



NEWSLETTER

Summer 2023



- picture of a robin on a sunflower by Nick Robinson

Ruth O’Keeffe - Chair of Friends of Lewes

Welcome to the Friends of Lewes Summer Newsletter 2023

John Steinbeck once said that “In early June the world of leaf and blade and flowers explode, and every sunset is different.”

It certainly feels that way in Lewes as I write this preface to the summer newsletter.

As always, thanks are due to all of the members of the Executive Committee, and to the Planning, Member Services and Trees committees that regularly meet to help Friends of Lewes plan and carry out actions to keep Lewes special, and to you, our members, who keep all the committees on their toes with your comments and suggestions.

The Planning Committee have had another busy few months since the last newsletter and on pages 3 to 5 you can read in detail Roger Maskew’s summary of events and the Friends of Lewes comment on the North Street Quarter / Phoenix development proposals. Thank you to all the members of Friends of Lewes who informed our response with their many comments, opinions and assessments of the application.

On pages 5-6 you will find an article from Peter Earl about the review of the Lewes Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan being undertaken by the National Park, with details if you would like to be involved with this. A key point of the review is whether respondents feel that the conservation area should be continued, altered or extended. The consultation runs until the 11th of July.

Next on pages 7-9 comes Audrey Jarvis’ report of the many and varied activities of the Trees Committee since we last sent out a newsletter, including the exciting news that Lewes, as a result of the committee’s hard work and your support for this, is now internationally recognised as a town-wide arboretum. There is only one other town-wide arboretum in the UK (Sidmouth in Devon) so this is an amazing achievement.

Many thanks to Di Wilkins and the members of the Membership Services Committee whose report on pages 10-11 not only provides details of past and future events, it also gives active links for more information and news of upcoming events from other organisations. Barbara Merchant’s work on our website and greater internet presence has we know been helpful to our members in finding out more about a variety of society projects.

Back with news on page 12 of the upcoming Lewes Heritage Open Day, Peter Earl gives details of some of the events and venues being planned.

Finally, also returning this year will be the Lewes Societies Fair, on Saturday September 2nd from 10am til 1pm in Lewes Town Hall, where Friends of Lewes and lots of other groups and societies from the town will be represented for the first time since 2019. We hope to see many members of Friends of Lewes there.

All good wishes

Ruth!

THE PLANNING COMMITTEE *from Roger Maskew*

In 2023 there have been six meetings of the Planning Committee at the beginning of each month from January to June, when a total of 118 planning applications were considered and responses submitted to the relevant planning authority on 42 submissions.

As a result of these responses, the views of the Society seem to have been well received by the South Downs National Park Authority in the determination of a number of planning applications that the Committee considered and comments submitted.

During this period there have been two projects of major concern to the Planning Committee, namely the future use of the Lewes Bus Station and the submission of a planning application for the widely anticipated proposals by Human Nature on the North Street Quarter site.

Please refer to the following item for an update on the North Street Quarter proposals.

A current planning issue worthy of mention is the recent consultation by the agents Parker Dann on the proposals to build 226 houses on the Old Malling Farm site on the outskirts of Lewes. The site currently has Outline Planning Permission in anticipation of the submission of detailed proposals for developing the site. As yet, the Planning Committee has not yet had an opportunity to consider the details of this proposal.

In terms of personnel on the Planning Committee, two new members have joined this year, namely Andrew Winter and Will Dorman whose combined experience and expertise have made a valuable addition to the range of skills of the Committee.

I also have to report the sad news of Stephen Catlin, who after a long illness died earlier this month, who in addition to his wide range of other commitments, was also a member of the Planning Committee. He was a well-known local personality in Lewes and will be sadly missed.

The North Street Quarter *from Roger Maskew*

As mentioned in the annual report, at a meeting in Phoenix House on the Friday 02nd December 2022, Human Nature confirmed that it was intending to submit a Planning Application to the SDNPA before the end of January 2023 and that this 'hybrid' application would consist of the following elements: -

- (1) An 'Outline Planning Application' for the whole of the Phoenix Project Site.
- (2) A 'Detailed Planning Application' for all of the proposed flood defences.
- (3) A 'Detailed Planning Application' for one parcel of the proposed development, illustrating how the proposed 'Building Codes' would be implemented.

Human Nature had agreed to make a further presentation to the Society in January, prior to the planning application being submitted, which subsequently took place at Phoenix House on Thursday 19th January 2023 and included a very useful presentation of the scope of the proposed planning application.

The "Phoenix Project" was subsequently formally launched at a public presentation at the Depot Cinema on Friday 27th January. The planning application was subsequently submitted to the South Downs National Park Authority as the planning authority on Tuesday 07th February 2023. The amount of information and the wide range of supporting documents submitted by Human Nature was enormous and has involved many hours of intensive examination as a basis for the Society to make a formal response to the SDNP.

Initially responses were invited by Friday 21st April, but this deadline was subsequently extended to Friday 26th May. The Society submitted its response on Thursday 18th May, which enabled members who wished to add any further comments to submit their concerns before the deadline.

For the convenience of members, the ‘conclusions’ of the Society’s response were as follows:-

This response from the Friends of Lewes is a combination of 4 areas of support, 6 areas of objection and 2 specific requests regarding the development, as follows: -

- (1) The Society **supports** the Outline Planning Application in principle, as it re-establishes the development potential for the provision of much needed housing on this important brownfield town centre site.
- (2) The Society **supports** the Detailed Planning Application for the Flood Defences for the whole site.
- (3) The Society **supports** the Detailed Planning Application for part of the Housing Development on the most northern part of the site.
- (4) The Society **supports** the Detailed Planning Application for Temporary Access to the site, subject to the relocation of the access point so that all the TPO trees are retained.
- (5) The Society **objects** to the removal of the existing trees fronting Phoenix Causeway that are subject to the two existing Tree Preservation Orders.
- (6) The Society **objects** to the suggested provision of three new bus lay-bys on the northern side of the Phoenix Causeway in the absence of an agreed Travel Plan for Lewes Town Centre, together with the failure to provide replacement tourist coach park spaces, and as such are considered to be premature.
- (7) The Society **objects** to the proposed construction of both the large scale ‘Mobility Hub’ and the tall ‘Foreshore Apartments’ fronting the Phoenix Causeway, as the scale and massing are considered to be totally inappropriate at such a significant location at the entrance to the historic town of Lewes, harming the setting of the conservation area. Furthermore, the Society notes that this south eastern part of the site is likely to be the last part of the development to be constructed and therefore considers that there would be an opportunity for the applicant to reconsider the overall design of this part of the development.
- (8) The Society **objects** to the location of the proposed Health Hub at its remote location in Spring Gardens and would strongly recommend that its provision should be re-considered on the Springman House site where there is an opportunity to sustainably reuse an existing building. This would have the advantage of being more accessible and have the potential to be provided in a much shorter timescale, as the site is located on higher ground above the flood plain and would therefore not have to wait for the construction of the necessary flood defences. Alternatively, the health hub should revert to the previous location on Phoenix Causeway where there is direct access to public transport.
- (9) The Society **objects** to the proposed access arrangements, including the pedestrian and cycle facilities across Phoenix Causeway. These proposals fail to bring forward comprehensive highway proposals that are necessary to avoid additional traffic circulating around the conservation area and gyratory system and the safe movement of cyclists and pedestrians through Eastgate are considered to be both premature and inappropriate at this highly trafficked location. It is considered essential that further traffic related measures need to be agreed with the County Council, as the Highway Authority, for the wider area. In particular, there are no specific amended provisions for cyclists in Eastgate Street, which is currently one way only.

(10) The Society **objects** to the lack of plans to integrate the development with the rest of Lewes and to reduce traffic circulating through the Conservation Area. The single entrance and exit for vehicles accessing the mobility hub is likely to increase the volume of traffic using the one-way network via East Street compared to that which currently exists. Greater integration with the wider area could be achieved with a link to Lancaster Street for vehicles exiting the development wishing to go north towards Haywards Heath.

(11) The Society would like to see more specific evidence that the loss of the 212 public car parking spaces will be adequately replaced within the development so that the impacts on the commercial and retail vitality of the town are not harmed.

(12) The Society requests that the phasing of the mobility hub and Thomas Paine Bridge are included in an early phase so that these elements are available to secure the vital modal shift identified in the application.

On the 12th June 2023, the South Downs National Park Authority made public its initial officer response to Human Nature on the Phoenix Planning Application indicating a number of 'key' areas which require further consultation and the need for detailed discussions with Human Nature on a wide number of topics.

As yet the Society has not had an opportunity to fully assess the contents of the response, which consists of a three page letter from the case officer, together with an 'officer response' of a further 31 pages, which has now been circulated to members for information.

Initially, this letter and officer response is a basis for further negotiations between the SDNPA, as the planning authority, and Human Nature as the applicant, which will need additional time to complete.

As part of this process, the Society anticipates having further meetings with Human Nature in order to establish whether its concerns can be addressed. In particular, as a response to the SDNPA's list of concerns, it is anticipated that the Phoenix Project would need a significant number of amendments in order to improve its successful integration within the wider context of the historic town of Lewes.

Important consultation on Lewes Conservation areas *from Peter Earl*

The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) as the Local Planning Authority for the town are currently reviewing the Lewes Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) and also the 'Article 4 Direction'* for Lewes Conservation Area (*special additional control on changes to the appearance of buildings removing some permitted development rights which can otherwise take place without planning permission).

These documents provide important tools for the effective management of development and therefore the basis for planning decisions across large parts of the town. It is important that they are regularly reviewed to ensure they take account of any changes and also integrate recent amendments to associated documentation or legislation.

The SDNPA want to ensure that the factors that contribute to Lewes' special interest are correctly identified and accurate; that key events within Lewes' historic development are correctly referenced and that the assessment of the town's general character as a whole are accurate, as well as the individual distinctive character areas. The document also seeks to identify the key issues to change. In outline these are seen as building maintenance, shopfronts and advertising, open spaces, climate change, traffic and new development. They are keen to know if these are correct or whether there are others.

On more specific matters views are sought on whether Cluny Street, Monk's Lane, Verrall's Walk, Anne's Path and Morley Close should be removed from the conservation area. Wallands Park Rise is another area where opinions are sought on the need to retain it within the conservation area. for inclusion or removal? At the same time views are sought on whether any new areas should be considered to add to the conservation area.

Lewes Conservation Area has been covered by what is known as an 'Article 4 Direction', since 1995. This covers all the residential properties in the Conservation Area and seeks to control changes to the external appearance of buildings. In sensitive places such as Conservation Areas the small changes allowed as permitted development can cumulatively damage the character of the Conservation Area. In order to provide clarity for property owners the new Article 4 Direction would identify individual dwellings which are affected by the order. Views are sought on whether the 'Article 4 Direction' should be continued, altered or extended.

The SDNPA public consultation period is currently taking place between Tuesday 30 May 2023 and 12 noon on Tuesday 11 July 2023. Copies of the draft documents are available for the period of the consultation, including paper copies which can be viewed at Lewes Library (display situated on the mezzanine floor).

The documents are also viewed through the SDNPA website:-

- [Lewes CAAMP Public Consultation Draft Document](#)
- [Article 4 Direction Review – Schedule](#)
- [Article 4 Direction Review – Schedule of Properties](#)

Completed paper surveys should be posted to:

Lewes CAAMP & Article 4 Direction Consultation
South Downs National Park Authority,
South Downs Centre,
North Street,
Midhurst,
West Sussex
GU29 9DH

Please be aware that Lewes Library are not responsible for sending any paper responses to SDNPA for consideration.

Due to the potential high volume of responses, consultation feedback received by the SDNPA after the closing deadline of midday on 11 July 2023, or which is not submitted in the requested format, will not to be included in the consultation review.

[Follow this link to access the survey.](#)

Should you experience any difficulties in accessing the survey or have a general query regarding the consultation process please contact us at consultations@southdowns.gov.uk.

The Friends of Lewes will be preparing their own response and if members wish to feed their views through the Society will try and take these into account. Please forward comments to The Secretary at enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk.

Trees Committee Update from Audrey Jarvis

Following the planting of 12 trees planted around Malling which were reported in the last newsletter the Trees Committee continued with working parties over the winter until they had planted 45 street trees altogether in the 2022/2023 planting season.

On a cold day in December, seven trees were planted along Ferrers Road at the request of residents. One *Cercis siliquastrum*, two *Acer campestre* Lienco, two x *Malus Rudolph*, and two *Crataegus persimilis Splendens*.

Later in the month a *Sorbus torminalis* was planted in Newton Road sponsored by residents who had raised the funds during their Platinum Jubilee street party. On the Winterbourne triangle, a *Liquidambar styraciflua* Worplesdon, sponsored by the Inner Wheel Club of Lewes, was planted. Both of these trees were chosen as part of the Queen's Green Canopy.



Ferrers Road



Newton Road

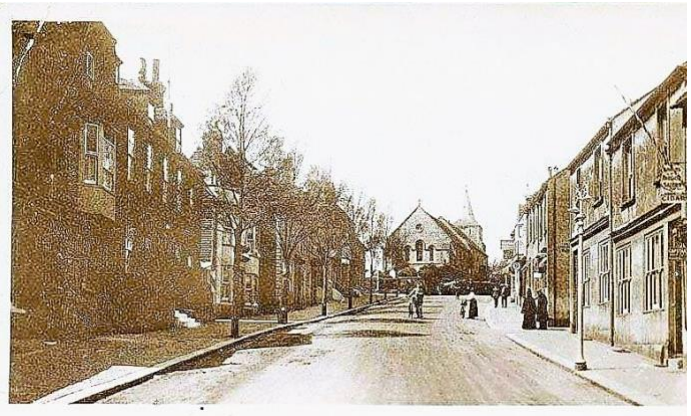


Winterbourne triangle

In Houndean Rise, two fine *Acer campestre* Elsrijk were planted to replace trees that had been felled some time ago and they joined the 12 trees already planted by the Trees Committee in previous years. Trees had also been lost in Cranedown and a *Pyrus calleryana* Chanticleer was planted there. Using some of the grant funding from the Local Authority Treescapes Fund, Bonny's Wood planted ten *Alnus glutinosa* along Winterbourne Lane on our behalf, where several Ash had been felled. The same fund paid for contractors to plant three more *Ulmus* "New Horizon" on St. Anne's Hill, to restore the original line of seven Elms planted in the early 1900s. Thank you again to Lewes District Council and East Sussex County Council for including our Lewes Urban Arboretum project in this funding bid.



Seven Elms in 2023



Seven Elms in 1916

In February we had our final working party to plant nine trees around the perimeter of Nevill Recreation Ground: three *Acer campestre* Lienco, three *Pyrus calleryana* Chanticleer, and three *Sorbus intermedia*. One of the *Acer campestre* was sponsored by Nevill W.I. to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee. Last of all we planted a *Liriodendron tulipifera* in Glebe Close.



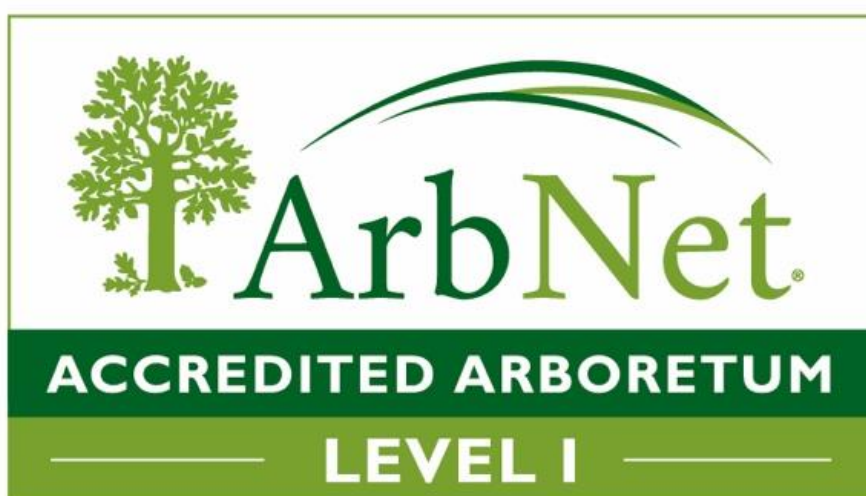
Nevill Recreation Ground



Glebe Close

The total number of surviving street trees planted by the Trees Committee is now 171. They have also been busy planting more hedgerows with school children. In January 2022 they helped each of the pupils at Southover and Western Road Schools to plant their own whip to make a hedge for wildlife and they returned in January 2023 to help all the new Reception classes to add their own little tree. The eco-group of Western Road were also helped to plant hedges along the Forest School area and Southover school were helped to plant four fruit trees in their mini orchard.

The Lewes Urban Arboretum Project was launched in 2012 to bring to life the vision of the late Paul Millmore - of Lewes as "a town in the trees" In May 2023 this status was recognised when we learned that Lewes has been internationally recognised as an arboretum town by the ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Programme. This is an international programme providing standards and guidelines for the establishment and development of an arboretum to advance the planting, study, and conservation of trees. Currently there are 611 accredited arboreta in 39 countries globally.



Lewes Urban Arboretum is unusual because it is not restricted to an individual property but extends across the whole of the town of Lewes. The only other town-wide arboretum in the UK is Sidmouth. The criteria which contributed to our award included our plans and organisation, our volunteer support, and the number of different species of trees. For example, the Trees Committee of Friends of Lewes has planted 48 different species across the town.

We hope that recognition as a town-wide arboretum by ArbNet prove valuable to our goal of restoring our treescape. This achievement owes much to the legacy of tree planting and conservation by previous community groups, local councils, and residents. Ideally, this new accreditation will provide a launch point to further engage others in working together to moderate the threats to tree planting, such as climate change, pests and diseases, the unnecessary felling of healthy trees and the demand for increased housing and infrastructure. We all need to plan and plant for the future!

You can find out more about ArbNet and see the link to the entry for Lewes Urban Arboretum with this link: <http://arbnet.org/morton-register/lewes-urban-arboretum>

Membership Services Committee *from Di Wilkins*

We run talks and visits focusing on Friends of Lewes's main areas of interest. Our aim is to balance in-person events in the summer, with online/blended ones during the winter, to allow as many people as possible to participate. Feedback and ideas for future events are always welcome – please send them to membership@friends-of-lewes.org.uk

Past Events

In March, Juliet Oxborrow spoke about the opening of the [Lewes Climate Hub](#), of which FoL is a partner. The climate hub, based in Lewes House on the High Street, is open to the public and FoL recently sponsored the wildflower planters outside the building. We also heard from Michael Blencowe about 'The Wildlife of Lewes', Peter Thurman on 'Designing and Working with Trees' and Trevor Beattie on the 'Role of the South Downs National Park Authority'.

In April, we ran a successful visit to the Wallands School raingardens with [The Aquifer Partnership](#) (TAP) which acts to protect our groundwater. You can read more about the [Wallands project](#) and the use of [raingardens](#) to catch pollution and hold back floodwater on the [Flood](#) section of our website. The developers, Human Nature, also organised two sessions for FoL members to view the plans for the development of the North Street Quarter.

Future Events

We are excited about our first in-person coffee time talk which will be with farmer and conservationist, Michael Richards, at the Eastgate Baptist Hall on 11 July. We do hope you can come. On 8 August, Marcus Taylor will give a preview of the highlights of Heritage Open Day, and [Reeves Archive](#) will be telling us about their next exhibition on 12 September.

All our events are listed on the [Diary](#) page of our website and members will be notified by email. Our events are also open for non-members if they book via Ticketsource and pay a small charge of £4, so please do encourage friends and family to take part.

Upcoming events from other organisations

Following the success of last year's sell-out tours, **Lewes Priory Trust** is once again running walking tours of the Priory ruins and of Southover Church, which houses the remains of William and Gundrada de Warenne who founded the Priory in the 11th century and was once the guest house of the Priory. Details via [Lewes Priory Trust](#) and Lewes Tourist Information Centre.

Lewes History Group's regular Monday talks are listed at leweshistory.org.uk/meetings:

- 10 July 2023, 7:30pm - Chris Grove: The battle for a railway to Lewes and eastwards, 1838 to 1844.
- 11 September 2023 - Mary Burke: The importance of the River Ouse for the growth of Lewes.
- 9 October 2023 - Guy Blythman: Traditional Windmills in Sussex and Lewes.

Sign up to receive our news by email

We add news items to our website regularly, such as upcoming events put on by the Friends of Lewes and other organisations, our responses to planning applications, the Tree Committee's latest plantings around Lewes and our newsletters. You can choose to receive our news items by email by going to the right-hand panel of any page on our website <https://friends-of-lewes.org.uk/> and entering your email under the heading 'Get News via email' near the bottom of the page. On your phone, this link is below the Home Page and the list of news items.

Two new historical plaques for Lewes

Two plaques have been added to the many around Lewes which tell the hidden history of the town. Funded by the Town Council and based on research by the Friends of Lewes, these plaques point to centuries long stories of the varied uses of two buildings in the middle of town – the recently converted Crown Hotel by the war memorial, and No. 1 Keere Street. The Crown was a coaching inn known as the Black Lion from 1633, then The Crown Inn from about 1790. It was converted to residential use in 2021 (see photo). In contrast, No. 1 Keere Street was built around 1430, and over the centuries it has housed a butcher, a bucket maker, and from 1780 until 1946, a bakery. Lewes Town Council and the Friends of Lewes have installed more than 70 plaques across the town to highlight the histories of buildings that may be unknown to visitors or residents. You can see the full list at our [Historical Plaques webpage](#). If you have suggestions for other locations where a plaque should be installed, please let us know.



New historical plaque at the site of the former Crown Hotel, Lewes

An active High Street

The conversion of the Crown Inn from a pub to a residential property is one of many signs of change on the High Street. In 2021, Friends of Lewes facilitated a well-attended online [Forum on the Future of the High Street](#) which provided a platform for discussion for the public and relevant groups. The Membership Services Committee would like to consider effective ways of supporting businesses and others on the High Street. If you are interested in helping with this work (or that of our other [committees](#)), please do get in touch via membership@friends-of-lewes.org.uk.

Get involved through committees & membership

We have been very pleased that several members have recently come forward to contribute to the Planning committee's activities and we are always keen to hear from members who would like to take part in committees or working groups, particularly if they have specialist knowledge or skills (see above). Our impact and vitality depends on our members, so please do continue to encourage friends, family and neighbours to [join](#) if you think they would be interested. Our current membership numbers remain steady at 396.

Heritage Open Days - Save the date 2023 from Peter Earl

England's largest festival of history and culture is now in its 29th year. Locally, the Friends of Lewes are again organising the annual Heritage Open Days event in the town. The Friends of Lewes recognise the importance of this event to the local area, highlighting the special architecture and history on our doorstep, as well as promoting the town to a wider audience. Responses last year indicated that approximately half of attendees came from outside the town. This year's Lewes event is to run from **Friday 8th September to Sunday 10th September** and the organising committee are looking forward to putting together a full programme of venues and walks, as well as exhibitions.

The national theme for this year's Heritage Open Days is 'unwrapping the colourful history of creativity in all its areas' with the aim of celebrating stories and work of local experts and amateurs that have changed some aspect of local life. A key feature of the event is that all the festival events must be free.

The provisional programme of Lewes venues is currently being finalised to include a range of buildings, including domestic homes, churches and chapels, brewery's, workshops and a photographic studio, as well as civic buildings. Walks and tours focusing on the Flint in the town, its History, Churches, Clocks, Harvey's Brewery, and the quirky side of Lewes are planned. Members will be advised of booking details for the tours.

The Lewes Heritage Open Day team are always seeking new venues in the town and members can either put forward their own buildings or businesses to be open for part or all of the weekend, or encourage others to join this national festival. Stewards have an important role during the event and if you are able to help, please do contact the secretary at enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk.

VOLUNTARY DONATION

We depend largely on our members' subscriptions to carry out our work, and welcome additional help from donations and legacies of any amount, however small.

You can also support Friends of Lewes by participating the Lewes District Council Local Lottery at: <https://www.leweslocallottery.co.uk/support/friends-of-lewes>