

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 13th September 2012

1. **Present:**

Dr Margaret Ford, Chair, Bob Kenhard, Treasurer
Fred Maillardet, Catherine Cassidy
Diana Goodbourn, Frances Gaudencio
Janet Slaughter, Heather West
Jacquie Whatford, Penny Wadsworth (newly co-opted member)
Charlotte Jackson, Daniel Smitherman (representing Downlands School)
Amanda Kenhard (standing in as Secretary)

2. **Apologies for Absence:**

Judith Poncelet, Juliet Strange
Peter Gibbons, Colin Wilsdon

3. **Minutes of last meeting and matters arising:**

The on-going issue of car parking by commuters was discussed. Margaret had attended several HPC meetings at which various possibilities had been discussed. However, things had not moved much further forward, although one small positive step was the consideration of a shop survey to get the views of the local traders; also whether the specific residential roads most affected should be part of a car parking scheme, or whether any future schemes would be set up to incorporate the village as a whole.

Margaret reported that Downlands Fair had been a great success and had succeeded in giving wider publicity to the Spitalford Bridge project, especially amongst the younger generation.

Margaret also reported that the HAA membership number had now increased to **266** as a result of a wider leaflet drop undertaken by Peter Gibbons prior to the HAA AGM at the Hassocks Hotel.

The issue of the venue for the next HAA AGM was discussed at length. Continuing at the Hassocks Hotel would prove problematic due mainly to the acoustic problems which resulted in many people not being able to hear the speakers clearly. Various venues were suggested. Penny Wadsworth suggested the URC Hall might meet the requirements adequately. The meeting agreed with this suggestion and **Margaret will liaise with Juliet on her return from holiday to ask her to investigate this further and report back.**

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4. Green Concerns:

Margaret distributed her paper outlining the current concerns. Regarding Footpaths, Margaret has been in contact with WSCC regarding the 12K footpath off Lodge Lane and unfortunately, this year, WSCC are giving their attention to the Mackie Avenue footpath with the promise of committing to help next year with the 12K footpath which is heavily used and proves almost impassable, especially in the winter months.

The possibility of using one of the Community Payback Teams to help with improvement work was discussed. Janet Slaughter advised that the best way to get into contact with them directly was through the Crown Courts in Crawley. **Margaret will look into this further to see if help could be obtained through this scheme.** Janet advised the meeting that it was her understanding they were looking for work of this type.

Other issues discussed were that Jonathan Tate may be willing to donate a large container to be placed outside the old Post Office, providing planting was undertaken by the local community. Phil Mead now heads up the Environment Committee on HPC and has negotiated an increase in the budget and has stated his willingness to be involved.

The Group Loyalty Club initiated by Jonathan Tate was discussed as detailed in Margaret's paper. **After some discussion, the Committee agreed to join the Scheme.**

Penny updated the meeting on the containers outside the infant's school. South Downs Nurseries will provide these and the children will plant them up as a contribution to creating a greener village environment.

Raised Beds:

Catherine explained the background to this on-going saga, saying it was in essence a stalemate situation. Eaglepeak and their agents essentially had zero interest in the maintenance or upkeep of this rundown area and do not respond to any communications, or return calls. Discussion turned to community effort to plant these beds.

At this point **Daniel and Charlotte** from Downlands stated that they would take this issue back and discuss it at the School to see if there would be an interest in the School becoming involved in a planting scheme for one of these raised beds. **Frances** also volunteered to talk to her contact (Jonathan) at Windmills School to see what interest if any they may have in contributing. **Fred** also said he would speak to his wife to see if the Guides may like to become involved in this project and that he

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would report back. He would also talk to the Wolstonbury Group to see if they might think about volunteering to clear these areas prior to planting.

It was agreed by all that time was of the essence here and therefore Margaret asked that responses were received by no later than 27th September as the window for bulb planting was short and needed to be completed by the end of October. Maximum cost of the bulbs was agreed with Bob should be no more than £250.00.

5. Sussex Lantern Update:

Bob's report is attached. Future action is to contact the original volunteers from December 2011 meeting to update them on progress and suggest they contact SL direct should they be interested in assisting. However, this is pending response to Fred's letter to SL dated 1st September seeking reassurances concerning community benefit from the Fields in Trust involvement and insurance cover and safe access for volunteers. Janet Slaughter was unsure of the actual National Park boundary lines and Margaret undertook to supply a map to her and also Jacque Whatford.

6. Spitalford Bridge Project:

Bob's report is attached. Key points being:

- a) the application for major funding from the Gannett Foundation (result expected in November);
- b) We are struggling regarding fundraising activity, more help and ideas required to Bob and Frances, please! Downlands attendees undertook to raise the possibility of involvement in the project and report back.

7. Rail Group:

Catherine updated the meeting on developments to date. The Contractors appointed to build the new ticket office will be commencing works on 29th October. A temporary ticket office will be constructed whilst this work is being carried out. The new ticket office is planned to be ready to open by 24th April, 2013.

The crane-work for the erection of the new modular units for the Station will commence in January, 2013. Catherine has concerns about adequate and timely communication to commuters and the local community alike on the phases of the work to be undertaken and in this regard, there will be an Information Session to be held at the Hassocks Hotel on 1st October 2012 starting at 2.30 until 8.00 pm.

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When work commences, there will be considerable disruption which could impact car parking. Catherine is also in talks to try to initiate the introduction of fairer car park charges for evenings and weekends, which are currently being levied at the full day-rate.

Catherine then went on to explain that a potentially hugely significant problem has arisen with regard to HPC granting a TPO on the West side, very close to where the lift shaft has to be sunk. This TPO was approved by MSDC just a few short weeks after the position of the lift shaft had been agreed and when there was no TPO in place. This has introduced an unacceptable impact on the schedule which is still unresolved. However, Gordon Marples is liaising with MSDC on an urgent basis to ensure the TPO is lifted in time for works to commence. Network Rail have offered to re-locate the tree in question and to re-plant the area with attractive screening. Hopefully, this situation can be resolved very shortly now that the various Departments within MSDC are talking to each other and have a fuller understanding of the local situation.

8. Youth Slot:

Daniel Smitherman and Charlotte Jackson announced that the School had achieved its highest percentage GCSE pass rate yet for 2011 at **99%** having five or more passes. The Committee congratulated them on this impressive result. The new intake (Year 6), were now settling in well after a slightly nervous start to the new academic year!

9. Treasurer's Report:

Bob's report including accounts update is attached. Key points being:

1. The need for a sustainable source of funds over and above the membership income
2. Bob introduced the idea of a Village Lottery scheme to benefit the community as a whole. There was broad approval to take the idea further, Bob undertook to operate the lottery but asked for help. Fred agreed to be involved in an oversight role. Margaret suggested involving the Hassocks Community Partnership (HCP) and **Bob agreed to send a copy of the proposal to them in time for their meeting scheduled for Monday 17th via Margaret. Post meeting note – Lottery paper submitted to HCP 14th September.**

10. Membership Secretary's Report:

This was not discussed due to absence.

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11. AOB:

Jacqui Whatford raised the subject of notices being removed from the village noticeboard or inappropriate or out of date notices being displayed. She advised the meeting that she unofficially monitors this and discreetly removes notices as she sees fit. In the meantime, **Diana Goodbourn had already posted a replacement notice!**

12. Next Meeting:

Thursday, 6th December, 7.30 pm. This meeting to be kept as brief as possible in order to have plenty of time to enjoy the refreshments and film show afterwards!

MF/ajk

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