

**Minutes of Annual General Meeting
Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum
11 March 2025**

The eleventh Annual General Meeting of the Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum took place at 7.00pm on 11 March 2025.

It was held at the Hampstead Community Centre with more than 50 people attending. The Powerpoint slides shown at the meeting are on the Forum's website.

Forum activities

Alex Nicoll, chair, announced that the draft of the new Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan had just been passed by the independent examiner. This meant that it would now go to Camden Council to be put into force. The examiner made very few changes to the Plan. In fact, most were small amendments that the Forum itself had offered in response to comments from Camden and other bodies. The examiner also ruled that the Plan did not need to be put to a public referendum. This was because the changes from the existing Plan, while significant, were not so radical as to alter its fundamental nature.

The examiner, Jill Kingaby, noted that the Forum was one of the first in the country to review and revise a Neighbourhood Plan. She wrote: "I commend the Forum for thinking ahead and seeking to achieve a new, up-to-date Plan for Hampstead....The plan-makers have clearly put in much time and effort to review all aspects...of the Plan, to understand their effectiveness since 2018, and identify where change is needed....I congratulate the Forum... and appreciate all the work that has been put into [it]."

Among other activities during the year had been a collaboration with local churches to hold a series of 'climate cafés' at which people were able to express their feelings about climate change in a non-judgmental environment. The Forum's part in this was led by Stephen Taylor and Carissa Bub.

The Forum was a co-signatory to a recent letter from the Heath & Hampstead Society to the government that urged both ministers and the Post Office not to close the Hampstead Post Office branch, and to protect postal services in Hampstead.

Annual General Meeting

1) Revision of constitution

Nicoll asked the meeting to approve small changes to the Forum's constitution. Every five years, a Forum must seek approval as the body responsible for writing a Neighbourhood Plan for a specified area. That includes approving a constitution. In 2024 the Forum re-applied for Camden's approval and was approved for the third time. The Forum had taken the opportunity to slightly revise its constitution. One change was to be more explicit about its commitment to inclusiveness in the Forum's activities, so as to be in line with Camden's demanding policies in this regard. Also, eligibility for membership was broadened to include people who live very close to the Plan area, or who have a particular interest in Hampstead. The revised constitution had been mentioned in notices about the AGM, with a link to the document. Adoption

of the new constitution was proposed by Stephen Taylor, and seconded by Oliver Froment, and passed unanimously.

2) Approval of Minutes of the last AGM.

The minutes of the previous AGM, held on 12 March 2024, had been posted on the Forum's website. As proposed by Stephen Taylor and seconded by Francesca Agostini, the minutes were approved unanimously.

3) Approval of Accounts

Clyde Whittaker, treasurer, reported on the Forum's accounts for 2024. The Forum's bank account at the end of the year stood at £768, compared with £1,051 a year earlier. The only significant payment of £289 had been for work on redesign of the Plan that was not covered by a grant. Separately, the Forum had received a grant from a government agency of £8,331, which had been held in custody by Camden, to meet costs of revising the Plan, including a 'health check' on a draft, preparation of the Basic Conditions Statement, and redesign/graphics work. This grant had been entirely spent. For its normal activities, the Forum depended on donations. As proposed by Carissa Bub and Sean Lask and seconded by Janine Griffis, the accounts were approved unanimously.

4) Election of the Committee

Nicoll paid tribute to David Castle, a founder member of the Forum committee and former vice chair. He had played a leading role in writing the first Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan. David was stepping down from the committee but would remain a valued adviser.

Nominees to the committee had been published on the Forum's website, with short biographies. They were:

- Francesca Agostini
- Carissa Bub
- Gordon Curtis
- Oliver Froment
- Janine Griffis
- Vicki Harding
- Andrew Haslam-Jones
- Andrea Lally Kukrika
- Sean Lask
- Alex Nicoll
- Glen Robinson
- Katharina Schauer
- Stephen Taylor
- Clyde Whittaker
- Guy Wingate

The nominees were proposed for election as a single slate by Susannah Hagan and seconded by John Vedelago, and were elected unanimously.

There being no other business, the chair closed the formal AGM.

Discussion: what does the Neighbourhood Plan do for Hampstead? What more could be done?

Presentations by three speakers sparked a lively discussion. View the slides [here](#).

Janine Griffis, a committee member and the Forum's founding chair, went through some of the new features of the new Neighbourhood Plan. It placed additional emphasis on sustainable design, encouraging retrofitting, use of sustainable materials and water efficiency. It expanded the previous Plan's creation of 'biodiversity corridors' into a network and supported a greener public realm. It added new policies to encourage considerate construction. Longer projects must be registered with the Considerate Constructors Scheme.

Susannah Hagan, an adviser to the Forum and Emeritus Professor of Architecture at the University of Westminster, spoke about the balance between sustainability and conservation, beginning with a photograph of Chester Cathedral with its roof covered in solar panels. The use of methods and materials that reduce the environmental impact is not contradictory with conserving our heritage, even in Hampstead's conservation areas, she said.

How should we approach retrofitting? First, by focusing on the fabric of the building by improving its insulation and airtightness. A more fundamental approach is 'deep retrofit', involving technologies such as heat exchange systems, heat pumps and solar panels. This is more expensive, at least initially, but also more productive. If we succeeded in making the transition from a carbon-based to a renewables-based economy, then 'solar panels can come off the roof of Chester cathedral as we settle into a new world of squeaky-clean energy.' Read Hagan's talk [here](#).

Red Szell, an adviser to the Forum, spoke about the challenges of accessibility in Hampstead. He is the author of *The Blind Man of Hoy*, a book written after he became the first blind man to climb the Old Man of Hoy, a sea stack in Orkney. Szell said street clutter tended to spread 'like Japanese knotweed' on Hampstead's streets. Pavements were increasingly cluttered with retail accoutrements. Cafés should keep tables and chairs inside the marked areas that were allowed. A-boards outside shops and cafés were a particular hazard. They were banned in the City of London, and some boroughs were also introducing restrictions. Research showed that A-boards they did not expand the business of the outlets that used them. Following discussions with Camden, there had recently been enforcement efforts in Hampstead, but Camden still needed to do better. Overall, this was about enlightening people so that they understood the hazards to blind and disabled people. Tracey Hogan, a Camden official with whom Szell had been working, attended the meeting and spoke about the borough's enforcement efforts.

Marc Hutchinson, chair of the Heath & Hampstead Society, bemoaned the lack of real sanction, such as fines imposed by magistrates, on establishments that did not adhere to the regulations. Forum members spoke about further obstacles, such as cyclists riding on pavements, children walking in line abreast, maintenance of paving stones, Lime bikes and scooters, and overgrown hedges.