

**Minutes of Haigh Annual Parish Meeting  
Held Monday 7 March 2023  
7:00pm – Haigh Hall Vestibule**

**Present:** Councillor Paul Kenyon (Chairman), Cllrs Roberta Darbyshire, Ian Parker, Marie-Clare Kenyon, Andrew Wilson and Mrs Krystyna Pilkington (Parish Clerk)  
AI & AI and 24 members of the public

**1 Welcome by the Chairman**

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone. Cllr Paul Kenyon explained the safety procedures and reminded those present about the location of comfort facilities. He then introduced himself and the other members of the Parish Council.

**2 Apologies**

None

**3 Matters Introduced by Members of the Public**

Cllr Paul Kenyon explained that the Parish Council were a voice for the residents at a local level and were hoping to improve their community engagement. He asked whether there were any matters that residents wished to raise.

**Traffic and Anti-Social Behaviour Issues in Sennicar and Pendlebury Lanes**

Residents of Sennicar and Pendlebury Lanes raised concerns about traffic and ASB issues in their area. Both lanes were private roads and their residents had total responsibility for their maintenance. Since lockdown the volume of traffic using both roads had increased because more people were taking exercise (with and without dogs) in the area. There were some mechanisms in place to prevent outside traffic entering the area, unless visiting residents, but they were not enforceable without a Police officer permanently on site. Installing CCTV would help, but the residents could not afford it. Help was needed to prevent the increase in traffic.

The area was also being abused by vandals, drug dealers and motorbike scramblers, who were all contributing to the destruction of the botanical environment. People often dug out their own routes. In inclement weather surface water from the golf course had a tendency to flow down the path and create a ravine.

The messaging from Haigh Woodland Park was that this was 'Your Park' and, as a result, many people often treated the area as an extension of their back gardens. The messaging from the LA needed to change. People needed to be aware that they should not abuse the area – they should treat it with respect.

There was a noticeable absence of wardens, who were very much needed to maintain the area in a litter-free condition and provide some sort of order and security. While some signage existed, there was none saying that no fires were allowed. It was suggested that being more explicit with signage might partly resolve the situation with regard to some casual visitors to the area.

Cllr Kenyon thanked the residents for their comments and informed them that the Parish Council were due to meet with Wigan Council's senior officers in the near future and would raise these matters at that meeting.

**4 Minutes of the Last Annual Parish Meeting (9 May 2022)**

**Resolved:** The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday, 9 May 2022 were agreed to be a true and correct record.

## **5 Matters Arising from Those Minutes**

There were no matters arising from the above minutes.

## **6 Clerk's Report**

The Clerk's report, which had been previously circulated, was received.  
*See Appendix A.*

The Chairman invited those present to read the report at their leisure and to let him know if they had any questions.

**Resolved:** The Clerk's report was accepted.

The Chairman drew attention to the part of the report about Community Engagement that dealt with the digital platform – Vocaleyes – being trialled by the Parish Council. He invited Cllr Clare Kenyon to speak about it.

Cllr Clare Kenyon explained the purpose of the Vocaleyes digital platform. Anyone could join the platform and vote on the proposed projects listed there. They could also volunteer to help with the projects, if they wished. They could even suggest new projects, which could also be voted on by platform members.

The Parish Council also had two Facebook pages which were used to communicate with the public. The one called 'Haigh Parish Council' was used to disseminate information about a range of things. To generate direct conversations amongst Parish residents the Council had introduced a page called 'Haigh Parish Community Group'.

## **7 Haigh Hall – The Masterplan – A Presentation by AI & AI**

Cllr Paul Kenyon introduced AI & AI, the artistic directors of the Haigh Hall restoration and development project, who had been invited to make a presentation about The Masterplan.

### **Introduction**

AI & AI began by saying that, having heard the comments made earlier, they would like to organise a meeting between the residents of Sennicar and Pendlebury Lanes, the LA and themselves to try to address the issues raised about traffic and anti-social behaviour. These issues were within their remit for the development of Haigh Woodland Park. Amongst other things, they were planning to modernise the car parking technology at the car park.

As part of their research AI & AI had visited Kew Gardens, and had gained a great deal from how things worked there. They observed that Kew Gardens had its own Police force, but it was unlikely that this would happen at Haigh Woodland Park.

### **Community Engagement & Funding**

The Masterplan was expected to take 10 years to complete. Funding had been secured to cover the work for the first 3 years of the project. AI & AI wished to talk about what they had been working on for the past 2 years.

As part of the restoration some of the old names used at Haigh Hall would return. AI & AI had worked in culture all over the world for over 25 years and

had been involved in many restoration projects. In the early stages of this one they needed to engage with residents.

In 2021 they held a Community Engagement event in the Hall. 764 people visited the event over a period of four weeks and gave their views. Another 250 engaged online. People were very open about what they wished to say. When views were collated it was found that 88.5% wished to see a focus on the Humanities, 63% on Hospitality and 41.75% on Horticulture.

In 2021 there was no money on the table. Bids for funding were submitted and funds had now been raised for the first three chapters of the 10 year Masterplan.

### **External Restoration**

Chapter One involved the immediate work, i.e. external restoration of the roof, windows, stonework, drainage, etc. This would be happening on the next three months. AI & AI were working with Paul Purcell, one of the nation's leading heritage architects, on this.

### **Landscaping**

Going forward, AI & AI were working with a local landscape architect to restore some of the landscape to something based on the landscape in 1796. It would include the development of an amphitheatre, which would become a place where performances would take place. The aim was also to restore the horticulture that was once so much a part of the work at the Hall. This would include a return of the formal gardens that existed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. An underground barn dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century had been located in this area, so the work might involve an archeological dig.

### **Horticulture**

Dr Sylvia Travers – the nation's lead on kitchen gardens – was acting as a consultant on the horticulture part of the project. AI & AI hoped to be able to employ her as the Head Gardener. They wished to re-activate the Hall as a country estate and, as part of this, wanted a kitchen garden that would pay for itself. AI & AI also wanted to restore the flower garden. Dr Travers was also an expert on Victorian gardens and had explained the purpose of the walled gardens. In order to make Haigh sustainable, one of the ambitions was to run a plant store.

### **Plantation Gates**

Once restored one of the lodges would become the Visitor Centre and the other would house a small exhibition about the Hall. To reduce traffic the plan was to encourage visitors to arrive at the gates by public transport. Shuttle buses would link the gates with the Hall.

AI & AI had recently met someone who had lived in the lodges as a child and had been brought up there. They were planning to film his story and to use the film as part of the exhibition.

### **The 'H' Symbols**

The designs for the 'H' symbols had been inspired by the Jean Boucher alphabet. Different 'H' designs had been created for different areas.

### **Inside the Hall**

AI & AI displayed illustrations of their plans for the interior of the Hall. The £20 million in levelling up funding secured from central government would be used

to fund the interior alterations at the Hall. Each floor would be divided into zones.

### The Cellar

The cellars would house an exhibition space (Zone 1), which would focus on Wigan's mining heritage, and a cinema. Old maps of local mines had been found in the archives and would be put on display. There had been a Pit near the canal and the old Hall had to be demolished because it was too close to the seams and was showing signs of subsidence.

AI & AI showed the audience a photograph of a chair made of hard coal. They were looking into the possibilities of using hard coal as an art material.

The history and work of Haigh Foundry was another suggestion for an exhibition. Many location and way signs had been made there in past centuries.

It was hoped that contributing to the night-time economy by opening the Chapel Bar (Zone 2) in the cellar to the public would reduce the amount of ASB.

### Ground Floor

There would be four zones – the Vestibule would be in Zone 1. The building had been designed very mathematically and faced North, South, East and West. Another zone on this floor would contain a Gallery, which would house both old and contemporary art. Another zone would be home to a restaurant and a café. There would also be a private hospitality zone, which would be completely cut off from the rest of the floor. Virtually no walls would be demolished – indeed, the project would involve the restoration of walls that once existed.

### First Floor

The first floor would provide visitors with a cultural experience. One zone would be used to display the works of Theo Major. Theo's family still owned many of his creations and had agreed to lend the collection of 2,000 works to the Hall. This meant that the exhibits on display could be rotated.

A second zone would consist of the Lady Mabel Gallery and the Haigh Heritage Reading Rooms. An incredible Renaissance collection had once been in the possession of the former owners of the Hall - some were on display at places like the National Gallery. AI & AI were planning to try to bring them back. They were also trying to restore the collection of books that the Hall once housed.

A third zone would house the Future Wing, where the work of the artists of today would be displayed.

### Second Floor

The Younglings' accommodation would be found on the second floor. The focus here would be on children's experiences and education (Haigh Academy).

### Roof top

Finally, the rooftop would be the home of the Observatory Bar.

### **Conclusion**

There were many possibilities for the way in which the project could develop. AI & AI were looking at the opportunities available for the rebirth of Haigh's lost heritage. This included the saving of the Bothy Cottages.

AI & AI then took questions from the audience.

The Chairman thanked AI & AI for their superb presentation.

The Meeting Closed at 8:30pm

**Chairman**