

Minutes Bexhill Heritage Meeting 28 October 2019

Bexhill Heritage Members Meeting Traffors, Egerton Road Bexhill on Sea

Committee :

Raymond Konyn (RK)	: Chair
Steve Johnson (SJ)	: Vice Chair /Treasurer
Alexis Markwick (AM)	: IT Support Officer
Simon Allen (SA)	: Projects Coordinator
David Beales (DB)	: Planning officer
Anthony Lightly (AL)	: Chartered Building Surveyor
David Hatherell (DH)	: Museum Liaison Coordinator
Jeanette Eason	: Committee Clerk

Minutes of the meeting held at 7pm on Wednesday 28th August 2019 were made available to all those attending.

1. Welcome, Fire precautions and apologies (Raymond Konyn): Members, guests and two new members were welcomed.

Apologies were made to the meeting for the unexpected change of venue. This was due to a double-booking error at the usual hall. Thanks were given to Traffors Bar for the last minute agreement for Bexhill Heritage to use their function room.

Apologies for absence were received from: Nick Hollington, Anthony Lowe, Colin & Barbara Taylor and Andrew Crotty.

2. Minutes from the August Meeting

RK explained that copies of the minutes are always posted to the web site for members to view.

3. Matters Arising

There being no matters arising, there were no amendments to be made. RK to sign copy.

4. Planning & Development Updates (DB)

Clavering Walk, Cooden – Appeal has been sent in by the developers, Bellway Homes. BH has submitted an objection based on the fact that it is a forgotten asset to the community. The site is known to date from c.1350 and has largely been overlooked, but is in danger of attention from diggers and metal detectorists who do not always follow current guidelines. Sadly, there is no way of protecting the site easily. RDC originally refused planning permission on the basis of the location of Cooden Moat and archeologically interest. Historic England appears to have had a change of mind, and RDC has followed suit in doing a U turn.

BH and Clavering Walk Action Group are the only groups now fighting against development. The meeting was asked if they wanted BH to continue to oppose separately or ally with CWAG, in modest way. CWAG are intending to employ a barrister. The meeting agreed that BH should ally with CWAG.

A member asked if there was any background information to the site from Sussex Archaeology Group? There is evidence of a manor house on the site c.1350 following the

Norman Conquest when parcels of land were given as reward for loyalty. Families then built and established modest country houses/manors, to administer their estates.

Cemetery Lodge – Progress on this issue has been very slow. The Community Land Trust have appointed an architect. They are due to produce a sketch of the scheme, to be shared with BH and taken to the council to gain agreement. CLT and BH have received informal advice from RDC. It is hoped the plan is to extend the property and not to demolish. Council are putting in new access for Cemetery Lodge & development of the land. However, there is a query/concern that the road is not wide enough. The county planners say it is.

5. Project Updates (SA)

- i) No.3 Shelter, Bexhill Seafront - Biggest Current Project. Ongoing work being carried out by BH volunteers, hopefully will beat the winter weather.
- ii) Sainsburys Mural, Town Hall Square – still awaiting response from Sainsburys before next steps can be planned.
- iii) Brick Bus Shelter, De La Warr Road – This has been earmarked for work commencing 2020. There have been some discussions with Bexhill College with a view to including some of the students in the remedial/restoration work. There is also discussion around a commemorative plaque/ student film to identify why it was built, location and future.
- iv) Clock Tower – there was concern earlier in the year about the humidity within the tower. This issue has been fixed and the building has been drying out gradually. BH aim to monitor and check the state of the tower in spring and assess if any further work or repairs will be required.
- v) Clock at Bexhill Hospital – This is another project that will now have to wait until spring time. An initial survey has shown that the clock has been separated at some point in the past, from the original mechanism. However, a new clock has been given by the co-workers of Apple Anson and can now be seen working.
- vi) West Station Clock – Continues to work very happily. It gets wound up once a week and all is ok, so far.

6. Treasurers Report (SJ)

Currently finances are very healthy. BH has more than 300 members. There is £2.5k planned expenditure for restoration projects possibly starting spring 2020, including the De La Warr Road Shelter. If BH can obtain matching grants these can be for up to 50% of costs. Whilst it is important for the charity to keep a reserve, it is also important to use funds towards projects members support.

Members were asked to consider bidding for a grant to be given to BH from the Co-oP special fund. Members of the Co-oP can make submissions online for consideration. All that members will need to do is say why BH deserves to be given funding.

7. Review of Events, Quiz, Unveilings, Talks (SJ)

70 people attended the Quiz Night. As it was a largely successful evening, BH are hosting another festive Quiz Night on 9th December. Tickets should be obtained in advance at £10 each, and includes a festive buffet.

The Local History Day went very well. There is another planned for the Sussex Day Weekend (June) 2020. There was good feedback from those who attended, with excellent speakers, interesting talks and enjoyable walks/outings. Steve asked members to let him know if there are any other events they would like to see offered.

At the meeting on 4th December members will be asked to judge the first Bexhill Civic Pride Award. There will be a short list of properties and areas nominated by members, who will be judged according to the various criteria. All members were invited to nominate any old/new project they feel suitable. Full details are available from the BH web site.

8. IT, Promotions and PR Report (AM)

Information and photos of the work being done by volunteers on the seafront shelter is being added to the web site. It has been quite interesting to see what has been uncovered by doing the restoration work and removal of decades of layers of paint. Some old photos and film from 1920s has also been posted on the web site.

Shelters 3 & 4 are c.1921 and linked to Frederick William Parker, along with Cemetery Lodge, the Waterfront and other sites around the town. There was a query as to whether the residents/ business owners within the waterfront have been approached for contributions to BH and the restoration. BH committee agreed to follow up on this.(Action)

Alex explained that members and new members will receive an additional email asking if they would like to be more involved with the organisation and in what type of capacity.

Members requested a different version of the BH pin badge, with a safety pin clasp. They are now available.

Active member-volunteers have been invited to a Christmas Lunch at Wetherspoons, on Fri 13th December. It is to be held on the top floor restaurant area and there is a £3.00 deposit required.

9. Refreshment Break

10. Talk: East Parade Shelter No.3 Project

All shelters on seafront are Grade II Listed. In 2017, prior to BH being established, it was noted that RDC had missed a Heritage Action Zone funding application. At the time BH was not in a position to apply for funding. The shelters became one of the catalysts for establishing BH in the first place. RK organised a general report on the state of all 4 shelters in December 2017, which was passed to then councillor for Sackville Ward Ian Hollidge, IH was very proactive in getting the attention of the council and raising the concerns of lack of a maintenance plan within RDC. RDC submitted a Heritage Lottery Fund application to turn No. 1 Bandstand shelter into a Heritage Hub which was unsuccessful. BH asked if it could be included in the drafting of any future funding requests. Tony Lightly then provided a professional report in 2018 and highlighted the sad demise of No.3 shelter and the vandalism that it had been subject to. RK was then allowed to speak at a Town Forum and raised the issue of the state of all the shelters and other heritage structures. By spring 2019 RDC had set £30k in their budget specifically for the refurbishment of the shelters. It is not known if that money is still there or otherwise still available.

A local firm recently refurbished No.2 shelter to a very reasonable level, but sadly much of the clogged detail in the cast iron columns has been covered by yet another layer of paint. However, the overall result is stunning. RDC also implemented repairs to No. 3 shelter and engaged one man working alone over the summer. BH was then asked to get involved at the end of September in order to finish No.3 before winter and the challenge was accepted. Unfortunately, the weather changed on the same day.

To date the project has been supported by a number of BH volunteers and a total 613 volunteer hours committed to the restoration. SA then showed a film clip from c.1950s of Nos 3 & 4 shelters that F W Parker built. Various photos were also shared of the work being done, the state of the original building and roof space. Generally, the wood in the roof is in good condition but it does need retiling urgently. The glazing panels have been removed and are currently a mix of glass and perspex. RDC is planning to replace with acrylic panels.

11. AOB, Open Forum, Q & A s, members Suggestions & Ideas

1) One member, a railway historian asked if there were any decent photos of Bexhill Central station and the tunnel between Station Road and Devonshire Square? Not known at present.

2) Will there be any plaques to indicate where BH has been involved or has worked on various projects, and who volunteered, contributed etc. e.g West Station Clock, Shelters? There was discussion as to whether this was always a positive move, given that the Youth Centre Plaque is not always maintained. RDC have consented to plaques for the shelters, and Pages Gap already has one.

3. Sackville Road Methodist Church. It was noted that the BH shop in Devonshire Road was very successful, but residence was only on a grace and favour basis. The Methodist Church has been persuaded to allow the use of some of their spare space to store BH banners and to use the foyer for an Information Point. Initially BH is considering opening on Saturdays for a set number of hours, due to limitations around staffing. BH is looking at another potential shop in Devonshire Road, but the agents are based in Bristol and will probably want legal agreements/costs paid. Also, it would be on a two week notice basis, which could see BH spend a lot of money on legal fees but find themselves out of the shop in one month. It is recognised that the Methodist Church provides a base, its location is fairly good with numerous shops, the bus stop immediately outside, the library nearby. It is hoped that the BH info point could be set up before Christmas on Saturdays and maybe one other day depending on volunteers willing to cover.

4. Is there an update on the Pigeon Project? The meeting was reminded that the Pigeon Project was a result of BH offering to help restore lights in the tower of the Methodist Church. What was initially thought to be a fairly quick job, soon took on other proportions. It was explained that trying to get into the tower proved more difficult than expected, because of the build up over many years of pigeon poo! The birds needed to be removed, their return access blocked, and the poo needed to be cleared out and cleaned before the lights could be installed. Subsequently there was an official switch on event.. There is talk of the church closing, which is why BH can move in temporarily asap. It is hoped that the arrangement there can be maintained until at least Aug 2020.

Members were reminded that "Light Up Bexhill" for Christmas has it's switch on event on 29/11/19

Next BH Members Meeting will be held on Wednesday 4th December 2019 at 7 p.m. at Friends Meeting House, 15 Albert Road, Bexhill on Sea TN40 1DG.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 21.00