

Friends of Lewes

the Lewes Civic Society



Autumn 2009 Newsletter

Secretary

Although the Society has excellent volunteers who undertake various secretarial tasks such as those concerning Membership and Minutes it has been operating for some 4 years without a formal Secretary. This has increased the workload of the Chairman and, as it has not been possible to find someone to become a volunteer Secretary, the Executive Committee have agreed that they would be prepared to pay someone to undertake the task. Whilst the precise duties would be open for discussion they would essentially consist of servicing General and Executive Committee meetings, answering queries from members and undertaking tasks associated with that of a Company Secretary. A requirement of the job is that the person must be computer literate. Any member interested in this position should contact the Chairman, Robert Cheesman, on enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk for further details.

The former Nurseries site, Malling Street

The Society objected to this planning application to extend the present development on the former Nurseries site in Malling Street by a further 41 mainly small units as it considered that traffic flows to and from the site would exacerbate the already heavy traffic conditions in Malling Street. Whilst we had no comments on the design we would have preferred to have seen more than 25% affordable units. We noted that there would not be habitable accommodation on the ground floor, but questioned whether the flood risk assessment had taken account of run-off from the Downs during periods of

heavy rainfall. Despite these objections the application was approved by the District Council's Planning Applications Committee.

Buildings at risk

English Heritage has recently encouraged local amenity groups to draw the attention of their local authorities to buildings at risk because of inadequate maintenance. The Society wishes to play its part in this exercise and the District Council's Design and Conservation Officer has indicated that he would welcome suggestions. Members are therefore invited to send details of buildings in the conservation area that they perceive to be at risk to the Society so that a list of such buildings can be passed to the District Council.



Draft Planning Policy Statement on the Historic Environment

The Society has recently considered and commented to the Government on their draft Planning Policy Statement for the Historic Environment. A copy of the Society's

response is on the web-site. Essentially we welcomed the principle of regarding the historic environment as an asset but were concerned that there was insufficient distinction or detail in dealing with various parts of it.

Conservation Area Advisory Committee

This is now established and the Society has nominated Mrs Kim Clark as its representative with Paul Millmore as a substitute. The Committee elected Richard Partridge as its chairman and Anthony Dicks, who is also a member of our Executive Committee, as its vice-chairman. Richard Partridge has lived in the town for many years and after retiring as a solicitor with the County Council is now heavily involved with the South Downs Society who he represents on the Advisory Committee. The Society has made the point to Richard Partridge that the Advisory Committee must deal with all issues in its remit relating to the Lewes and Malling Deanery conservation areas, particularly how they could be enhanced, and not simply comment on planning applications

Southover Grange

The Society has been in touch with the District Council over a number of issues concerning Southover Grange. After years of inadequate maintenance we were glad to learn that the District Council, who own the property, intend to carry out external repairs in 2010 and are considering ways in which the internal accommodation can be rearranged to provide a better disability compliant location for the Registrar, whilst also maintaining facilities which can be used by community groups. Separately we have been concerned that health and safety issues are dominating the question as to how the unsightly chestnut paling fencing alongside the Winterbourne stream might best be replaced; our suggestions of sloping banks or close planted shrubbery seem to have fallen on deaf ears and we are likely to have a standard metal fence as a replacement.

Highway reinstatements

Whilst the County Council are maintaining their previous position that more expensive maintenance works in the conservation area cannot be justified, they have suggested that the Society lets them know of any reinstatements to the highway which are, in our view, below standard. Thus where contractors do not reinstate the highway or footpath to what existed previously members are invited to let the Society know so that the issue can be taken up with the County Council.

Pedestrian crossings

Whilst the Society remains committed to trying to reduce traffic in the town and its speed, it has suggested to the County Council that additional pedestrian crossings would not only act as a deterrent but also make it safer for pedestrians to cross the road.



Linklater pavilion

Congratulations are offered to the Railway Land Wildlife Trust for persevering with their campaign to raise funds to build an interpretation centre at the main entrance to the Railway Land Local Nature Reserve. Work on constructing the building has now started although funds are still needed to furnish and fit it out. The project started in 1986 shortly after the death of Peter Linklater, a former chairman of the Society, who had been instrumental in saving this land from

development. Over the years the Society has made a number of financial contributions to the project but it was a large donation from former Society President, Peter Mettyear, that has enabled it to proceed.

Flint walls

The Society has suggested to the Town Council that joint projects might be undertaken to repair the low flint wall that runs alongside Paddock Lane and remove the concrete facing on the flint wall that supports the path leading to houses in Mount Place. Whilst estimates for both projects have been obtained, consent must be obtained from the owners of the walls before any work takes place otherwise the Society and Town Council might be liable for any problems arising from it.



Civic Society Initiative

Following the demise of the Civic Trust, a new body called the Civic Society Initiative, is emerging from the ashes. The Society supports the establishment of this new national body as it considers it important that there should be a national voice to put civic society issues to government and other bodies operating at national level, whilst also providing advice to local societies. However the new body needs financing and it is likely

that the annual subscription will be higher than was previously paid to the Civic Trust.

Society web site

The views of members on the Society's web-site would be welcome. Apart from advertising what the Society does to those outside it, is it also of use to members? Could its layout be improved and are there suggestions for additional things that could be added or even things that could be deleted? Please send your views to enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk. In addition if any member is interested in working on the contents of the web site. www.friends-of-lewes.org.uk please indicate this in the reply.

Elisabeth Howard memorial

The Society is grateful for the contributions made to this project by members following the appeal in the last newsletter. As stated then the intention is to provide a stainless steel penny farthing type bicycle rack just inside the north entrance to the Grange Gardens at the east end of the Grange building. The cost will be in the region of £3,000 and as this sum has not yet been reached in the donations already collected, members are invited to send their donation to the Treasurer of the Society at the Town Hall with a cheque made payable to the Friends of Lewes Society.

Priory Trust

A letter from the Priory Trust is included with this newsletter. The Society congratulates them on being awarded a development grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and trusts that their application for a full grant to complete the site works and prepare an educational programme will be successful.

