

ROTARY CLUB OF CANTERBURY

Minutes of a meeting of the Vocational Service Committee held on 8th October 2013

1. **Present:** Alan Mepstead, Leslie Stephenson, Mike Talbot, Brian Dobinson
2. **Apologies:** Tim Brett, Nan Miller, Roddy Tyndale-Biscoe, John Beckett, Ian Wright
3. **Matters arising:** None save Agenda items
4. **Young Photographer competition:** A meeting had taken place on 18th September with the other 2 clubs promoting the competition. Emails had been sent to the heads of 19 schools, and the Forest of Blean Club had actually received some entries. Kings School had applied to enter. Vic Banks and Diane Forrest and an independent from the Forest of Blean had agreed to act as judges. RTB had been the driving force in getting the competition going.
5. **Innovation competition:** A meeting had taken place on 1st October between AM, BD, SE and ME to consider the form of the competition and its publicity. BD had circulated a form of poster for a similar competition that had been supplied by Laurence Kemball-Cook, who was interested in the project, together with a rough draft showing what the poster/ entry form might cover for the present competition. SE produced some eye-catching graphics which might be used.

It was agreed that the innovation must be aimed at improving life, local or global, in some aspect; that it might relate to any area of the human or natural world, technical, organisational ,artistic or otherwise; and that it must have a degree of practicality but need not be completely novel (so long as it contained a novel aspect). Entries were to be lodged by 31st March 2014, the idea being that the competition would run for the first 3 months of 2014.

The competition would be given a page on the Club's website together with a QR Code, to which entries would be addressed. Initial entries would be submitted using no more than a page of A4 plus any sketch. There would be an initial judging, the best 4 entries being invited to submit further detail, if the judges thought that necessary. The winner would be the idea considered innovative and capable of giving the greatest improvement to life in the sphere on which it impacted. Entries could be made by individuals or teams of not more than 4. The winner would receive a prize of £300, provided by the Club, and after the judging, all entrants would be given the opportunity of discussing their ideas, and methods of developing and exploiting them, with judges or other experienced business people.

We would not seek any financial assistance from any other body, but would look for backing from suitably prestigious organisations , such as the Innovation Centre at the University, Christchurch University, the City Council and UCA, who would be approached once we had a draft poster to show them, the idea being that their names would be shown on the poster. The competition would be open to all secondary school pupils in the district, the schools for a special approach mentioned being Canterbury High, St Anselm's, the Simon Langton schools, the King's School, Kent College, Barton Court, St Edmunds, Spires and Chaucer.

ACTIONS: SE was to use the information to produce a draft poster: ME would approach the Innovation Centre and BD, Peter Hermitage for Christ church University (with the draft posters). BD would canvass with other members the best way of approaching the City Council and Kent Messenger. ME was prepared to act as judge and BD felt LKC would be willing to do so. MT welcomed the competition and produced a very helpful press article on Innovation

6. **Visit to the former colliery railway at Shepherdswell:** Over 30 members and partners attended this visit on 12th September. A good buffet lunch was provided by members of the Association, and this was followed by a video of the mining, which was accompanied by an excellent talk by a former miner, who had spent 30 years in the pits. The Kent coal is of high calorific value, but in very narrow seams, making extraction very arduous.

There are thought to be 10bn tons of coal remaining in the coalfield, but the only likely method of its exploitation is gasification. We were then shown the Association's apprenticeship scheme for young people in the district (currently 12 apprentices) and the woodland scheme for schoolchildren. The miniature and model railways were in operation, and we admired the exhibits in the "museum" - an old signal box taken from the Elham Valley line - which included a map of the system, which once covered some 30 miles.

The highlight was a ride on the train, when one member tried driving and certain ladies sounded the horn! MT had sent a letter of thanks to Jill Norris, secretary of the Association, and steps were being taken to arrange for a talk to the Club about Col Stephens, instigator of this and many other light railways.

7. **Children's creative writing competition:** Daren Kearn had produced a list of the schools and a start made in contacting them. It was narrowly decided to continue with the competition, but the prospects were bleak. AM was to scan an amended poster and send it to BD, so that it could be recirculated to the schools. Prizes £50, £25 and from Waterstones - all in vouchers, if we get that far.
8. **Visit to Whitechapel Bellfoundry:** The Bellfoundry had reneged on an arrangement made with NM to keep visiting slots open for the Club until mid-October. The foundry had offered further slots of up to 25 places each on 9/8.14 at 10.0am, 11/10/14 at 4.0pm and 8/11/14 at 10.0am. As there appeared to be interest in taking some of these up, it was agreed to proceed, the committee arranging the tickets only.
9. **Visit to Elham Valley Vineyard on 2/10/13:** 21 members and partners attended this visit. The vineyard is run by a charity for mentally disabled people of whom some 50 are resident, each having bought their accommodation for a capital sum (currently some £44,000) with up to 100 others attending some days. The beneficiaries work in the café, vineyard, garden centre, pottery and woodworking shop.

We had a light lunch, beautifully prepared and served and were shown round by Peter Buscall, the "outside" manager and his internal counterpart. We were touched by the enjoyment in their work, and attention to it, which the beneficiaries showed and the patience and care of the staff, which included volunteers, and we felt the organisation must offer a huge relief to many parents, uncertain of their children's future. A letter of thanks had been sent to Peter Buscall.
10. **Possible bird watching walk:** BD had spoken to AF about this and March/April was proposed.
11. **Children's Public Speaking competition:** The date of the final had been fixed for 5th February 2014, at the Guild house. Noel Ensoll of ESU had had interest from the Langton Schools, Barton Court, Folkestone School for Girls, Ashford, Dover Christ Church, Dover Girls' Grammar and Duke of York's. He would like others to take part, and Spires, St Edmunds, Chaucer and King's were mentioned. RTB to be asked to contact Inner Wheel for refreshments.
12. **ECO concert, Cadogan Hall 6th November:** NM had managed to assemble a party of 20+ to secure the discount and this trip was proceeding.
13. **Possible visit to Morgan Cars:** BD had spoken to VP and told him that the Committee would arrange the visit itself, but not the accommodation and walking etc if it were to be combined with that. VP was looking to Autumn 2014.
14. **AoB :** It was agreed no further trips were to be attempted for 2013 and the 2014 position considered at the November meeting, bearing in mind the ESU commitment for February, and Innovation competition.
15. **DONM:** Tuesday 12th November @ 6.00pm at the cricket ground.