

FAIRLIGHT PRESERVATION TRUST

(Registered Charity Number 1107169)

The Annual General Meeting of the Fairlight Preservation Trust was held on Sunday 22 November 2020 at 2.30pm via Zoom.

Present: David Shortman, Chairman (DS), Leslie Kosmin, Vice Chairman (LK), Dr Ruth Kosmin, Secretary (RK), Nick Booker, Treasurer (NB), Paul Capps (PC), Isabel Horsley (IH),

Jill Lewing (JL), Keith Somerville (KS) and several other members including Rother District Cllr Andrew Mier.

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chairman, DS, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He thanked the Fairlight Parish Council and its clerk for the use of the FPC's Zoom facility which had enabled the meeting to be convened in this format. There was no alternative due to the coronavirus restrictions currently in force.

Apologies for absence had been received from Keith Pollard and John Pulfer.

2. Minutes of the 2019 Annual General Meeting

The Minutes of the last AGM were considered by the meeting. RK referred to a small amendment on page 2 the final sentence of which now read:

“A recent clean had resulted in the removal of large quantities of silt from the flow meter, which had built up over time and had not previously been spotted.”

Subject to that amendment, the Minutes were proposed by IH and approved on a show of hands without debate, to be signed by DS in due course.

3. Chairman's report on activities over the past year

DS reported that this last year had been another year of substantial progress in all areas of the work of the Trust. There had been two formal Committee meetings held on Zoom, and the Committee had kept in close contact by email on a regular basis throughout the year as need arose.

The main work of the Committee over the year had been to ensure that the sea defences were being properly maintained and monitoring expenditure in this regard. Essential repair work had been carried out where required. The Secretary, RK, had been involved on behalf of the Committee in the negotiations with Rother DC and EKEP to agree the maintenance programme for the berms and the monitoring of the expenditure involved. RK had also been engaged in drafting a Protocol for Planning developments in the Fairlight Cove, which had been adopted by the Planning Committee of Fairlight Parish Council and had been supplied to Rother's Planning department. DS thanked RK for her work as Secretary over the past year and in particular for all her hard work in these discussions and the time that she had put into this.

Monitoring of the sea defences remained the responsibility of Rother DC as coast protection authority. However, in addition, our Committee member IH had continued to collect the

monthly data on the functioning of the Rockmead wells and the Compressor House. This vital work helped to safeguard the working of the system and the protection of residents. DS thanked IH for her efforts in this regard and also thanked Laurie Beetham for all his work in relation to the Rockmead wells system.

DS noted that living in a coastal village where there has always been a risk of coastal erosion meant that, even though the Trust has had considerable success in obtaining the three berms, there was no room for complacency in relation to the state of the cliffs and a need for constant vigilance.

Membership of the Trust is very important. DS thanked JL for her vital work as Membership Secretary in chasing up outstanding subscriptions, maintaining membership records and encouraging new members to join the Trust. All residents of the village really needed to be members.

DS thanked NB for his continued work as Treasurer to the Trust and for ensuring the production of the annual accounts. NB had made a very considerable contribution to the administration and working of the Committee over the past year.

DS then thanked LK as Vice-Chairman and for his assistance to RK in her work. Thanks were also due to KS and PC for their work on the Committee in the past year. The Committee benefitted considerably from their knowledge and experience.

Finally, DS thanked Cllr Andrew Mier for his extensive support of the Trust and its activities over the last year and for all his efforts on behalf of the village. Thanks were also expressed to Roger Bird, our other local councillor.

4. Report on the Fairlight Maintenance Programme and related matters

The Secretary, RK, reported that 2020 had been an extraordinary year but notwithstanding all the problems with Covid the work of the Trust had continued without interruption. Significant progress had been made in a number of areas. These included issues relating to drainage, planning, building and development in the Cove area, maintenance of the slopes and the berms, and the Rockmead Road pumping system. The Trust also continued to have good working relationships with Rother District Council and with the engineers – the East Kent Engineering Partnership (EKEP) – who undertake or supervise much of the work.

As a result of the monitoring carried out monthly by IH the Trust is able to ask Rother to get the engineers or maintenance crew out quickly to attend to the Rockmead wells and keep them working. They had authorised some expenditure on buying in important spare parts which it is important to have to hand when there is a failure in these components. Essential items are now immediately available. This is a much more efficient use of the engineers' time. Meters and floats for the pumps have been acquired for the same reason. Any reduction in water settling within the cliffs is hugely important to reduce slippage and erosion.

RK reported that EKEP had inspected the three rock berms and they are said to be doing well. There is also a helpful build up of shingle behind the berms. EKEP also undertook a laser

scan of the cliffs and pin monitoring to see if there had been any significant movement in the slopes, but it was evident that the cliffs had mainly been robust except for some particular areas where there was some evidence of slippage or falls. It is essential that nothing is done to create excess weight or pressure on the cliffs which can exacerbate the problems, especially since we now know that there are large areas of pooled water that are trapped below the cliff surface which could be disturbed by building work on the top.

One of the major focuses of the work of the Trust this year had been on Planning issues and building on the cliffs within the Cove area. The Trust remains very concerned whenever the owners of cliff top properties or those in the Cove seek to carry out substantial building works which may undermine the work that has been done over the last 30 years to stabilise the cliffs. The Trust had been particularly involved in correspondence and contact with the Planning Department at Rother, as well as with members of the Rother Planning Committee, in an effort to standardise the advice given to owners of properties in the Cove area that are seeking planning consent for new developments. A Protocol dealing with the information and advice required to satisfy essential planning issues has been drafted by the Trust and has been adopted by the Planning Committee of Fairlight Parish Council. RK thanked the Planning Committee of the Parish Council for their support. The Protocol set out to increase the level of awareness and understanding about the problems of the area with regard to coastal erosion. There were a number of new residents who did not have a familiarity with the issues, and the Protocol assists in setting out the reports and information required to accompany any planning proposal.

RK expressed special thanks to Councillor Andrew Mier who had been very active in regularly contacting Rother and their Planning department on our behalf and getting them to understand the problems. She reported that the Trust had invited and hosted a visit by Rother Councillors Jonathan Vine -Hall and Susan Prochak, the Chair and Vice Chair of Rother's Planning Committee, together with Andrew Mier, on a tour of the Cove area in order to see the problems at first hand and also to note how close some of the houses are to the cliff edge. This visit had provided the Planning Committee with much needed evidence on which they can make any future decisions.

RK referred to various current issues with drainage including the situation in Channel Way and the increased erosion on the cliffs in that area. A solution would be to get East Sussex Highways to take the excess water from the Firehills into their system, but they are reluctant to do this. This issue would hopefully be addressed in the period ahead, but the Trust would need the residents of Channel Way to give their active support and be much more directly involved if anything positive is to be achieved.

Finally, RK mentioned that the Trust had received some very favourable publicity from a recent article on the BBC's website concerning communities threatened by coastal erosion. Fairlight's amazing success in achieving the construction of the three berms had been acknowledged and was compared with the failure to take action in many other threatened locations. Contact had been made by several people seeking advice.

DS thanked RK for her report and her considerable work for the FPT.

5. Planning and development along the cliffs

RK had already referred to this subject in her report and in particular of the production of the Planning Protocol for Fairlight. The view of the Committee was that no new substantial building work should be carried out near to the cliff edge. Nothing must be done which would disturb the existing land or drainage. That included the construction of foundations for new buildings and enlarged homes.

Cllr Andrew Mier spoke on this issue. He reported that he was seeking to obtain from Rother DC an Article 4 Direction under the General Planning Order, removing the right to “permitted development” from properties that are located on the cliffs in the coastal buffer zone as defined in the Rother Development and Site Allocations Plan (DaSA). Rother officials had declined to take action in the past but it had been made clear to them that progress on this issue was now at the top of their list of priorities. Such a Direction would have the effect of extending planning controls to extensions to properties as well as entirely new buildings. Cllr Mier said that he hoped that he would be in a position to report some good news on this matter soon.

6. Treasurer’s report and approval of accounts.

NB presented the Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2020 which had been approved by the Committee and had been signed on 15 October 2020. Total funds were £33,508. There were currently unrestricted funds totalling £21,971 in the bank accounts at Barclays and Nationwide. In addition, there were restricted funds of £11,537 held at HSBC which were designated for further coast protection works.

NB went through the accounts in detail, explaining each of the important items. Insurance cost £351. There had been net income for the year of £395 which was an improvement on the previous year (a loss of £92).

NB reported that the FPT currently had 181 members, of whom there were 39 new members who had joined since last year. NB thanked JL and KS for their hard work in obtaining new members. The membership subscription remained at £10 for 3 years.

MMP Accounting Solutions Ltd was thanked by NB for their efforts in preparing the Accounts without charge.

Approval of the Accounts was proposed by Stephen Leadbetter and seconded by Carol Shortman. The Accounts were unanimously adopted.

7. Election of officers and members of the Executive Committee

LK proposed that DS be re-elected as Chairman and thanked him for his work for the FPT. This resolution was carried unanimously on a show of hands.

DS proposed LK as Vice- Chairman. This resolution was carried unanimously on a show of hands.

DS then proposed NB as Treasurer. This resolution was carried unanimously on a show of hands.

DS proposed RK as Secretary. This resolution was carried unanimously on a show of hands.

DS announced that there had been 4 nominations for members of the Committee – Jill Lewing (Membership secretary), Issy Horsley (Rockmead Road monitoring), Keith Summerville and Paul Capps. All were re- elected unopposed.

8. Any other business

IH recorded her thanks and those of the Trust to Strandliners for their clearance work on the beach. Mark Dutton had stated that they had collected about 70 sacks of plastic, including bottles, from behind the berm.

PC said that he wanted to make it clear that the damaged drainage pipe which ran over the cliff in Channel Way had been put there in 2003 by Fairlight Parish Council, who were now responsible for ensuring that the pipe was repaired. He repeated the view that the only effective method of removing surplus water from Channel Way was if East Sussex Highways were to accept the water into their system. The cliff pipe ought to be only for use as an overflow on rare occasions. Rother needed to work with the Trust and the Fairlight Parish Council to sort out this situation.

Several members expressed concern about the need to widen membership of the Trust in the village. Bob Scattergood said that it seemed that only about 20% of homes were members. Trevor Lewing noted that many households were now represented by one member whereas two people had joined up in the past. However, a recent circular had generated 39 new members. It was agreed that the Committee should give priority to recruitment in the period ahead.

The meeting closed at 3.30pm.