

# ***Single News*** – the KSM Volunteers News-brief – Special Edition

## **Update from John Anderson, Chair, Kempton Great Engines Trust**

I am very pleased to have this chance to say a few words directly to you. The work of the trust cannot be done without the dedicated group of volunteers I know you to be. You are the key to our future and I wanted to share with you some of the opportunities and yes, challenges, that we will face as we look ahead to the coming years.

I want right away though to pay a particular tribute to Nick Reynolds who unexpectedly retired as Chair of KGET for personal reasons. He was a very important figure in the life of the museum getting it to where we are now. I am sure we all wish him the best for his future.

I also thank my colleagues for allowing me the privilege of serving as Chair at least until the next KGET AGM.



### ***Expanding the museum***

Thanks to the work of the volunteers the museum has come a very long way in the last twenty five years. No 6 engine has been brought back to life, the conservation of No 7 is well under way and the museum is now regularly open to the public serving its key function as part of the heritage of our community.

It's now clear that to be fit for the future the museum must be expanded; we have outgrown the capacity of the building to deliver our plans. The expansion of the museum will be the main focus of our activities from now on whilst we also continue with the essential work in which you are already involved.

The plan is to expand into the old boiler house directly adjoining the engine house. We are talking to Thames Water about this and our ideas for transforming the museum to provide new visitor and volunteer facilities. It is greatly encouraging that they are very supportive of the project. Eventually, the museum will occupy an even more important place in the cultural life of our community.

Delivering the new museum will be a huge piece of work. It will require changes to the way we think about and operate the museum.

First of these is our business plan which sets out in more detail what needs to be done to develop the museum to ensure that it has a sustainable and successful future. We will keep the business plan under review.

Secondly, substantial external funding will be required to achieve our goal. We need to recognise that the big grant making bodies set their own criteria for funding and this includes expectations of the way we are organised and how we manage our affairs.

Attracting such funding will be a lot easier when we can show that we have adopted and are using the highest standards for collection acquisition, curation and presentation. That's why we are preparing to seek accreditation from the Arts Council UK Museum Accreditation Scheme. Information on the scheme is available from the Arts Council website – go to <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/> and search the site for 'accreditation'. We have had helpful and encouraging talks with a Museum Development Officer from the Museum of London about the possibility of gaining "working towards" accreditation status as the first step.

### ***Organising ourselves***

I mentioned earlier the need for changes to the way we work. Like all charities we need to give attention to our governance.

As we entered 2021 a concern was raised about the operation of our Articles of Association. This governing document is the legal basis for what we do and how the charity works, but it has fallen behind both charity law and best practice in the heritage sector. Following advice from two separate firms of solicitors a breach of the articles was identified and duly addressed early in 2021.

Further work to modernise the governing document is being progressed with Bates-Wells, a legal firm specialising in charity law.

It's intended to have the new Articles of Association in place in early 2022. At the same time we will be considering how to add to the skills and knowledge of the trustees so that we are able to progress our business plan.

This brings me to a matter of some concern and greater importance as identified by both sets of solicitors. That is about the structural organisation we have with two governing bodies in both the Society and Trust.

On the one hand having two bodies raises concerns of accountability, transparency of decision making and resource management. On the other hand, a key issue is that the Society is not an incorporated body. This means that, unlike members of the Trust who have the protection provided by the company, Society members have no such protection.

Concerns were also raised about how the Charity Commission might view matters where an unincorporated body is handling revenues and charitable donations where there is lack of clear governance. This two body arrangement will also be an area to be clarified as we move to achieve accreditation. As one Trustee recently put it, we need to be squeaky clean!

The Trust has therefore reviewed the current organisational structure and has come up with a proposal for change that will remove the issues. We know this is very important matter which will raise concerns for some of you. The Trust is therefore very keen that all volunteers have the opportunity to be updated on the proposed changes and are able to ask questions and put their own views forward.

Trustees will be present at the museum on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> January (at 2 pm) and Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> January (at 10 am) to deliver a presentation detailing their proposals and to allow questions to be put to them. It is hoped that as many of you as possible will be able to attend one of these sessions.

I hope this will be the first of a series of communications between the trustees and volunteers. I look forward to meeting more of you as we move forward.

John Anderson

### ***The current Trustees***

The current composition of the Trust is:

Suzy Webb – Trustee

Christopher Hobson – Trustee

David Lawrie – Trustee

Martin Wicks – Trustee and Treasurer

Jeremy Scholefield – Trustee

Bernard Chorley – Trustee

John Anderson – Trustee and Chair

Richard Abbott – Company Secretary