

Bexhill Heritage Online Members Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 9th December 2020 at 19:00

Committee members attending:

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 (By phone)
Jeanette Eason	(JE)	Committee Clerk

Apologies received: Rebecca Cosier; Nick Hollington; Maureen Newport; Sandy Melvin; Brian Comber; Jill Harrington; Cllr. Polly Gray; Cllr. Deirdre Williams; Val Hunnisset

1. Welcome and short seasonal prize ice-breaker

SJ – opened meeting with a fun quiz. Winner was Dave Hattherell (bottle of wine). The quiz included links to the 1920s and when Shelter no. 3 was built, plus the meanings or origins of the bingo callers ‘tag names’ for several numbers e.g Kelly’s Eye No. 1 and No. 9 Doctors Orders.

RK formally welcomed all those attending our second online Members Meeting.

RK introduced himself and explained roles and titles and remaining members of the Committee and Trustees attending that evening. Together with our speaker for the evening Daryl Holt from Sussex Heritage Community.

2. Approval of minutes for the September meeting and matters arising

It was not possible to circulate and approve in time for the meeting – so will be held over to next members meeting (two sets will be available for approval).

3. Urgent planning and development updates (David Beales via phone)

DB reported on three upheavals in Planning nationally which will affect us locally. They are all intended to speed up Planning and reduce delays due to augmentation.

The first is potentially very damaging where the government has greatly extended the scope of “permitted development” of dwelling houses, continuing a trend which has been going on for more than five years.

For example if you own a detached house you can now extend upwards by two storeys without planning permission, only notification to the Council with limited opportunity for the Council to react.

A bungalow can be extended upwards by 1 storey and a block of flats by 2 storeys, subject to a height limitation.

Secondly, a recent White paper consultation on the Planning System and in particular local plans. The government wants to encourage house building. They propose that local plans should be produced far more quickly, where the current average is 7 years. They could be shorter, less complicated and more able to react to changes in the social and economic conditions. We agreed with this in our response which is one in thousands, and they want to see greater beauty in development and suggested ways of achieving this. We broadly agreed with these aims.

We disagreed with their idea that all land should be characterised as either “growth areas” where planning permission should be automatic; areas of renewal where applications for planning permission would be smiled upon; and areas for protection such as conservation areas and areas of outstanding natural beauty. We objected to all this as we thought the renewal label would cover, in Bexhill, large areas of the town and be too inviting of redevelopments and thus be too unsettling and disrupting to the existing population. We think the local plan will deal with this whole business.

Finally, the topic of greatest concern to Council's, including Rother, is the figure for the number of houses they have to make provision for in their area. This government laid down in total has been objected to by the leaders of several Councils locally and many nationally, and by local politicians including our own who has had a meeting with the minister to explain the constraints we face in Rother, particularly the High Weald AONB, and now intends to examine the assumptions the government has made and wishes to examine the algorithm which underpins the government's conclusions.

4. Talk: Daryl Holter of Sussex Heritage Community

'Threats to our shared heritage'

Presentation – SHC is an independent community (and Facebook group) to inspire and defend our heritage past, present and future. Looking at threats, exploitation of sites for monetary gain. Churches are often victims both inside or out. Removal of items frequently cause damage to the surrounding buildings of fittings. Designation such as Listing or Scheduling provides some legal protection. More than 90% of heritage in the county is unrecorded. DH showed of photographic examples of damage and theft to churches. Thieves target lead, brass, copper roofing and statues plus various forms of vandalism smashing stained glass windows, stealing original steps from Shoreham Fort. Often sites are the target of tagging and graffiti and not all done by young people. DH mentioned one graffiti vandal recently arrested was in his 40s.

DH went on to cover Scheduled Monuments (SM) and an example of ignorance through 4x4 owners driving over a scheduled monument. Damage to a Long Barrow. Wild camping during Covid especially, on SM and National Parks. Fly tipping – which is a criminal offence. Theft of heritage assets – organised Crime. Theft of Victorian and Edwardian post boxes, and Mile Posts. Also covered under SM rules are military artefacts, guns, grenades, bombs. It includes rare motoring heritage and illicit metal detecting. There is online information

about the Portable antiquities scheme. Also, the Burial act of 1857 made it an offence to disturb or remove bones or artefacts from grave sites.

Daryl showed all the different legal Acts of Parliament covering heritage, protection, looking after sites. Presentation to be posted on to BH website. For information and future reference Daryl can be contacted via : sussexheritagecommunity@gmail.com

Questions: Topic & response:

1. Restoration work on shelters – SJ reported that the work has largely been respected so far. Daryl Holter was asked if he had any advice for making sure remains that way? He indicated that usually it was good to get the cooperation of nearby local residents to keep an eye of places. Asking near neighbours and organisations to look out for misuse and abuses and report any misbehaviour, knowing who to call and when. Keep places clean, tidy and putting up signage to say who has done the work (e.g., restoration) and why. If aware teenagers are causing problems, arrange small group to go to schools, do presentations and make aware of a community asset and why important for now and the future.

RK explained we have a monitoring group of volunteers (approx. 5 members) who walk past the shelters most days. They can report damage, graffiti, litter and if necessary, the Police.

DH – advised members not to approach anyone doing damage, but to call the police if urgent, or report to council or 101 (slow time reporting). Make someone aware.

RK thanked Daryl for his input and his very interesting and informative presentation.

5. Projects update (Simon Allen)

Completed Shelter 3. The music system installed has been very positively received. Will have some Christmas tracks in due course. The next project will be Bandstand. BH focus is desire to change back to its original use as music venue. There are some lovely photos available from late 1890s showing a piano and bands with people seated listening. It was felt that the shelters were sterile areas and performed a function, but nothing else, hence the installation of music in one cubicle.

Bandstand – wish to promote use to performers. Want to get fully restored. Some of structural timbers are ok, but most of the panels are poor. When reroofed last time it was done with concrete tiles, not in keeping with the original design and style. Hope that a proficient local company in Battle will be able to supply again. RDC is arranging for quotes. Some 'ventilator panels' in the base may have in fact been to open it up to make it better to hear/amplify the music. Some panels will need to be remade or fixed.

Doors will be fitted eventually so that it is no longer available unless in booked for formal use. There will be more controlled access, and when there are no performances, it can be used as an overflow for the nearby café. BH has done a paint analysis and there are approx. 13/14 layers, showing that this shelter has never had its paint removed. Previously just rubbed down and repainted. BH will be going to go back to reveal original features – some have been so over painted they cannot be seen. Recent investigations has identified

little clover leaves details. It is hoped these will be more visible in future. Due to Covid and expenses, not sure if RDC will be able to fund, despite free labour provided by BH volunteers.

Steve Johnson explained that BH had consulted key stakeholders for the bandstand e.g. DLWP, Tea Bar, Bexhill Museum, Bexhill Writer, Bexhill Harmony, Bexhill Wave Arts. All are very much in favour but don't use the venue at the moment due to state and smell. At present it is Public Open Space, but RDC plan to remove designation and for it to be leased to BH at peppercorn rent to look after it. That is why it will only be closed if no other events booked. Members were thanked for the many volunteer offers received so far. At present BH is waiting on RDC and producing a method document and health and safety considerations – training will be given and all will wear PPE and need to be agreeable to being monitored. Working safely and professionally. Realistically being contacted in the new year.

Project in Waiting – Telephone Kiosk (last of the old type) at Normans Bay. It has been adopted by local community as it was due to be removed and disposed of. BH purchased and when renovated will find use as miniature library/book exchange. Consultation with locals in Normans Bay and wish to restore to previous 'glory' and use generally.

West Station Clock – Recently reported it had stopped. SA not going into clock as often, but there is new member who has been trained how to wind and overlook the maintenance of the clock.

6. Financial report and auditor's report (Steve Johnson)

Audited accounts have now been received and due to be signed off. Covid has been kind, and resulted in not much expenditure. Co-op and Hastings Direct have provided generous grants to local charities. Thankful of members paying their memberships, and ticking the Gift Aid box, enabling almost £1700 to be claimed. Although we have expenditure commitments on rents (for the new workshop space to assist refurbishment working), rates on rented space), fees (web site). BH is now finalising the application to be fully registered as a charity and to benefit from that change of situation.

7. Q & A session

1. Where is BH workshop? BH now has a shared mews garage and workshop space with Bexhill 100. SJ also mentioned BH had received a generous donation of tools to help with work on shelters restoration.

2. Sovereign Lighthouse Tower? This is a project in waiting and very tentative at present. It is an attempt to rescue the tower on top of cabin, which it all metal. The base of the tower appears to have housed a control room, with two further floors housing the foghorn and topped with the light. RK has been liaising with Trinity House, and been notified re demolition which has now been postponed to 2022. Various end uses – mainly green re heritage, conservation, marine information have been suggested. BH is awaiting confirmation re logistics of moving, cost of purchase, maintenance, possible scrap metal

element – price. However, the proposal has created some interesting ideas linked to fishermen, marine conservation, and it is hoped that the structure can be glassed in so that it can be used. Apart from applying for planning permission, BH would own it and so not so hindered in asking for permissions to renovate or restore for ongoing maintenance. Until there is a meeting with Trinity House, BH is unable to find out any more information re costings and individual transfer costs. It has been suggested that perhaps the army might wish to provide transport and relocation, as a live field exercise.

3. When writing to Trinity House it was suggested that BH include a plan to add the names of those lost at sea, merchant seamen, navy, local fishing community – as memorial to their people. Maybe they would also be willing to contribute to the maintenance. RK confirmed been included into the benefits for Trinity House. RK thanked the member for the excellent suggestion.

No of members attending - 27

8. Date of next members online meeting: Wednesday 10th Feb 2021 7pm

RK - Thanked all those attending and hoped they had enjoyed the meeting.

The committee wished a Merry Christmas to all members.

There being no further questions the meeting closed at 20.45