

BEXHILL HERITAGE COMMITTEE MEETING On-line meeting Monday 15 June 2020

Committee:

Raymond Konyon	(RK)	Chair
Steve Johnson	(SJ)	Vice Chair/Treasurer
Alexis Markwick	(AM)	iT Support Officer/Historian
Simon Allen	(SA)	Projects Coordinator
John Swap	(JS)	Membership Officer
David Beales	(DB)	Planning Officer
Anthony Lightly	(AL)	Chartered Building Surveyor
Jeanette Eason	(JE)	Committee Clerk

1. APOLOGIES None

2. DECLARATION OF ANY EXISTING OR POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None, except noted that RK is a Trustee of Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society (BOTPS).

3. APPROVAL of MINUTES for the May meeting and MATTERS ARISING - Agreed

- Bexhill Town Flag : SJ to confirm online meeting before end of July, with KR to ask his views.
Action : SJ to contact KR
- Keeping in Touch with Members : Suggestion of an online Members Meeting/Q&A session, to remind members that BH is still active despite the lockdown. AM and SJ to check available dates and logistics of only those with internet access, how to let people in to the meeting, mute/unmute for questions to be put, or how others could join in by phone. Request questions be submitted in advance where possible.
Action : AM & SJ to notify members, possibly Tuesday 7th July, start time 7 p.m. Committee to meet in advance from 6.30 p.m. to discuss any issues.
- Members Quiz : A 'just for fun' quiz, no entry fee, email communication with an answer sheet. To be returned by a specific date. JE has some quiz questions already prepared and to send through to AL and AM. **Action** : AM, AL & JE.
- Committee Roles : SJ stated that the review of roles is not urgent at present and therefore this item can be postponed until things are back to normal. Previous potential volunteer will not now take up a role with BH. Two other potential volunteers not renewing, and therefore need to be removed from the website.
- JS Training : JS and AM confirmed they had a 'distanced' meeting to provide training for JS to use the Membership/Renewal Database. JS indicated there seems to be a problem with people renewing via PayPal. A substantial number did not renew online, and therefore he suggested BH needs to review the payment process. Suggest that BH offer other ways to pay e.g. provide bank details, direct debit, standing order forms, by cheque to official address. Some people have indicated that they do not like using PayPal and they do take a % for their fee. JS suggested this should be part of the sign-up process and that Direct debit is preferable, it can be varied if our membership fees change. RK stated that most of the information is already on the membership page of the website, but BH needs to ensure additional info is added to the website. RK thanked JS for his work so far and improvement suggestions.
Action : SJ and AM to implement and ensure additional info is added to the website.

4. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT (DB by phone)

- i) Cemetery Lodge – no further information
- ii) Spindlewood – nothing further showing on RDC website. No other news received separately.
- iii) Sackville Road flats – Currently undetermined.
- iv) 3-5 Eversley Road – Currently undetermined.
- v) Others – Molynes Mead : It is planned to retain the current house, and keep within the Local Plan Boundary. but place extra houses within the boundary. DB did not feel it appropriate for BH comment, but open to any other thoughts. SJ felt that as an historic house it should retain some grounds/setting rather than be blocked in by too many additional houses. It was mentioned that the land available does allow for house setting to be retained. RK asked if the fencing will be in the same position, or is it encroaching on the buffer zone? DB confirmed it is difficult to work out, without physically visiting the site. However, the new owners do appear to have enough space/curtilage to 'set the building off'.
- vi) Revamped RDC website – still very clunky to use. There are no anticipatory actions, and poor Search facility. Delayed applications and contents are still closed to public viewing e.g. Spindlewood – it is known that things are happening, but there is no update shown on the website. RK asked if BH needs to write to RDC? DB suggested perhaps useful when things are beginning to get back more to 'normal'. SA mentioned RDC are short on Planning Officers, and that RDC has stopped advertising their vacancies at present.
- vii) Building Controls – DB mentioned the information he circulated, involving the current plans by the Secretary of State (R Jenrick) to make major changes to the Planning System and what that could mean for the town and local environments. Discussion re current issues changes to planning guidelines aimed at stimulating house building.
- viii) 28 Collington Avenue – Project undecided at the moment.

5. PROJECTS AND PRIORITIES (SJ)

- i) Number 1 Shelter / Bandstand – this project is now 'on ice' due to the virus. No further action at present. **Action:** SJ to canvass views and ideas from a range of interested parties.
- ii) Number 3 Shelter – SJ confirmed there was a meeting and RDC is happy for a formal handover due on 31 July 2020. It was disappointing that the new acrylic windows have been scratched by the chap taking off the protective coating and removing excess putty. They have all been washed and cleaned and it was suggested that Caravan Window Restorer might be suitable to remove/hide the scratches. AM already working on an Interpretation Board. It was noted that the Conservation Officer needs to approve any BH design for the Interpretation Board, brass plaque, plus the seating, disabled access and lighting. This has been sent off today.
- iii) Civic Pride Award – SJ has passed this item over to RK to progress. It has been difficult due to lockdown to find suitable sponsors. One is currently in the 'wings' and as little as £100 per sponsor would be acceptable. It was agreed that the address for nominations would be St Barnabas Church as it is the official HQ. RK suggested that due to current lockdown and virus emergency, that perhaps the award could be held once every 2 or 3 years, rather than annually. The proposal to postpone the Civic Pride Award to 2021 was put to the meeting and agreed unanimously.
- iv) Information Point Reopening – it is anticipated that St Barnabas Church will reopen at the end of July. They are currently looking at how best to clean, reopen and maintain recommended social distancing etc.

The situation with the Methodist Church and Heritage Hub is currently unknown and BH awaits their decision. It has been reported that the current plans are to deconsecrate the building in August 2020 and extending ownership for one more year to 2021. Luke Sanderson (LS) from Rother Voluntary Action (RVA) previously confirmed their organisation is interested in opening it up as a Community Centre, retaining use of the building for a Community Café, theatre space, cinema, meeting rooms and housing the Heritage Hub. LS queried whether the window in the church was sufficiently unique to attract ESCC or National Lottery funding. It was noted that Luke will be arranging to discuss the matter with the church. BH to await the decision of Methodist Church management.

- v) K6 Telephone Box – RK apologised that he did not have the time to wait for a cheque to be obtained from the Treasurer. Given previous timeline and involvement of RDC etc., it was urgent that the paperwork was signed and the purchase completed asap. It is recognised that it will need some work to bring it back to a usable state. AM has taken several photos. The Neighbourhood Committee at the site have been contacted and BH is awaiting their response and ideas as to how it could be used for the local community.

6. Finance and Governance

- i) Members response to revised constitution – It is due to be sent out to members via the internet with letters being sent to members without email. **Action** : SJ will be framing the questions required and AM to organise via Google Documents.
- ii) Membership report – JS stated that many of the members in Clavering Walk are unhappy with BH and even more unhappy with the developers. JS tried to explain the limitations as to what BH could do, but some remain very unhappy. Currently there are 384/385 members. During recent 'ring arounds' JS said he had had some good discussions with people. He also asked about their preferred renewal option, and most stated a preference for Direct Debit.
Actions: JS and AM confirmed they are working on removal of non-renewals from the database.
- iii) Finance Update – SJ confirmed that as of 1 June 2020 there is currently £6423.47 in the bank account. It is a very healthy balance and will help to keep the BH 'head above water' during the lockdown and emergency situation period. Renewals are coming in more easily now.
- iv) Fund Raising – SJ stated that there was no further action at present, but called for potential ideas. he would like to have a Quiz Night or Raffle perhaps in September. JE mentioned that she has found her printed sheets to enable BH to hold a Beetle Drive, which would be suitable to include children, when and if the emergency situation with the virus improves and allows larger gatherings. **Action:** JE will also send through her updated sets of quiz questions for committee consideration.

7. Any other business

(N.B this item was moved forward to be discussed prior to Projects & Priorities to accommodate DB accessing the meeting by phone.)

- i) Legal Graffiti Wall – RK stated that there had been an interesting online meeting with TL and AM also taking part. TL expressed concerns that H&S rules were not being adhered to, given that an artist was seen working alone, using a double extension ladder, at about 16ft off the ground. This is a much greater height than the 8ft max originally agreed. There was also concern that the area and size are not in keeping with a Conservation Area. At present BH will take a neutral view of developments, but will need to canvass the membership on their views on the project longer term. TL mentioned that the

meeting highlighted that a larger site might be better located along Beeching Road. Also, it was noted that the landlord is the council, not a private individual. It was suggested that it may be necessary to consider mapping areas/dates where tagging and graffiti has been reported and removed, to get a better view as to any changes or not. RK contacted Daryll Holt (Sussex Police Heritage Crime) who had not been notified of the recent taggers and new sites along the seafront being targeted. DH recognised most of the taggings as belonging to a Sidley group. The current project has the backing of Cllr Harmer and others under the banner of "Bexhill Gets Creative". Good work can be attractive but random tagging often less so. It was suggested that Daryll Holt should be asked for his experiences with tagging and graffiti in other towns in the county, to provide some feedback on both the positive and negative aspects, which may need to be discussed at some stage with councillors.

It was also noted that there has been a change of mayor, now Lynn Langlands, and AM suggested it would be useful to know her views on the matter as she was not at the meeting.

It was also noted that until recently Network Rail had been ensuring the underpass between Wickham Avenue and Collington Avenue had been regularly cleared of graffiti and tagging. Unfortunately, in the last month with the lockdown, it has been noticed that tagging has increased here significantly. TL said he will write to Network Rail to advise about the increase in tagging.

SJ commented that BH is in favour of improving the civic area and built environment, but needs to balance this with uncontrolled tagging to the detriment of the town and perception by residents and visitors. DB also added that the Conservation Area is not the boundary of BH interest.

It was suggested that BH ask the membership to be its 'eyes and ears' in identifying and logging any tagging/graffiti sites around the town, photos too if possible. TL suggested that a Q&A document be drawn up to help distinguish/identify tagging from graffiti, or Wild Style art work. For example, things such as the Wickham Avenue Butterfly, which have been professionally created, may not be seen as appropriate by some residents in the area.

DB also mentioned that council are planning to remove the notice board space from the Sackville Road foot bridge, as part of the London Road development.

Action: TL to write Network Rail re underpass tagging. / TL to draw up Q&A sheet to be sent to members. / RK to contact Daryll Holt. / RK to contact new mayor, Lynn Langlands for views.

- ii) Dealing with Illegal Graffiti – as discussed above.
- iii) 'Sanitisation' of Memorials (re BLM movement) – AM highlighted the fact that several history societies are concerned that some of the memorials in Bexhill could be at risk of damage, or removal as a consequence of the Black Lives Matter movement, without proper review and consideration. BH will need to be aware of any developments.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9.00 p.m.

7. Dates of next scheduled meetings:

- **(Members Meeting)** Tuesday 16th June (Sussex Day Event Evening) Postponed
- **(Committee Meeting)** Monday 20th July – online meeting at 7.00 p.m. (now Thurs 16th)