

Friends of Lewes

the Lewes Civic Society



Summer 2009 Newsletter

Conservation Area Advisory Committee

The District Council has moved forward with establishing a Conservation Area Advisory Committee for the Lewes and Malling Deanery Conservation areas. The purpose of the Committee will be to give advice on any issues, including planning applications, concerning these conservation areas with the overall aim of enhancing and protecting their features. The Committee will consist of representatives from a number of organisations concerned with conservation, including professional bodies, and the Society has been invited to nominate a member. The Committee has yet to meet and clearly it will take time to become a body whose opinion the District Council and others can respect. It will not, however, remove the right of the Society to comment separately about conservation issues or planning applications although it is to be hoped that the Conservation Area Advisory Committee will take a similar position.

Keere Street and Castlegate

Two of the iconic streets in Lewes are Keere Street and Castlegate.



Whilst environmental enhancements took place in both streets about 20 years ago the County Council, who are responsible for maintaining them, have been undertaking unsympathetic repairs in recent years to both of them. This issue has been taken up with the Director of Transport and Environment who, whilst accepting the nature of the streets, has indicated that County Council resources do not permit more sympathetic maintenance works. The Society will be pursuing this issue including the suggestion that a consortium of bodies might fund the required work, as was the case 20 years ago.

River Basin Management Plan for the South East

The Society responded to this Environment Agency consultation, that was largely about water quality, by expressing disappointment that the reaches of the River Ouse that concern us have been assessed only to a limited extent. We suggested that one

objective should be to have good ecological potential in the tidal Ouse and Winterbourne stream and that flood risk management should be considered carefully in relation to hydromorphology. In this connection we said that more priority should be given to land management in the Ouse catchment so that run off would be delayed in times of exceptional rainfall and that any removal of barriers to aid fish migration or improve habitats should only be done if it can be confidently shown that there is no adverse effect on the peak flow of flood water. We supported the need to be economical with water and the need to reduce the contamination of the river by urban waste.

Integrated Urban Drainage Project

Although it is now a year since the project report was delivered to the relevant authorities and, whilst some improvements in street drainage have been made, many examples still exist where the drains are either inadequate or blocked and unable to cope with removing high rainfall from the streets. It would be helpful if members seeing a problem of this sort could take a photograph of it and send it to the Society with the date, time and place noted so that the various locations can be collated and sent to the relevant authorities with a request that they are dealt with urgently. Separately the Society has already taken up the unsatisfactory finish of the Printworks development where the drains from the building pour directly on to the footpath of Church Lane and a hazard would be caused if the water were to freeze.

National Park

The government have appointed an Interim Chief Executive (Dr Richard Shaw) for the National Park Authority whose task is to set up the structures necessary for it to operate when it becomes functional on 1st April 2011. This will include the location of the Authority's headquarters though it should not be assumed that Dr Shaw's choice of Midhurst for his own office will be made

permanent. Dr Shaw was previously Chief Executive of Surrey County Council and it has been made clear that he will not be the eventual Chief Executive of the Authority as that appointment will be made once the members have been appointed and met. In this connection the Government are currently consulting on the size of the Authority with options for either 29 or 37 members. In either option as it stands the District Council would have one seat whilst the Town Council would be competing with other parish councils in the Park area for one of the seats allocated to such authorities.

In view of objections made to the Government's proposal to include 6 new parcels of land in the National Park a further short Public Inquiry is being held into them but it is hoped that this will not delay the legal confirmation of the National Park by Parliament during the autumn.

Malling Brooks planning application

After considering this proposal on three separate occasions the District Council's Planning Applications Committee agreed to it. The proposal is to provide industrial units on an area of floodplain near Orchard Road so that current industrial users of the Phoenix site can be decanted there. However as the proposal by Angel Properties for the latter site is in abeyance it seems unlikely that any work will commence on the Malling Brooks site in the immediate future. The Society's position on the latter was that if the Environment Agency were satisfied with the proposals we did not have the expertise to second guess them whilst it was also difficult to object to a proposal which complied with the District Local Plan when we had not objected to the proposed use at that time.

Tesco Extension

This proposal, to which the Society objected, is still under consideration by the District Council's Planning Applications Committee.

20mph in Lewes

The concept of a 20mph speed limit on roads in the conservation area was put to the County Council some years ago by the Society and the concept agreed by the then Lead Member for Transport and Environment. However there has been considerable prevarication in having the concept implemented despite the fact that such limits are increasingly evident in other towns. The Society reminds the County Council of this at every opportunity and will continue to press for the introduction of a 20mph limit in the conservation area.

Civic Trust

The Civic Trust, the national body to which civic societies are affiliated, went into administration earlier this year following the loss of major contracts. Whilst this does not directly affect the Society, since it is an independent charity in its own right, the loss of a body able to represent views on national issues to Government is unfortunate. The possibility of a new national body being formed is being investigated and the Society has been represented in these discussions.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The Society's 2009 Autumn General Meeting will be held on Wednesday 7 October 2009 in the Lecture Room of the Town Hall at 7.45pm (members only).

(Please see overleaf for more information on this and details of our next talks on Wednesday 18 November and Thursday 21st January)

Elisabeth Howard memorial



At last progress can be reported on this. The intention is to provide a stainless steel penny farthing type cycle rack just inside the north entrance to the Grange Gardens at the east end of the Grange building. The project was delayed following discussions with the District Council to allow them to complete a report on refurbishment work in the area. Work which will be carried out by the District Council should now commence in October and the likely cost of the cycle rack is around £3,000. The Society will then contribute towards this cost and provide a nearby plaque commemorating Elisabeth Howard. If you feel able to contribute to this project, which the Society believes is a fitting way to commemorate Elisabeth, please send your donation, made payable to the Friends of Lewes, to the Treasurer of the Society at the Town Hall.

