National Centre for Computing History

Minutes of Meeting Held on 30th April 2007
at Pure Energy Multimedia, Rookwood Way, Haverhill

Present:
Jason Fitzpatrick (Pure Energy), Elaine Collins (Gold PR), Lisa McGerty (Printwise/Town Centre Management Group), Tom Harrison (Adams Harrison Solicitors), Howard Lay (Samuel Ward Arts & Technology College)

Apologies:
None.

Minutes recorded by:
Lisa McGerty

This is an interim meeting convened in addition to the meeting on 26th March which Tom Harrison and Howard Lay could not attend.

Summary of Discussion

- As per the meeting on 26th March a presentation was shown about a computing history museum that exists in California, USA. Nothing of this sort currently exists in the UK or in Europe. The most similar entity is at Bletchley Park but the focus there is on the second world war. Since the meeting on 26th March, Bletchley have made moves to establish a national centre themselves, with a small amount of funding from the Institute of Electrical Engineers. However, this has not yet gained momentum and it was felt that we should continue with our plans irrespective of this.

- Again, as per the previous meeting, discussions took place about establishing a Centre here in Haverhill, based (initially) on Jason's private collection of computing history artefacts.

- The two most pressing issues are funding and premises. A well thought out business plan is also a must.

- Regarding funding, Howard suggested asking lots of local companies for a small amount of money in sponsorship of the project which would be affordable for each yet would add up. Alternatively, a few larger benefactors might be preferable? Tom suggested giving more thought to issues of visitor numbers (how many, who are they, where are they coming from) and to identifying other sources of revenue (Lottery funding, charging visitors, offering research facilities, a café

etc). Thought also needs to be given to how to staff the Centre now and in the future. Jason suggested that the conservation side of the project could be covered with volunteer enthusiasts but other staff would ultimately be needed.

- Regarding premises, we discussed issuing a press release announcing that the National Centre for Computing History is looking for a home and seeing if that generates any interest/offers.

- Tom advised that the project should set up a non-profit-making company limited by guarantee, with probably at least 4 directors. This is relatively easy to do and serves to 'grab' the name, giving the project a corporate ID. A bank account will also be needed.

- Howard pledged full support from Samuel Ward and agreed to be on the committee (in his absence one of his deputies may attend meetings instead).

- Howard declined to be on the committee but offered support and legal advice when needed.

Actions

- Firm up membership of the committee and hold another meeting to take things forward, particularly in starting to put together the business plan.
- Register a limited company.
- Open a bank account.
- Further develop the project's website and start promoting it.
- Source suitable premises, even if this means starting small.

Date of next meeting: TBC