

Policy and Resources Committee

13/02/19

External Board/Outside Body

External Board/Outside Body	Rochester Bridge Trust
Councillor(s) represented on the Outside Body/External Board	Derek Butler (Ex Councillor)
Report Author	Derek Butler
Date of External Board/Outside Body Meeting Attended	Various meetings

Purpose of the External Board/Outside Body:

In summary, the Trust's charitable purposes are as follows, in order of priority:

- (i) to provide and maintain the two road bridges and their approaches and the Service Bridge at Rochester which are owned by the Trust;
- (ii) to promote other crossings over, under or across the River Medway;
- (iii) to promote other charitable purposes in the UK, primarily in the County of Kent.

The Trust's activities under the third object are determined by its Grants and Charitable Expenditure Policy. This gives priority to the following types of project:

- promotion of study of civil engineering and related disciplines;
- education, research and conservation in the fields of construction (particularly related to bridges), Kent history and agriculture;
- projects to preserve, to improve, to develop further understanding of the history of the River Medway and its crossings; and
- conservation of the historically important fabric of heritage buildings.

The Trust's income is derived from its property estate and financial investments. The Trust has significant investment land and property holdings in Kent, Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire and West Sussex.

Update:

During the last six months, July to December 2018, I attended all of the scheduled meetings that I was expected to attend to in relation to my role as the Maidstone Borough Council nomination on the Rochester Bridge Trust.

These meetings included the Audit Report meeting and proposed new and revised investment initiatives because of the Rochester Bridge Trust's over exposure to property based investments.

There is a major exercise to be undertaken on the Rochester Bridges over the next two years and there have been meetings held to assess contractors for the extensive work to be undertaken. I have attended these meetings and the contract for this work has now been granted and work should commence in a few months time. This work will obviously have an impact on traffic flows across the bridges but much work has been undertaken in order for these works to have as little impact to the traffic flows as possible.

Apart from the Trust giving grants for education etc. The Trust sponsors students in Engineering through a scheme called Arkwright Scholars. This has been an impressive initiative and the fruits of this sponsorship are now becoming apparent with some of the scholars taking responsible and rewarding professional posts in the Engineering Sector. I was fortunate to meet a number of these scholars at a function just before Christmas at the Institution of Civil Engineers and I was mightily impressed by them on a personal basis and in what they are planning to do with their careers.

During this last year there has been a new initiative, based to some extent on the number of farms in the Trusts portfolio, of sponsoring students in agriculture. There have been three scholars who have been accepted as Spence Scholars this year (named after John Spence who had been a long serving member of the Trust and a previous Warden of the Trust and incidentally, some time ago, the Head Boy of Maidstone Grammar School, who informed me that he had given a speech at Maidstone Town Hall to welcome the New Mayor of Maidstone back in his day when he was the Head Boy). There will be opportunities for scholars to be sponsored in subsequent years, probably one scholar each year.

There has been a "Bridge Works Exhibition" detailing the story of Rochester Bridges. This had been displayed at Rochester Cathedral for over a year and was very well attended. It has now been moved to the Medway Archives Centre in Strood for just over a couple of months with a view to the exhibition moving to Tonbridge Castle after March 2019 and subsequently into Maidstone. This has been a relatively new initiative in informing the public the history and significance of this river crossing and how important the Trust, to some extent, has been for the local economy. This educational initiative has been particularly well received by pupils from local primary schools, when they have visited the exhibition; they have been entertained by local theatrical actors who give an interpretation of the people throughout history who may have used the bridges. I believe one of the characters to be "The Spirit of The Bridge".

The Rochester Bridge Trust has increased in many different ways over the last few

years. One way is that the number of employees has grown and subsequently there has been a need to have larger office space. During most of last year the staff used the facilities of Kent Space Business Facilities in Lordswood, but later in October 2018 the majority of staff were able to move back into Rochester in The St Andrews Centre in the grounds of Rochester Castle. The Trust has arranged a five year lease and provided extensive repairs and refurbishment of the St Andrews Centre and made it a most attractive place to work in. The Rochester Bridge Trust Chapel requires a complete overhaul in order to bring the facilities up to date and compliant with current standards. This project is on-going and it will be some time before this work is completed.
