

Tenants Association of the National Trust (TANT)

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

11.45am Sunday 9th May 2010

Mottisfont Village Hall

Mottisfont

Near Romsey

Hampshire SO51 0LX

Attendees:-

Alan Yates, Dudmaston
Peter Hand, Lamberts Castle
Andy Simmonds, Mottisfont
Terance Morris, Mottisfont
Dorothy Morris, Mottisfont
Philip Simmonds, Mottisfont
Maria Bint, Coleshill & Buscot
John Bint, Coleshill & Buscot
John Safford, Mottisfont
Sue Safford, Mottisfont
Leo Stevens, Lacock
Mary Wheeler, Mottisfont
Norma Stevens, Lacock
Peter Summers, Sherborne
Debby Limb, IOW
Alan Limb, IOW
R Lawrence, Mottisfont
C Whitelocke, Mottisfont
A Lawrence, Mottisfont
Fran Robinson, Lamberts Castle
Cristina George, Philipps House
Linda Baharier
Miriam Baharier
Andrew Turner-Cross, Slindon
Peter Bate, Holnicote
Sally Bate, Holnicote

10.30am Tea/Coffee

11.00am Guest Speaker, David Riddle, Land Use Director, National Trust.

David was accompanied by Alison Evans, Property Manager at Mottisfont.

David explained his role and the new NT Strategy – “Going Local.”
The NT aim to increase membership from 3.8m to 5m.
The NT want everyone to feel like a member.
The NT will “manage places for people.”
Another drive is sustainability, all dimensions including environmental.
The NT is a Charity and does what it does “for the benefit of the Nation.”
Properties will have more power to make decisions locally, including the management of financial budgets.
The NT is not just about buildings but also landscapes and the countryside.
The NT feel that they have been a “restrictive and controlling” organisation and they want to change that – bringing properties to life.
This will be a big change.

Tenants are important to the NT – not just for income but because tenants manage 80% of NT owned land and 80% of houses and cottages.
The NT want to provide good homes and recognise that there is room for improvement.
DR wants to see improvement in the management of the Let Estate and improve standards of repairs, service and relationships.
The NT want to relet property faster and improve Tenant Satisfaction.
Work with TANT and local Tenant Associations will continue.
The NT want to manage performance and this will include turnover of properties, property condition and income as well as tenant satisfaction – the National Trust Innovation Group is working on this now.

Questions from the floor:-

One tenant reported an apparent increase in funding availability for repairs but that five different people had been to inspect a problem with his guttering.
Another tenant reported that fact that contractors and sub-contractors have been to his home to inspect the same problem – duplication of cost. He also reported that high rent levels are now limiting the ability of local people to live on the estate. He asked how the NT match their people centred approach to their business approach to managing the estates.
DR replied that this was possible although perhaps the rent issue will always be a difficulty. He went on to say that the NT will not normally reduce rents. He pointed out that the NT does not want a high turnover of tenants and that it was better for all concerned to have long-term tenancies.

LS raised the question of rent levels in comparison with social landlords who have reduced their rents in recent times. DR replied that the NT simply want to obtain a rent based upon what each property is worth on the local rental market.

FR mentioned that tenants generate 10% of the NT income – she would like to see full NT membership for all Tenant Custodians and that in doing so this would enable the NT to achieve their objectives.

CG raised an issue of access to larger houses at times which may be restricted as well as places like Lacock where an increase in visitor numbers and visiting times could affect the rights of tenants to the quiet enjoyment of their homes. DR noted these comments.

LB referred to the different approach to management from property to property, noting that NT Policies should be applied consistently across the Country.

AL raised the fact that Tenants Handbooks had still not been received by tenants at Mottisfont. Alison Evans replied that these had now arrived and will be delivered to all tenants on the Estate. AL also asked about allotment rents at Corfe Castle which have increased by 400%. DR responded that perhaps the original rents were too low. He said that a 400% increase was not unreasonable although others felt that such a high percentage increase in one year was too much and that any increases should be staged over time.

PD asked what training would be provided to NT staff to enable them to manage under the proposed new regime. DR said that Customer Care training would be provided and that he would have no objection to TANT being involved in the training process.

MB asked about poor quality builders and poor quality materials being used. DR said that this was not acceptable and that the NT want to improve the repairs service to all tenants.

LS mentioned that some, not all, NT staff still have an “unfortunate attitude” when dealing with tenants.

Another question was raised about repairs seeming to be carried out down to a cost rather than up to a standard. DR said that the NT was currently looking at introducing a Code of Conduct for contractors.

ATC asked about the timescales for the roll-out of the new NT regime. DR said that the target was 2020 for achieving their outcomes but that work has already started.

Alison Evans closed by saying that she would welcome a meeting with tenants at Mottisfont to discuss any concerns that they may have.

11.45am AGM Business Meeting

1. Welcome. ATC welcomed everyone.
2. Apologies. None received, CG attended in lieu of AG.
3. Minutes of the last AGM held on 26th April 2009 at Dudmason, Shropshire. Agreed as an accurate record and signed by Chairman.
4. Matters arising
 - a. Concerns in relation to Tenants Handbook. Evidence is that the distribution has been patchy. Also, the repairs targets have not been included in the current edition and TANT wish to have these included in the next edition.
 - b. Tenant Custodian Membership. TANT now call all Tenants "Tenant Custodians." The NT has been asked to use this term. They are considering but have called tenants "Customers" which is good news.
 - c. Tenant database. This is required at the NT will not release property details to TANT so we have built a database of over 1,000 addresses (about 20% of total). A company called Business Prospects is managing the database on our behalf.
5. Chairman's Report. ATC presented his report.
6. Treasurer's Report. LB presented her report. Agreed to send reminder to tenants to renew their annual donation. ATC thanked all members who have made donations to TANT. LS said that some tenants feel that the NT should fund TANT 100%.
7. Development Officers Reports. PB presented his report.
8. Election of Officers and Committee.

The following tenants were elected as Committee Members, proposed by Sally Bate, all agreed, no objections:-

Andrew Turner-Cross
Leo Stevens
Alan Yates
Linda Baharier
Peter Bate
Fran Robinson
Alan Lawrence

Alan Limb
Cristina George

The following Committee Members were elected to the key positions on the Committee. Alan Yates resigned from the position of Secretary and was thanked for his service:-

- a. Chairman, Andrew Turner-Cross, proposed by MB, all in favour
- b. Vice Chairman, Leo Stevens, proposed CG, all in favour
- c. Secretary, Mary Wheeler, proposed Norma Stevens, all in favour
- d. Treasurer, Linda Baharier, proposed FR, all in favour
- e. Development Officer, Pater Bate, proposed CG, all in favour
- f. Farms Officer, Peter Summers, PB proposed, all in favour
- g. Small Business Officer, Frank O'Neill (in his absence), PB proposed, all in favour

9. Any Other Business

The new Committee members introduced themselves to the meeting.

LS raised the issue of publicity. Following discussion it was agreed to increase our presence in the press.

CG raised the need for a campaign to support her election. ATC advised that although CG had not been called to interview by the NT, she could still stand and that we needed a co-ordinated campaign to support her. He went on to say that the NT process for election is flawed and may be challenged.

CG raised a point about prospective tenants seeking advice – felt that TANT should support them. The website provides an opportunity for them to do so.

FR raised concerns about NT funding for TANT. She suggested that TANT could perhaps provide an agency service for a fee to enable tenants to swap homes.

Alan Limb raised an issue about security of tenure on the basis that he only has a 12 month Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement. AY said that the NT House Letting Policy allows the NT to agree longer periods for AS Agreements to encourage good tenants to stay and pointed out that DR had said earlier in the meeting that the NT wants to reduce turnover.

Mottisfont tenants raised an issue of concern in relation to conflicts of interest relating to two NT staff one of whom manages the other. PB

agreed to arrange a meeting at Mottisfont between tenants and the NT as offered by Alison Evans.

Peter Summers asked if a list of the regional Tenant Associations and their contact details could be posted on the TANT website.

PB proposed that TANT formally approaches the Charities Commission to establish whether the NT should fund the Tenants Association. This was agreed unanimously.

ATC thanked AL for making the arrangements for the AGM

1.25pm Meeting closed