stick with our current auditors and had proposed in advance the appointment of Brett Nichols Associates as external auditors and Michael seconded the proposal.

### **Appointment of Directors**

Michael reported that since the last annual general meeting one person had joined the board, Yanru Zou. Yanru was proposed as a director by Janie Nicoll, seconded by Martha Wardrop. Michael said we are always looking for people to join the board. We like to have board members connected to an area of our work, and he thinks someone will be joining us in the next couple of months who will be link into the Anti-racist Library, but we don't have anyone who links directly to the family work. If anyone knows of anyone please drop him an email (his email address is on the website) and he will happily chat with them about what we do. Clare Crawford proposed a vote of thanks to Christophe Marchand who had stood down this year. Michael agreed and said that Christophe was a guerrilla planter of bulbs all over Woodlands and an able assistant to Fiona in all things clean-up and said we have much to thank him for over the years.

### **AOB**

Tim said that the Women of Woodlands Group had sent their apologies because of a diary clash and have asked for a meeting with him and someone from the board to talk over the plans that they have already corresponded about. It was agreed that this would be done once we know more about our budgets.