

FAIRLIGHT PRESERVATION TRUST

(Registered Charity Number 1107169)

The Annual General Meeting of the Fairlight Preservation Trust was held on Sunday 21 November 2021 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), Keith Somerville (KS) and 12 other members.

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 current spread of the coronavirus.

Apologies for absence had been received from Denise Lamb, Trevor Lewing, Jill Lewing, George Hensher, Mike Webb and Vi Webb.

2. Minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting

The Minutes of the last AGM were considered by the meeting and unanimously approved.

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

DS reported that this last year had been another year of sustained 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.

As in the past the main job of the Committee was to ensure that Rother District Council carry out its obligations and that the sea defences were being properly maintained together with monitoring expenditure in this regard. Essential repair work had been carried out where required including repairs to the Rockmead Road wells. 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 involved with the consideration being given to an Article 4 direction under the Planning Acts which was being investigated by 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.

DS thanked IH and Laurie Beetham for their hard work in monitoring the wells and collecting the data from the Compressor House. He pointed out that there was always a risk of continuing erosion of the cliffs and there was no room for complacency. Regrettably there was a need for constant vigilance.

Membership of the Trust is very important for Fairlight. DS thanked JL for the work she had done 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 work as Treasurer to the Trust and for the very valuable help he had given to the work of the Committee over the past year, in particular in maintaining and ensuring the

preparation of the annual accounts. DS also thanked LK for his work as Vice-Chairman and the assistance given to RK as Secretary.

DS thanked KS and PC for their work on the Committee in the past year. KS had been most helpful in delivering letters to members and circulating notices throughout the village. 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.

4. Report on the Fairlight Maintenance Programme and related matters

The Secretary, RK, reported that 2021 had been another extraordinary year but notwithstanding all the problems with Covid the work of the Trust had continued without interruption. It was best described as a “steady as you go” year.

The last winter was one of very heavy rains, and this led to some substantial cliff falls along the shoreline and the cliffs in a number of sections from Pett Level and around the Cove area. Anyone walking along the foreshore would have seen where these falls have occurred. This is evident in particular near the Compressor House and also along Sea Road below “Bishopsgarth”. This was natural movement and weathering, but RK was pleased to say that the three berms had been doing their job and functioning well.

The Trust organised an aerial survey by drone in the Spring in order to see more clearly the state of the cliffs, and to assess where the erosion has occurred. This proved to be very informative, and it forms the base for checking against the results of the next drone pictures which will be taken next Spring for comparison. It is clear from the drone photos that there is a particular problem with the cliff at Channel Way in the area where a pipe was fitted over the edge of the cliff to take the water off the road. This pipe was fitted by the Parish Council about 20 years ago, and there is a major problem with access to it due to the slope. As a result of the Covid restrictions nothing had been able to be actioned over the last year in relation to this problem.

During the summer months essential repairs and regular significant maintenance work were carried out on the Rockmead slopes. The berms were also monitored on a regular basis and reports were received from the engineers that they remain in good condition, notwithstanding the difficult weather conditions. There had also been the regular maintenance of the Compressor House and the 56 individual wells which pump out huge quantities of water which collect below the surface in the cliffs. This work was carried out by Rother’s contractors. In addition, Campbell Scientific have checked the working of the complex machines that are housed in the Compressor House and which work 24 hours a day every day of the week. Regular checking and monitoring of the efficiency of the wells continued to be carried out by IH and LB to whom we are all very grateful for all their efforts.

Funding: There remained a significant amount of money in the Fairlight Maintenance Fund that is held by Rother, and ring fenced for work on the cliffs. The money has to be carefully spent. It is a fund that will gradually be spent over time, and in reality it cannot be replaced in view of current government spending limits. Over the last 12 months there had not been any need for any significant expenditures from this fund, with most work being paid for by Rother itself in its role as the Coast Protection Authority.

Membership: With regard to Membership, it was clear from last year's AGM that the Committee needed to do more to increase the membership of the FPT. Last year membership stood at 181. During this year we have put in place a number of new initiatives to increase our membership. RK reported that the membership drive over the last year had seen an increase in numbers by over 40%. Much of this has been due to the efforts of JL as Membership Secretary, kindly supported in recent weeks by Bob Scattergood. The Trust was delighted to have so many new members joining. The size of the membership is of importance as it enhances the FPT's reputation and standing with the local authority.

Publicity: The Trust had an article published in each of the editions of the Fairlight News magazine. These articles have covered some of the history of the work on the coastal erosion of the area and our various efforts to save properties in the village. The Trust (and its predecessor) has been doing this for 30 years, and the articles explain how the Trust obtained the government funding for each of the three berms that cover the Cove area, and the difficulties associated with obtaining this financial support. As members would know, Fairlight now had one of the most extensive sets of coastal defences of any community in the UK.

Planning: RK noted that monitoring of Planning issues had been an important feature of the Trust's work over the year, especially as the FPT is concerned with the development of the village and the likely impact of this on the cliff area. In particular, there is the need to restrict building along the cliff edge. The ground is saturated, and it was known from previous works and engineers' reports that further work in this vulnerable area close to the edge could lead to the collapse of the cliffs, especially in those locations which are subject to underground water pooling. It would be a disaster not just for those immediately affected, but also for the whole village, if there were to be the loss of any further properties.

In this context RK reported that during this year Cllr Andrew Mier had persuaded Rother to investigate the possibility of seeking from the Secretary of State an Article 4 planning direction for the zone along the cliffs. Such a direction would require householders to obtain planning consent for any new developments in that area. An expert in this field, Professor Robin Mc Innes, had been employed by Rother over the summer to do some research into this proposal. It was understood that Prof Mc Innes had completed his research. It was likely that the issue would come before the District Council for consideration in the new year.

The Trust had benefited from a good number of new people coming on board during the year, and it always welcomed assistance from people new to the area who have skills and expertise that they would like to share with us. The FPT wanted to encourage as much participation as possible from local people. It needed to be kept informed about anything that pertains to the state of the cliffs. If anyone heard of any cliff fall or other concern they should notify the FPT.

RK concluded by expressing her thanks to Councillor Andrew Mier for all his support and guidance over the past year and for all the enormous efforts he makes on behalf of the village.

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 so it did not require further elaboration.

6. Treasurer's report and approval of accounts.

NB presented the Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2021 which had been approved by the Committee and had been signed on 12 November 2021. Total funds were £34,226. There were currently unrestricted funds totalling £22,589 and restricted funds of £11,637 which were designated for further coast protection works.

NB went through the accounts in detail, explaining each of the important items. Membership subscriptions had raised £975. Insurance cost £367. There had been net income for the year of £618 which was an improvement on the previous year.

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

Approval of the Accounts was proposed by Carol Shortman, seconded by IH. 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 – JL , IH , KS and PC. All were re- elected unopposed.

8. Any other business

There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 3.10pm.