

## **Bexhill Heritage Online Members Meeting Minutes (Draft)**

Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2021 at 19:00

### **Committee members attending:**

|                 |      |                              |
|-----------------|------|------------------------------|
| Raymond Konyn   | (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              |

### **1. Welcome and short prize ice-breaker**

SJ – opened meeting with a fun quiz. Winner was Jackie Turner.

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

RK asked the Committee Members to introduce themselves briefly, plus any additional committee support attending.

Any conflicts of interest? None indicated except noted that RK is also a Trustee of Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society (BOTPS).

**2. Apologies** – Anne Anderson; Rachel Hills; Brian Comber; Ed Peppitt; Pauline Jones; Cllr Sam Coleman

### **3. Matters Arising** from December Members' Meeting

Last minutes amendment required, from DB - Should end at “Planning” and to delete last 6 words. Approved with amendment.

### **4. Planning and Development updates** (DB)

**Cooden Moat** - on appeal the developers have gained agreement for 99 houses, despite the old manor house and other ancient remains are designated a scheduled monument. The site is under guardianship of Heritage England. With nearby development there is concern that it will come into view and to the attention of more and more people. This could lead to damage by public and metal detectorists and illegal night hawking.

Digging on the site will degrade the archaeology and stratigraphy, plus there is likely to be damage and erosion by new residents, even though it is private land. Damage and incursions may be attracted from further afield, if there are any interesting finds. Also potential cycle cross damage. Although these fears were not considered great, the advice that the site be more visible to public, but at same time keeping people away is conflicting. Various suggestions were put forward, but Historic England did

not appear at the meeting. No one has come up with plan to deal with the conflicts. Trespass in past has been minimal and never been problem. Concern expressed that that situation may change.

BH has been in touch with Historic England, RDC and archaeologist working for developer. It was suggested that instead of putting a chain link fence around the site, it might be more protective to put the chain link flat across the top. It wouldn't damage the monument, could be safe to walk on, and disappear when vegetation grows through. Plus, it could negate use of metal detector equipment. It is felt this could keep it safe, until such time as there is a decision to investigate the site. Historic England says it has raised 'issues', which have been put back to the developer. There are still a lot of objections to the development. BH considers this site needs to be taken more seriously than the Inspector currently appears to consider.

**Modernising Planning** – The matter is still with Robert Jenrick. In trying to speed up planning decisions, it has created more issues. No doubt there will be some attempt to simplify planning this year and BH will try to keep members up to date.

Q. John Gardner – Cooden Moat - suggested contact Hastings Area Archaeological Research Group. Contact names given to DB. HAARG might be interested in coming in on that matter.

## **5. Bexhill Heritage Development Plan 2021-23** (SA)

The Bexhill Heritage Development Plan was shared on screen.

BH needed a purpose and direction and we now have a plan for 20-23, which has been ranked in order of importance.

- i) Top of list is the Band Stand which started late 2020 with discussions with RDC. A proposed finish date of Sept 2021 was shown, with the estimated number of vol hours anticipated.
- ii) Second is Sainsburys Mural – BH have tried 3 different ways of contacting Sainsburys, but has not had much response to date.
- iii) Bexhill Flag – Acknowledged that K Rhodes did a lot of work on this project. BH are in process of seeing if it can be manufactured locally, or in the UK.
- iv) Normans Bay Telephone Kiosk Renovation – planned for August 2021, and expected to evolve into mini library as it is now redundant as a telephone box.
- v) De La Warr Bus Shelter – currently have a start date of Sept pencilled in.
- vi) Royal Sovereign Lighthouse – RK explained the idea for this well-known structure and has developed a plan. The suggestion is to remove the top part of the RSL and relocate to an area at the base of Galley Hill. There have been many discussions and BH is currently waiting on Trinity House (TH) decision.

If any other items/projects get suggested they will need to be evaluated to see where they will sit on the present list. It is important to be aware of BH capabilities and not over stretch the teams and volunteers.

**Action:** Copy of list to be sent to every member by RK.

## **6. Talk: Steve Johnson, Vice Chair "Making the best use of Bexhill's Bandstand" (SJ)**

A presentation was shown. Thanks were also offered to everybody for supporting the plan and for submitting additional ideas as to how to use the bandstand in future. Plus, there was a very good response for people to join the management group, and volunteers generally.

The aim will be to get as close to the design as originally in use. BH are planning to reinstate the panels to replicate the original design. Drawings and designs were shared on screen and discussed. The replacement of the roof tiles will be done by Aldershaws, a local company, who will be supplying materials and contractors to install. That aspect will be down to RDC to organise and order. SJ acknowledged the excellent work done on the designs by Tony Lightly.

The main question is what to use it for? The Committee ideas included a meeting point that will be comfortable and congenial. The café nearby is very interested in using the space, when not in use as a music/performance venue. They have also indicated they will also lock up and keep the area clean. It is also suggested that BH also install a 'no touch' switch to trigger 3 minutes of appropriate music. It is hoped that it will become a nice place to visit, meet, a venue maybe for people to enjoy board games, read and relax.

It could also be a focus for exercise, perhaps being a start and/or finish point for walking and cycling routes or similar events. It was noted that there was a cycle kiosk nearby in past. The plan is to make it a place to inform and educate – e.g. a pop up hub, or a Saturday book shop for children. It was recognised that not all events would be happening every week. With respect to entertainment, BH has had lots of contacts from people who are performers, and who would like to use the venue. It has also been suggested that it could be used for Heritage days and 'Learning', for classes or demonstrations by local hobbyists, crafters, including displays, or for educational groups using the space for field work during week. BH has been pleasantly surprised by number of ideas and charity groups wanting to use it for fund raising, or education opportunities in the town.

SJ explained that BH is obviously constrained by Covid and RDC need to deal with structural work to make the site safe, before any volunteers can start working. BH is hoping for a late summer/autumn start date, but it will depend on government guidelines. BH is currently negotiating to take the building over on a Lease. RDC will retain ownership and will remain custodians.

Q. – Ian Hollidge – do you plan to charge or allow voluntary contributions for use?  
SJ said there could be a degree of flexibility given the need for continual maintenance. Could be a great idea. The idea will need to be discussed further, and BH may need to be quite firm on contributions, but some could be free e.g. RBL promoting Remembrance Day.

Q – Carmen asked if electricity is already installed? SJ confirmed there is and unfortunately some cycle racks nearby. They do not suit the location and are ugly. There are ongoing discussions re those already installed and the lack of consultation

about others planned. BH has suggested some alternative designs e.g the 'Canterbury' design. RDC will be mapping the places/locations for more cycle racks in Rother and hope to get more appropriate racking installed in various sites.

## **7. Projects Update** (SA)

SA explained that currently due to lockdown there is not much going on re Projects.

SJ and AM have now completed the Interpretation Board for the Shelter 3 which is hoped to be installed by beginning of April. The sponsor is Aldershaws.

Paul Vincent asked if there has been any feedback from local residents about the music? There may need to be something put in place re hours of use, volume controls, decibel limit. SA said the reaction for Shelter 3 is very positive from local residents. He also mentioned that in view of the comments re music and noise generally, it guided the installation of the music in Shelter 3.

Royal Sovereign Lighthouse (RSL) Project – RK provided an update. They have had a very productive Lantern Tower working group meeting. BH has also had a positive response from RSL Masonic Lodge who have strong links going back before the current structure was installed. Trinity House Board (TH) consultants met on 18 Jan and the feedback is very positive so far. It is understood the idea has to go through quite a rigorous system of approvals. BH is awaiting the outcome. Covid 19 has been useful to BH which has delayed the dismantling of the RSL and any fund raising possibilities. Also, asbestos been found and it will be the responsibility of Trinity House to transfer the structure to the mainland and dispose of it under compliance. TH have found a road haulage company who could take the tower, intact, for asbestos removal. No negative comments or feedback have been received re the project to date.

## **8. Financial Report** (SJ)

SJ felt membership might be interested in where BH funding/support has been coming from: memberships, Hastings Direct, Co op Community scheme, Paypal, Hailsham Roadways and Aldershaws. Fortunately, it has made up for the small donations usually collected from events and seafront activity. BH has a good income at present. It may provide the opportunity for BH to pay for things like the sound system, that RDC cannot be relied upon to fund.

AM explained there is a lot of activity in background e.g. updates to the website and the production and distribution of newsletters.

JS explained that it has, of course, been a difficult year for fund raising. He is conscious that members only seem to hear from him when chasing membership renewals. Otherwise everything is very quiet, but like AM and the Committee they are all working away in the background to keep things moving along smoothly.

## **9. Q & A Session**

RK asked if there were any questions.

i) David Hatherall asked about the Parking Meter at Shelter no. 3. It has fortunately now been moved. BH were surprised by its sudden appearance. DB found the original East Sussex plan and the meter was not even placed even to their own drawings. DB confirmed – SA and Lynn Langlands progressed.

ii) Down Cottage – JE asked if anything was known about the new activity and builders skip that has appeared recently within a few feet of the property and a flint wall? DB explained that RDC were originally not prepared to follow up on the property and it was not listed, although of listable quality. RDC decided it was under no apparent threat at the time. BH will visit to assess.

lii) Lynn Markwick reported that No. 2 shelter is beginning to look very shabby, together with another one at the far end of the seafront. SJ mentioned that BH had been asked to take that on. However, RDC had some people underemployed. Soda blasting has been used on the paintwork, but it has been a very brutal process. When SJ and SA went to do a paint analysis, the structure looked like it had been peppered with shotgun pellets. BH cannot work on anything at present due to the weather. Shelter no.2 was repainted a couple of years ago, but the contractors did not take off the old paint first and so now the work is looking a bit shabby and peeling.

David Hatherall asked about the Planning Application for the Beulah Baptist Church. DB explained that there have been a range of responses to the proposed demolition of the building. BH committee is due to meet next week to discuss a way forward.

There being no further business the meeting closed 8.50 p.m

**Date of next Members' Online Meeting:**

**Wednesday, 7th April 2021, 7pm**