

VENTNOR & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

**Open Monthly Meeting Yarborough Masonic Hall, Spring Hill,
On Friday 29 May 2026 at 7.30pm**

Background to the Open Meeting

The structure of the meeting followed the discussion paper previously circulated by the Trustees, to the membership.

This discussion paper outlined the key issues faced by the Trustees with areas of discussion being focused on what the Trustees have endeavoured to do, what has been done already, and what can be done to find a new Treasurer. For non-members and those individuals who had not already received the discussion paper, hard copies were available on the evening.

The Trustees have had great difficulty in recruiting a Treasurer over the last four-year period. The Treasurers who have served the Society have also served as Trustees, but have held the Treasurer position on a shorter-term basis. The Trustees have endeavoured to use various methods of advertising for this role, including personal networking, collaborating with other island-wide charity support bodies and through the Society's own publications. The Trustees have also been seeking additional Volunteer support in general.

Although an existing Trustee is currently holding this position, this is solely on a temporary basis and will not do so past the end of March 2027. Without a Treasurer, the Society cannot continue and will be compelled to instigate wind-up. This would be the most extreme outcome. Additionally, diminished membership numbers and incoming revenue mean the Society and Heritage Centre is already running at a deficit, increasing future financial uncertainty.

Summary of Discussions

Both members and non-members contributed to discussions, including current Volunteers and ex-Trustees.

The role of the Treasurer and its constituent responsibilities were discussed, which include both 'book-keeping' for Museum and online transactions, as well as the broader reporting and auditing elements to the role. The merits of delegation were deliberated, where 'book-keeping' could be outsourced to a professional, either on a paid or voluntary basis.

The Trustees were already trialling a delegation system at present, which involves the input of other Trustees to cover off responsibilities.

Opinion was divided on this matter, with the recent exiting Treasurer offering caution as to the delegation route based on their experience of the various elements of the role. It was noted that the Trustees had requested a 5 year minimum term for the tenure of the position, which might not be realistic.

Three offers of assistance have now been made (one of which has been offered by email) on the basis of having a 'figure-head' Treasurer role with the delegation of day-to-day book keeping and cash handling responsibilities. This would make the Treasurer role less time-consuming for the responsible named officer in this role.

It was noted that the greater use of social media could have expedited the search for another Treasurer and more Volunteers in general.

The Trustees stressed that the reduction in Trustee and Volunteer numbers had impacted the extent to which the Society and Heritage Centre operated. Additionally, it was suggested that continuing liaison with Community Action Isle of Wight and other charitable collaborations could assist the Trusteeship in developing interest in new Trustees and Volunteers, as well as providing holistic support on general charity development.

It was noted that the annual membership fee was 'small' in comparison to other charitable organisations. There was an opinion that increasing the membership to £50 could allow the Society to employ an external bookkeeper, however, even the additional revenue raised by this (assuming all current members renewed) still would not meet the cost of an external bookkeeper.

The Trustees viewed the membership fee as being responsible in proportion to their current offering of 10 monthly meetings and periodic newsletters. It was noted by the Trustees at this point, that they intend to extend their website offering to the membership, to include a specific repository for materials of interest. It was noted that the membership fee would invariably need to increase by a certain margin at some point in the future.

It was noted that different membership 'types' could be instated, which could include junior or family membership. In addition, collaboration with local educational institutions could generate organic interest in local history. This was something the Trustees have considered and will continue to develop, subject to Trustee resource.

It was acknowledged that in addition to individual memberships, the expansion of business sponsorship would be an important part of increasing incoming funds as well as building community connections with local businesses.

The options for Society wind-up were discussed. No immediate comments were received regards the formal mechanics of wind-up although the options of amalgamation with other island historical societies were not particularly well received. There may also be options to consider working with other Ventnor-based charities with a similar focus. The perception of amalgamation with other island groups would probably inevitably dilute the localised focus of the Society and its current unique offering.

Closing comments and Action Points

The Trustees were heartened by numbers attending the meeting and were grateful for the input given by member and non-member attendees alike. Additionally, messages and emails of support had been received by individuals not able to attend on the evening which, all told, provide assurance that there is enough interest and appetite to continue the Society's work.

The Trustees reiterate their commitment to ensuring the future of the Society by securing the role of the Treasurer. Initially increasing Volunteer and member numbers would facilitate the expansion of the offering to members and visitors to the Museum.

In the immediate term, the Trustees will be working with the individuals who have offered their support for the Treasurer and other Volunteer roles. In addition this will include following up on any other offers of assistance and support, received by email prior to the meeting.

The Trustees will continue to make representations for the Society and utilise social media channels to publicise Volunteering opportunities, as well as increasing their offering in publications and the member website. Collaboration will continue with other island charity and Volunteering groups. Increased membership, Volunteering opportunities and organically increasing community interest in our work would see the Society and Heritage Centre thrive into the future.