

**Bexhill Heritage Members Meeting  
Wednesday 20 April 2022 at 7pm.  
St Barnabas Church, Sea Road, Bexhill**

**Committee Members:**

Steve Johnson	(SJ)	Vice Chair/Treasurer
Alexis Markwick	(AM)	iT Support Officer/Historian
Simon Allen	(SA)	Projects Coordinator
David Beales	(DB)	Planning Officer/Consultant
Geoff Tompkins	(GT)	Band Stand Chair
Yolanda Laybourne	(YL)	East Parade Liaison
Chris Madeley	(CM)	Membership Secretary
David Hatherell	(DH)	Bexhill Museum Liaison
John Swap	(JS)	Events Management
Gordon Smith	(GS)	Marketing and Media
Jeanette Eason	(JE)	Committee Clerk

**Welcome** – SJ welcomed everyone to the meeting and also welcomed the guest speaker, Howard Martin, the Chair of Bexhill Chamber of Commerce and Tourism. As usual, members will have the opportunity to hear from the committee about their recent work and ask any questions they may have about the projects. Also, it might be an opportunity to hear where perhaps BH and the Bexhill Chamber of Commerce and Tourism’s aspirations coincide and could work together.

SJ explained that he would start the meeting by provide an update of BH projects for the membership, answer any questions and that Howard Martin will talk later, after the refreshment break, about the Bexhill Chamber of Commerce and Tourism role.

Refreshments will be available in the break - courtesy of Bow Ties in Western Road.

**Members’ Business Meeting**

**1. Apologies** – Pearl Mason, Yolande Leybourne, Ellie Gibson, Kathy Harmer, Daniel O’Farrell, Clare Crick, Lynn Markwick. No declarations of interest were made

**2. Bandstand Project SJ** – It was reiterated that this was a project in partnership with RDC, who were providing the ‘lion share’ of the financing. It is down to BH to find the money for the ‘extras’ like furniture, the sound system, flag pole and interpretation boards.

It was agreed at a previous online members meeting and with RDC that the Bandstand should be a multi-functional place. Not just for music but a whole range of things. SJ then went through a slide show presentation of the building that BH took on, including the history of the bandstand and it’s original design which echoed the other buildings around it at the time. The Bandstand had been allowed to become tired, sad, unloved and embarrassing and was likely leading to possible demolition. In future it will be locked at night and hopefully better respected.

SJ ran through potential uses to encourage local activities in the area and town centre, from music, craft demonstrations, poetry, games events. It could also host a range of entertainment and Arts subjects. BH is looking to find a “Games Host” for a dedicated session each week, when the weather allows. It would also be possible to include a Tourist Information Pop Up, Museum Information Popo Up and even a Heritage Hub. Bookable slots will be available, with requests for donations towards the maintenance of the building.

Things of interest were pointed out during the slide show, pictures of the Bandstand from 1895 onwards, the original design and location. It was noted that in 1910 it was converted to a shelter and ownership transferred to the local authority. By 2021 it had gone through various physical changes, but despite these it was listed in 2013. Sadly, it didn't help with its preservation.

SJ then went through the ideas BH/RDC had to consider for the restoration, although not strictly to the original design and format. The redesign also ensures that the lowered floor gives access to all. SJ mentioned that work done on Shelter No. 3, proves that BH can produce high quality outcomes, as the photos of 'hands on' volunteers showed.

Current project update – 80% of the finance in place, but funding still needed for the 'extras'. Lots of skills, time and work and former trades being provided by volunteers. BH is very grateful to everyone who is helping with this project. More volunteers are always needed and very welcome, especially when reaching the painting stages, probably around June.

SJ explained that there are opportunities for members to become, Gold, Silver or Bronze patrons. It is envisaged that donors can have their name on a plaque, or dedicate it to a loved one, to formally recognise supporters.

SJ reminded those attending that BH work with various other organisations, including RDC, including the new Conservation Officer and are able to get involved with more events.

Any questions?

**Q.** Dave Hatthral asked how many layers of paint were discovered when stripping down the Bandstand?

**A.** SA said there were 8 or 9 different colours. It shows the history of local authority changes in East Sussex. However, the Bandstand will now be repainted in the Bexhill colours.

There being no further questions, the meeting broke for refreshments.

### **Guest speaker – Howard Martin, President of Bexhill Chamber of Commerce and Tourism**

HM introduced himself to the members and other attendees, and provided some background to the BCCT organisation which was founded in 1925. He explained that as it will be the centenary of their organisation soon, they are looking for landmark projects to help celebrate their 130 business members in Bexhill, 40 of which are located in the town centre.

He highlighted that their members are spread across town and range from small businesses, some working from home or small offices, to some bigger players. They try to encourage networking with things like breakfast meetings. HM said that it was important for their members to invest in the town which means investing in our businesses. It is a non-political organisation. HM explained what the BCCT is all about – moving forward, encouraging investment, heritage for younger generations. Bexhill was built by entrepreneurs, who invested and took risks e.g DLWP in order to make Bexhill a dynamic town.

HM then introduced some of the members of the BCCT attending the BH meeting, to highlight the diversity of businesses represented within the town. It was explained that the aim is to bring businesses together and support projects. BCCT is very supportive of BH and recognises the hard work it has done and what BH is currently doing, and to also understand better the subject of conservation and heritage.

With regards centenary or landmark projects, BCCT is looking to sponsor items e.g. Victorian flagpole, the cycle cabin opposite the Sackville Hotel, possibility of mapping on the ground, the former location of the control tower to the race track, all with a view to bringing more tourism to the town.

It was recognised that their members also have issues, and indicated some problems such as with town centre conservation area requirements. What is the Conservation Area for and issues with items such as replacement windows and the 'like for like' costs, and often needing planning permission and the purchase of specific types. BCCT would like to work with BH and find a heritage solution with RDC, to replacement windows and to find a best way forward.

### **There then followed a Q&A session.**

- Dave Hatherell mentioned that in 1920 there was an East Parade Development Programme and the Cycle Chalet was going to go. It was demolished for £10.
- Councillor Paul Courtel – Bexhill Central – stated that 2 recent planning applications for replacement UPVC windows had been discussed/refused. He subsequently asked Councillors on the Planning Committee what concerns they had with UPVC windows. They indicated that it is not necessarily the change from wood to UPVC, but the style and look of the replacement windows. It was mentioned that one of the issues was the style and thickness of the UPVC frames. However, it is now known that owners can get advice to reapply/make a resubmission for a small cost. Renewal of the application is free.
- Paul Lendon – Asked if BCCT had considered the roundabout at Glyne Gap for a project for their centenary. It was in need of attention as the gateway to Bexhill. HM agreed and said they were also wanting to put something at the bottom of Sackville Road, on the roundabout. There are problems with Highways England, but BCCT are trying to get Ravenside Retail Park renamed as Bexhill Retail Park and Leisure.
- Lee – mentioned that there was already a mix of windows, some UPVC, others falling apart.
- Tracy – made a point about getting together with RDC and BH to seek a way forward re UPVC windows.
- Patrick – spoke about the Bexhill Town Team which he helped to establish about 10 years ago, and who prepared a document to review the state of empty shop units, posters, flyers which was circulated to estate agents. The town at the time looked awful. He was also involved in improving the Playhouse in Western Road. He explained a lot of landlords/freeholders of properties were absent and have no interest in looking after their properties. It was also mentioned that there are no set guidelines for the Conservation Area, no rules, regulations. No one knows what is required or wanted.

HM agreed that the guidelines are incoherent and that some owners blatantly ignore planning rules and regulations.

DB responded with regards the subject of UPVC Replacement windows on behalf of BH who have been trying to resolve this matter with RDC since 2018. The problem of poor quality or different replacement windows, troubles BH a great deal. Last year it was agreed that the organisation recognised that for the comfort of the residents, insulation, environmental considerations, it would accept UPVC replacements if they were to the highest standards. BH is still trying to get RDC properly focussing on the matter and trying to resolve the situation to everyone's satisfaction with a proper policy about windows in the Conservation area. BH is due to meet the new Conservation Officer next week and this subject is at the top of the agenda. Unfortunately, the CO is not the sole arbiter of the planning decisions, but some progress should be possible to devise a strategy, to achieving that goal.

HM stated that RDC should set up a grant system to support the replacement with specific energy efficient windows. DB said there was historically a scheme for windows and shop fronts,

but it was later noted that all the money went towards shop fronts, which has benefitted Bexhill subsequently.

DB then ran through a series of slides with examples of UPVC windows, to show what can be done. Many of them are now indistinguishable from their former wooden style originals. There was discussion about recent applications/refusals. SJ mentioned that it would benefit the electorate and businesses knowing the rules and seeking some common ground. BH will be taking forward to the CO next week and perhaps some consultation would be in order.

Councillor Paul Courtel stated that a Local Plan for Rother was due to be announced soon and suggested that BH/BCCT put together proposal to produce a high specification standard to be written and included in the plan. Also mentioned about Sainsburys, that the new freeholder is RDC. Public Works Loans Board could be available at very low rates of interest, which might include help with the replacement of windows across the Conservation Area. HM mentioned that it is disappointing that RDC does not seem to getting the same business support as Newhaven.

Tracy asked about the CO opinion with regards changing the Bandstand windows. SJ explained that the decision was made by the previous CO post holder, and acknowledged that the bandstand would not have survived with the old ones. Indeed, she was instrumental in putting BH in contact with the architect who has designed the replacement windows. So they did need to be changed urgently.

HM thanked BH for their invitation and for a very constructive meeting.

SJ then introduced Paul Lendon to make a short statement about our departing Chairman.

PL said that as Raymond Konyon is not here tonight and has resigned as Chair from Bexhill Heritage, which is quite sad, he wished to officially thank Ray for all that he has done for Heritage and that the team and his work is going from strength to strength.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.00 p.m.