

Minutes BH Meeting 28 August 2019

Bexhill Heritage Members Meeting Friends Meeting House, Albert Road, Bexhill on Sea TH40 1DG

Chair: Raymond Konyn

Minutes of the meeting held at 7pm on Wednesday 26th June 2019 were made available to all those attending.

1. Welcome, Fire precautions and apologies (Raymond Konyn): Apologies were received from: Ian Hollidge, Joan Harding, Brian Comber, Peter Halligan, Raymond Dobson, Maureen & Leonard Stirling.

2. Matters Arising – June Meeting

No matters arising. RK signed off the minutes as a true record of proceedings.

3. Urgent Planning & Development

i) **Cemetery Lodge** – DB announced breaking news about these premises. BH has made its position known to RDC that it is unhappy at plans to demolish the building. BH has submitted a preference for the premises to be retained and converted into much needed social housing units, and/or possibly incorporated into another housing scheme on the site. DB stated that BH had not been kept aware of the plans by RDC. Concerns regarding the safety and security of the building have been flagged by BH to the council. There is now a new council and BH has been invited to a meeting with RDC/Community Housing soon. BH has made clear what it would wish to see on this site, which will be discussed with the new cabinet. There is concern that council officers are intent on progressing with demolition. One of the stated outcomes from the Community Housing Trust/RDC was for demolition.

It was announced that BH will be writing to all RDC councillors and members of Community Housing Trust, arguing the case why the building should be retained.

ii) **Knole Road** – It was confirmed that BH had submitted a strongly worded objection to the principal and size of buildings planned for this site. This was in support of other local objections from residents and others in the immediate vicinity. The BH objections included the belief that the plans were wrong for this particular site being too big/tall and too ordinary for such an historic area, so close to other buildings of interest opposite.

iii) **Drill Hall** – It was noted that there was a strong response to BH survey which felt it was important to retain at least the front section of the building, but that the rest of the site could be used for other activities. Apparently the MOD has no wish to relinquish their use of the building at present. The MOD decision is considered good news for now, it does however intrude into the planned development site. It is accepted that the remaining area will probably include more housing.

4. Talk : Combe Valley Country Park (Peter Hunnisett) - Peter gave a very interesting talk and presentation with photos of the flora, fauna and special habitat areas found in the country park. It has a very varied range of ecology and environments which includes flood meadows, reed beds and seashore. In addition the park has vestiges of the old water pumping station and system once in use there, plus the remnants and natural outlines from the former Bexhill West Branch Line that ran through the area. Peter also showed photos of some of the birds and other rarer wildlife found there. Leaflets, maps and invites to a Fun Day on 15th September were also made available.

RK thanked Peter for a very interesting talk and presentation.

5. Events - RK introduced Andrew Crotty who has agreed to take over Events Planning from RK. Andrew announced that the next event was The Festival of The Sea on Sat/Sun 7th & 8th September, and that more volunteers were needed to help run the BH stall at the event. Also that the weekend after more volunteers would be welcome to support the stall at the Anglo French Market.

6. Developing Brand Recognition – Keith Rhodes gave a brief presentation on the work undertaken to raise the profile locally of BH and developing brand recognition through the use of the BH logo on the web site, correspondence, pin badges, and iron on/sew on embroidered badges for use on members own T Shirts, Sweat Shirts, Aprons or even can be applied to fabric holdall bags or rucksacks etc. The preferred supplier for the sew on/iron on badges is Superstitch 86 in St Leonards. The cost per badge is £6. Interested members can either email BH (Keith) for further details, or can contact the supplier direct.

7. Any Other Business

- i) Request for earlier reminders of meeting dates and locations.
- ii) Query regarding an extension to the current Friends Meeting House Hall – anything known?

8. Local History Day 21 September – Steve (Johnson ?) explained that this event was being put on by BH, Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society (BOTLPS) and the Hanovarian Society. It will be a whole day of events, talks, exhibitions, with an option to chose 1 of 4 different morning and afternoon events.

BH Quiz Night & Supper – Monday 21 October at The Sackville Bistro. Members were asked to book tickets on line in advance.

9. Refreshment Break

10. Launch of Civic Pride Awards – SJ announced that this award is to recognise any work done to preserve, or enhance or save from demolition a number of buildings in the wider Bexhill area. Full details of the criteria for nominations and application form will be available on the BH web site.

11. Q and A Session

Bus Shelter, De La War Road - Update requested: BH have decided to progress with restoration but it is not known who owns the land or the shelter. Apparently it was owned by the Crown Estates, but a developer bought it as a "Ransom Strip". It is understood his business folded and therefore the land reverted to Crown Estates land. BH communications have now been approved to inform guardians: Bexhill College, RDC – to make them aware of BH planned actions, and the Commercial Director of Stagecoach – to request funding towards the project. BH is aiming to start before Christmas, because the roof is in need of urgent attention.

A member asked whether squatters rights/usage or adoption could be designated if the owner of the land cannot be determined? In reply it was stated that if the Town Council designated in the next few years, they may wish to pursue, but the legal costs would be substantial.

Sainsburys Mural – Andrew Crotty advised that BH had received a reply from Sainsburys Area Manager. They are aware of the importance of the mural, as the artist was based in Chichester, West Sussex and agreed it is looking a bit 'tired'. The manager is willing to forward proposals to Sainsburys HO. Also considering a small ceremony for a plaque to be erected post restoration, as some members of the Sainsburys family are still resident in the Bexhill area.

"Secrets of Bexhill on Sea" book – Dave Hatherell wished to bring members attention to a new book just released by Alan Starr price £14.99

Bexhill (Seafront) Shelters Restoration – update requested: RK noted that many people had made very positive comments on the quality of the restoration work by the workmen contracted by RDC. A letter has already been sent to the council expressing thanks for the standard of work completed. It was also noted that No.1 Shelter is supposed to be the Heritage Hub with £30k set aside in the budget for shelters.

It was suggested that Shelter No.2 be nominated for the Civic Pride Award.

A Crotty said that Bexhill 100 group had asked if special lead paint needed to be used. It is understood that as the project is designated as a 'repair' not a restoration, therefore specialist paint is not required to be used.

Wickham Avenue Butterfly – a member wished to bring the meeting's attention to the beautiful huge Butterfly mural currently being painted on the side of a house in Wickham Avenue, opposite St Andrews. It is part of a seaside art trail.

Next BH Members Meeting will be held on Wednesday 4th December 2019 at 7 p.m. Friends Meeting House.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 21.00