



KEEPING OUR TOWN SPECIAL

# Annual Report 2016



**The changing face of the river side south of Cliffe Bridge**

# THE FRIENDS OF LEWES - THE LEWES CIVIC SOCIETY

Lewes Town Council Offices, Town Hall, High Street, Lewes,  
East Sussex BN7 2QS (Registered Charity No 258756)

Web site : [www.friends-of-lewes.org.uk](http://www.friends-of-lewes.org.uk) E-mail address: [enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk)

## Personnel at 31st December 2016

President Baroness Kay Andrews of Southover OBE  
Vice-Presidents Norman Baker Jim Franks Peter Mettyear  
Honorary Life Member John Davey

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Officers	Chairman	Robert Cheesman	(11/12)
	Vice-Chairman	vacant	
	Secretary	Marcus Taylor	(10/12)
	Treasurer	Mike Stepney	(10/12)
Elected members	<u>At March 2016 AGM</u>	<u>At March 2015 AGM</u>	
	David Hutchinson (12/12)	Roger Beasley (11/12)	
	Chris Kneale (8/12)	Anthony Dicks (3/12)	
	Neil Merchant (10/12)	Audrey Jarvis (11/12)	
	Ruth O'Keeffe (6/12)	Phil Green (12/12)	
	Janet Kennedy (12/12)	Roger Maskew (12/12)	

(The figures after each name above indicate the number of actual and possible attendances at Executive Committee meetings.)

Minutes Secretary Judith Davies

The Mayor of Lewes has the right to attend Executive Committee meetings.

## PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

## EVENTS SUB-COMMITTEE

\* indicates member of Executive Committee

Chris Kneale (Chairman) \*  
John Kennett  
Bronagh Liddicoat  
Roger Maskew\*  
Frances Tufnell (Vice Chairman)  
Nick Wiseman  
Carolyn Beckingham (minute-taker)

Marcus Taylor (Chairman) \*  
Audrey Jarvis \*  
Neil Merchant \*  
Marietta van Dyck

## HERITAGE OPEN DAYS GROUP

David Attwood  
*Paul Benjamin*  
Judith Davies  
David Hutchinson\*  
Peter Mettyear  
Mike Swift  
[Advisory non-members in italics]

## TREES SUB-COMMITTEE

Audrey Jarvis\*  
Phil Green\*  
*Nick Jones*  
*James Newmarch*  
*Keith Sacre*  
David Saunders  
*Peter Thurman*

**Membership Secretary**

**Website Manager**

Marietta Van Dyck

Barbara Merchant

## ***STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT***

The Friends of Lewes - the Lewes Civic Society - is an unincorporated association, the constitution of which will be reviewed at the March, 2017 AGM, to bring it in line with contemporary requirements and good practice. It is a registered charity (No 258756) usually known as the Friends of Lewes, and referred to throughout this report as FoL.

Communications to it should be addressed to [enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk). The postal address is:  
c/o Lewes Town Council Offices  
High Street  
Lewes BN7 2QS

Membership is open to all, on payment of the relevant subscription.

Members of FoL's Executive Committee are the charity trustees. Officers are elected at an Annual General Meeting for one year whilst half of the ten elected members retire each year, but are eligible for re-election. In addition members can be co-opted to the Executive Committee during the year. The trustees in office on 31st December 2016, all of whom are FoL members, are listed above. Micheal Turner resigned in December and is thanked for his long service to the Society.

The Executive Committee, which meets monthly, manages FoL's affairs but annually appoints a sub-committee to examine all planning applications affecting Lewes and the surrounding area, another to provide services and events for members, and one to manage its tree interests. It also has a group that organises Heritage Open Days.

FoL had a membership of 411 at 31st December 2016 (this figure was 435 at the end of 2015). While 34 members died or resigned during the year, only 10 new members were added.

An increased membership is most likely to be achieved by word-of-mouth contacts and by presentations to groups where likely members are to be found. If you can tell others why you are a member that would help; if you know of a group that might like to hear of our work and plans, do let Robert Cheesman or Marcus Taylor know.

The Charities Aid Foundation holds FoL's liquid assets. Its accounts are examined by Ian Clifton, 21 Seabright, West Parade, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 3QR

FoL employs no staff and has not incurred fees from professional advisers during the year.

On 31st December 2016 FoL's representatives on external bodies were: -

Lewes Conservation Area Advisory Group	Nick Wiseman
Lewes District Council's Planning Service Users Group	Robert Cheesman
South Downs Network	Robert Cheesman

## ***OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES***

The objectives of FoL are to stimulate public interest in the beauty, history and character of the town of Lewes and its surrounding area; to organise concerted action for protecting and enhancing the townscape of Lewes and the architectural, visual and historic interest of Lewes and the immediate surrounding area and to co-operate with similar civic societies. It does this by arranging meetings for members on conservation and heritage issues; lobbying relevant bodies to protect the historic environment of Lewes, whilst recognising that the town needs to remain an economically vibrant place, and by supporting projects that fall within its objectives. The principal risks FoL faces are a failure to find sufficient volunteers to undertake activities, a decline in income through lower membership, and a lack of legacies which would limit the projects FoL is able to fund. The Executive Committee is very aware of the need to plan for the smooth replacement of the Society's officers when necessary.

## ***PERFORMANCE***

The Executive Committee considers that during the year the activities, projects and services to members, details of which follow, fulfil FoL's objectives and that they are beneficial to the town and its inhabitants. The Committee therefore considers that FoL has complied with the public benefit test that applies to all charities.

## ***PLANNING POLICY ISSUES***

In the early months of the year we had the disappointing news that despite many objections to zoning the fields at Old Malling Farm as a site for future development, the Inspector considering the issue had decided to do so. He also decided that the number of houses the site could take could be more than 200 and deleted some of the conditions put forward by the National Park Authority. We will, however, still be able to consider and comment on the site layout and design of any development and at the year-end no details of this had been put forward.

The decision reached on Old Malling Farm then enabled the District Council and National Park Authority to adopt their Joint Core Strategy, which supersedes the former District Council Local Plan and is now the policy document against which planning applications in the town are considered.

Work has continued on drafting a Neighbourhood Plan for the town and a public consultation on its provisions is expected in February. An early draft provided to the steering group, on which FoL is represented, shows that sites for about 300 dwellings can be provided in the town in addition to the housing to be provided in the North Street Quarter and at Old Malling Farm. This figure is in excess of the target set by the National Park Authority and, fortunately, the draft does not include any greenfield sites. However, it does include the St Anne's School site and proposals for dwellings to be constructed above the western part of the car park at the railway station.

FoL considered and responded to consultations on planning procedures by the Department of Communities and Local Government and a flood risk consultation by the Environment Agency.



During the year FoL published an updated version of the District Council's advice note on shop fronts and intends to produce similar advice notes on dormer windows and garden rooms in the coming year.

## ***MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS***

Progress has been slow on developing the North Street Quarter site, partly due to the need to comply with various planning conditions. The tenants in the former ironworks buildings have left and this part of the site has hoarding around it pending demolition. Consultation is taking place on how significant artefacts can be incorporated in the new development. Consultation is also taking place on the environmental improvements that will be made to the Pells and Malling Fields areas. It is anticipated that demolition of that part of the site nearest Phoenix Causeway will take place in 2017 and building work, which will commence with a health hub, will start shortly thereafter. Once the site has been cleared constructional vehicles will access it from Phoenix Causeway. At the same time it is envisaged that Springman House in North Street will be demolished and a new building erected there for the Fire Station, for which a planning application is awaited.



The Premier Inn (pictured above) opened in October on the site of the former Magistrates Court. A number of minor issues mainly relating to external lighting remain to be resolved. Planning permission has been given for housing to be provided on the car park that was associated with the former Court.

Although planning permissions are extant for the South Downs Road and Canon O'Donnell sites no work has yet taken place on them and, in relation to the latter, a renewal of the permission given will be needed when the current one expires in April, 2017.

### ***PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT***

The Planning Committee met each month to review all new planning applications submitted to the National Park Authority that fall within Lewes Town. Paper copies of applications are no longer available and details of all applications must now be viewed on line. The Committee continues to be concerned at the time taken to validate some planning applications and make full details and drawings available in time to make comments. Following delays in recording its representations submitted via the District Council by email, all representations are now submitted directly to the National Park Authority via its online planning portal.

In 2016 the Committee examined 266 planning applications and submitted formal objections to 40, made comments on 22 and wrote in support of 4. Not all objections resulted in refusal but the Committee was pleased to note that some of its representations resulted in modifications to design details before permission was granted. A typical example was where an application proposed the use of roofing felt as the material for a dormer window roof in the conservation area. In our objection we proposed that lead or zinc should be used as an alternative, which brought about a change of design.

The Committee has maintained its objection to applications that seek to install of uPVC windows in the Conservation Area as replacements for original traditional timber windows with glazing bars. Some of its objections have been successful and resulted in alternative more appropriate traditional materials being used. However, it has been concerned by a recent decision to approve a retrospective application for uPVC windows in the conservation area on the basis that they were an improvement on the metal windows that they replaced.

Similarly, it has been consistent in objecting to applications in the conservation area for internally illuminated signs, such as those at the Premier Inn. Historically such applications have been refused as they are considered to be detrimental to the street scene and contrary to planning policy in the District Council Plan. The Committee was therefore disappointed when in granting permission for internally illuminated signs at the Old Courthouse the National Park Authority did not continue to support this principle.

The Committee was pleased that its continued joint objection with a local neighbour against the visually intrusive fire escape constructed at the rear of the Nationwide Building Society in the High Street was successful. Following a design review by the building society the fire escape was dismantled and removed. An alternative internal fire escape has been provided.

The Committee has welcomed dialogue with some developers on development proposals before planning applications were submitted. Early engagement provides the opportunity for a constructive discussion which can influence design details and avoid the need to raise objections.

The monthly Planning Committee reports continue to be published on the website with details of the representations submitted. The reports received 360 views this year were also sent automatically by email to 44 people each month.

There have been no changes in membership of the Committee during the year and it would welcome anyone who is interested in the planning system and would be willing to fill the current vacancy.

### ***TRANSPORT ISSUES***

FoL officers have continued to meet with County Council officials as part of the consultation phase of their proposed Sustainable Transport Projects.

Plans to make bus stops on the upper High Street (westbound) and at the Prison (eastbound) more accessible to passengers with disabilities were due to be implemented in 2016, but action is still awaited.

FoL continued its correspondence with the County Council about the effects of parking on pavements, especially by vans and lorries delivering to the upper High Street. Together with Ruth O’Keeffe as the local County Councillor, accurate detailed costings are being sought for the remedial works required to that part in front of the Crown Court.

When new ‘no stopping’ markings were painted on kerbs on the upper High Street in the incorrect style/colour for a Conservation Area, FoL was alerted, objected, and the error was rectified almost at once.

### ***TREES COMMITTEE REPORT***

In December 2016, the Trees Committee planted nine new street trees around Lewes, moving towards their vision of Lewes as a “town in the trees” or an urban arboretum.



Tree planting in North Way / Middle Way

At the request of residents, three new trees were planted at the junction between South Way and Middle Way on the Nevill Estate, where plaques record that in 1935 trees were planted there to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of King George V. The new trees, a fruiting cherry, a Whitebeam and a red Crab Apple, should provide both colour and fruits to attract birds.

A further planting of two specimen Liquidambar trees, which should have lovely rich red leaves in the autumn, was sited at the bottom of Valence Road.

Nearby, in Abergavenny Road, there used to be two Rowan trees with pink-white berries which had been a great attraction for birds, including Waxwings, in the past. Three new Whitebeam have been planted near

to the one remaining tree, in the hope that their bright red berries will attract the Waxwings on their next visit to Lewes!

Finally, the working party revisited South Downs Road to plant a Grey Alder and to check on the progress of the four trees already planted there in March 2015. This now makes a fine row of five trees towards the aim of increasing the number of trees and improving the environment in this area of the town.

The Trees Committee are now planning further planting of street trees in 2017, including following up the many good suggestions from Lewes residents given at the Societies Fair in September 2016. You can find out more by visiting their Facebook page, “Lewes Urban Arboretum, Trees Committee of Friends of Lewes”, or the FoL website.

### ***OTHER ISSUES***

Officers from FoL have met several times with the CEO and other officers of the District Council. We discussed housing policy, the future of the Tourist Information Office and the promotion of Lewes to visitors. The creation of a single CEO, shared with Eastbourne Borough Council has resulted in the building of a new co-operative relationship with Rob Cottrill.

Liaison meetings between FoL and members of the Town Council occur roughly twice a year, where matters of mutual interest can be raised and updated. The support and advice of the Town Council in several FoL projects is much appreciated. In addition to the long-running collaboration on historic plaques, the past year has seen joint funding of a scheme to bring the lighting in Pipe Passage up to Conservation Area standard.

Respect for FoL’s knowledge and experience of the town continues to be evident in our relations with these and other authorities and agencies. There have also been two meetings with Maria Caulfield, our MP, in the past year at which a wide range of matters were discussed and she was willing to lend her support to several FoL initiatives, for which we are grateful. One of these matters was the move of the Crown Post Office from the upper High Street to within the WHS store in the pedestrian precinct. FoL raised objections, suggested improvements to the new arrangements and is monitoring both the new operation and the eventual use of the previous Post Office building, as well as the old Lloyds Bank building.

Coverage of FoL activities in the Sussex Express and in Viva Lewes has continued throughout 2016.

### ***PROJECTS***

1. Historic Plaques: In collaboration with the Town Council four more historic plaques have recently been put up in the town. These relate to the old Red, White & Blue public house on Friars Walk, Nunnery Stables on Irelands Lane, The Dripping Pan on Mountfield Road and the old slaughterhouse, now a house, on St Martin’s Lane.

Why not try to get to see them for yourself and extend your knowledge of the town and its past inhabitants or check out the list of 78 plaques at:

[https://friendsoflewes.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/lewes\\_plaques\\_and\\_photos\\_asj\\_160120.pdf](https://friendsoflewes.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/lewes_plaques_and_photos_asj_160120.pdf)

2. Design Awards: FoL has again made awards to recognise and celebrate quality design and craftsmanship in building projects – new-build, conversions and renovations. These awards, usually made every third year, show that good design makes a positive contribution and can set standards for future works.

The presentation evening was held in Waterstones, which was one of the winners for its sympathetic interior conversion of Dial House in the pedestrian precinct. Awards were also made to 142 South Street, to the new wall at 55, Grange Road and to the extension to Lewes Mansions, in Castle Ditch Lane (see picture on next page).



Commendations were given for the restoration of the street façade of 21, Priory Street and the new housing development at Crosshaven Place, Malling. Owners, architects and builders/craftsmen were presented with certificates by FoL's President, Baroness Kay Andrews of Southover.

3. The "Magic Circle": the long-running saga of trying to improve this area above Castle Ditch Lane continues. After years of persisting, a Right of Way through it has been confirmed and plans are now being drawn up with a target date for completion of November, 2018.
4. FoL offered enthusiastic support to Mike Turners Lottery Grant application to restore and interpret some of the paintings in the Town Hall and we are delighted that his efforts were successful.

### ***HERITAGE OPEN DAYS***

FoL once again organised the September Lewes Heritage Open Days, as part of the nation-wide scheme. For a relatively small town, we continued to provide a large and varied programme and also published a leaflet, and placed posters around the town. We also achieved wide press coverage.

Despite staffing problems, Lewes prison increased the number of visits this year, and, like the rest of our advance booking events, quickly sold out.



Private homes that opened up received hundreds of visits, and also very popular was the Lewes History Group's streets project exhibition at the Town Hall.

In total, more than 2000 visits were recorded, and FoL is indebted, not just to the organisers of the event, but to those who generously opened up their buildings, and to the experts who led the walks and tours. All events are free to participants. We are grateful to our sponsors for covering our costs: the District Council, Adams & Remers, Stapleton Consulting, Mackellar Schwerdt and the Town Council.

## ***SERVICES FOR MEMBERS***

Four talks took place in 2016: In January Marcus Taylor led multi-speaker reminiscences of Lewes in Storm and Flood: held in Southover Church, this was the best-attended talk for some time. In February, Kevin Gordon entertained and informed us with what he termed “A quirky look at Lewes”, with much fresh material. In October, John Davey returned to tell the story of the discovery of the Piltdown Man finds – what he called “Lewes Greatest Crime?” The November talk was a ‘double-hander’, as Pamela Day from the county’s Registration Services outlined the recent conversion and renovation works that have been enhancing Southover Grange and County Archivist Christopher Whittick shared the house’s colourful history: the Town Hall’s Lecture Room was packed and appreciation was very evident.

Two general meetings were held in the year; at the AGM in March, Carole Ryan, Heritage Protection Advisor for Historic England, spoke on the history of the listing process and current listing methodology.

At the Autumn General Meeting in late September, Freddie Gick, the out-going Chair of the national body Civic Voice, to which FoL is affiliated, talked about their role and aspirations.

Participation in the town’s annual Societies Fair in the Town Hall in September provided another opportunity for FoL to explain to the public what it does. Awareness of this has to be where the path to interest and membership begins.

A competition for families over the summer holidays was arranged and one for children in the build-up to Christmas: this involved designing and making a tree-ornament using recycled materials and had a particularly good response.

A new Facebook page was launched, reaching thousands of people and attracting over 170 ‘likes’ in its first few months. The FoL website is well-used and is worth exploring. Work is in hand to improve its layout and scope in the coming months.

Sincere thanks are due to all those who serve on committees, give their time organising and staffing events, provide services for members or carry out other work for FoL. Additional offers of help to ensure that all our activities and work continues would be appreciated.

## ***FINANCIAL REVIEW***

### **Receipts and Payments**

#### **General Funds**

On FoL’s unrestricted funds, receipts in 2016 amounted to £7,922 (£7,933 in 2015) and total payments to £5,606 (£8,042) which resulted in a surplus of £2,316 (deficit of £109).

The aggregate of receipts from voluntary sources has remained fairly stable but there are a number of one-off factors that mask a decline in subscription income, associated donations and the tax rebate from Gift Aid. These have arisen because there has been a net loss of 24 members during the year (a 6% reduction). It is envisaged that if this rate of attrition continues (and bearing in mind the age profile of membership, this seems likely) then FoL’s financial wellbeing may come under threat. A watchful eye must be kept on this.

On trading activities, sales income has, overall, remained fairly stable, decreasing from £1,353 to £1,215. This does though mask variances on individual items which themselves are inevitably prone to volatility being dependent on the timing of when the larger orders are received from retailers. A vigorous sales drive has continued throughout 2016 but appears to confirm last year’s observation that a saturation point has probably been reached on books in the local market, as pre-2015 sales levels have not been reinstated.

With no expenses being paid to trustees, the cost of running FoL in 2016 was £1,002 (£440 on Governance plus £562 on Other) against £3,832 in 2015. The reduction is predominantly due to two items. Firstly, the non-recurring expenditure of £2,160 on FoL’s “Public Face” review in 2015 and, secondly, a reduction in payments made for room hire for Executive Committee meetings which are now payable (at less cost) in arrears at the Phoenix Centre, rather than in advance at the Town Hall. While, currently, the recurring costs of running FoL remain below the 2016 ordinary membership subscription income of £2,743 it is

nevertheless hoped that those who can afford to pay more than the minimum subscription will continue to do so in order that we are able to continue to support small enhancements to the town.

FoL remains active in reviewing opportunities for delivering and supporting Projects, Grants and Donations with expenditure in 2016 of £1,678 (£1,747).

## **Balance Sheet**

### General Funds

At the end of the financial year, FoL's total assets on the unrestricted funds account amounted to £42,132 of which £39,963 was cash and £2,169 stocks of books, tea towels and cards. In its annual review of the reserves policy the Executive Committee has confirmed that an operating reserve of £10,000 is considered necessary and that part of the residual cash balance of some £30,000 should be held in order that FoL can provide funding for further small projects without firstly having to make an appeal. In addition, as there is the potential for a sizeable project (the Magic Circle) to come to fruition in the next few years and there is always a possibility that FoL may need to seek specialist advice and representation on significant development proposals, it has been concluded that a cash reserve of some £40,000 is appropriate and has sought to maintain this in its 2017 budget.

### Restricted Funds

A further £9,523 of cash is held in restricted funds. Of this, £4,766 has to be spent on tree planting (Tree Planting Fund) and £4,757 on the maintenance of trees.

## ***PLANS FOR THE FUTURE***

FoL will continue to try to improve marketing itself to the public, whilst maintaining the professional approach it endeavours to take on issues that arise. However, what it is able to do will be constrained by the resources, human and financial, that are available to it. In particular it would like to assist more minor projects which enhance the townscape of Lewes and has reason to believe that its support could lever funds from bodies such as the SDNPA.

Members are also encouraged to check out our website [www.friends-of-lewes.org.uk](http://www.friends-of-lewes.org.uk) for updates on many of the issues mentioned here and for copies of FoL's contributions to consultations and press releases.

Approved by the Executive Committee on 25th January, 2017 and signed on their behalf by

Robert Cheesman      Chairman