

RINGSTEAD PROTECTION SOCIETY (RPS)

www.ringsteadprotectionsociety.org.uk

Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting held at Shambles Ringstead Bay on Sunday 29 August 2021 at 10.30am

The Chairman, Nigel Williams (NW), welcomed members to the meeting and reminded them of the RPS objectives. He reported with sadness the loss of two longstanding members, Celia Hensman and Tom Kirkpatrick. Celia owned the Shepherd's Hut behind Seafields which now belongs to her niece Davina and loved sharing Ringstead with her friends. Tom, who was living in Australia, was described by one friend as having Ringstead in his DNA. His family and friends would be remembering him after the Friendly Sail and at the barbecue in the evening.

An attendance register was circulated.

Apologies: Liz Carter, Julian Arkell, Mitch Charles, Tim & Jane Williams, Terry & Jo Alldridge, Tess Banham, Sue Blane, Nigel & Barbara Hensman, Diana Godwin-Austen & Alexander Cullen, Lelia Kneeshaw, Jenny & Eric Serjeant, Rosalind & Michael Langford, Rupert Edwards and Gill & Mickey Walker.

Minutes of the 2020 AGM

The minutes were on the website and NW asked if they could be signed as a true record of what took place. Sue Kirkpatrick proposed this, Nick Willis seconded and the meeting voted in favour.

Matters Arising

These would be dealt with in the Chairman's Report.

Chairman's Report

NM reported on his meeting with landowner Johnnie Russell (JR) which covered the following. Last year, it had been suggested that a sign be placed near the slipway saying 'To The beach' as visitors often missed it and tried to get down in front of Over The Hills (OTH). A sign has been made and will go up in the winter. The plan remains to fence off the grass area across the road from OTH to prevent further cliff damage. A land drainpipe has been suggested for beyond the footbridge by The White House to help prevent cliff loss and this is being investigated. More roadside fences will be replaced with single strand electric fencing, as they have been on the hill, making the road wider for passing. No remedial work is planned for the road running east. Hedges on the front will be cut back in the autumn. NW explained the RPS planning policy to JR who said he did not envisage any more green field development. Car parking was discussed and it was felt the situation was better than last year but there were traffic bottlenecks at Upton.

Osmington Mills Protection Group AGM

NW said he had briefed the meeting on issues exercising the RPS. The Osmington Mills group was concerned about an application by Waterside to have the licence for Osmington Holidays extended from ten to 12 months a year but this was refused by planners.

Beach Erosion

There had been talk of placing rock armour in front of some of the houses to slow erosion but the cost would be around £1.5m. NW had asked if any members had useful contacts who might assist with funding but no one came forward. He had spoken to Councillor Mary Penfold who chairs the Standing Conference On Problems Associated With The Coastline and hoped to do so again but was aware there were some powerful bodies against any form

of coastal intervention. NW has a meeting planned in October with Councillor Ray Brian, who is responsible for Highways Travel & Environment, about erosion at Ringstead.

Report of Society's Trustees

The report had been posted on the website www.ringsteadprotectionsociety.org.uk at the beginning of the month. Also online are this year's Accounts and Treasurer's Report. The Minutes of this meeting will be posted no later than 30 September. If members wish to propose any new features for the site, the Trustees would be happy to hear from them.

Treasurer's Report

NW expressed the Society's gratitude to Rupert Edwards for auditing the accounts and to Alastair Fisher (AF) for keeping the RPS on the financial straight and narrow. AF took the meeting through the accounts reporting the balance of funds which included subscriptions, bank interest and gift aid. The RPS account that held the majority of its cash had been moved to Redwood Bank which offered a better return. There were no questions on the accounts.

Election of Trustees and Officers

The current Trustees are Vicky Banham (VB), AF, Lucy Kirkpatrick (LK), Ian Scott (IS), NW and John Young. In accordance with the Society's Constitution, Vicky and Lucy retire by rotation but, being eligible, offer themselves for re-election. NW asked if the vote could be taken for both at once and this was proposed by Lydia Lebus and seconded by Derek Thomas. Re-election was proposed by Al Thorpe, seconded by Davina Moss and carried unanimously.

The current officers are NW (Chairman), VB (Secretary) and AF (Treasurer). In accordance with the Constitution, all retire from office but have offered themselves for reappointment. Alfie Kirkpatrick proposed and Derek Thomas seconded that their appointment be voted on en bloc. The proposal for reappointment was made by Simon Walker and seconded by John Gibbs and carried.

The General Committee currently comprises Liz Carter, Mitch Charles, Will Edwards, Tim Pratelli, Louise Scott, Paul Thomas, Simon Walker and the six Trustees. NW asked for a proposer and seconder of the motion that they be re-elected en bloc. It was proposed by Deb Peele, seconded by Mark Fisher and agreed unanimously. NW added that Ginny Rolls had agreed to be a watchdog, keeping the RPS informed of local issues.

Planning Matters

IS mentioned the planning application made by the Ringstead Caravan Company (RCC) last year to increase the time the site could be used from seven to 11 months of the year. Planners agreed to ten months but this decision was overturned following a judicial review brought by the Wallis family. It is expected the RCC will reapply. If and when there is a new application, members will be informed. Currently the site has been cleared of most of the caravans and trees and is not being used. Hilary Fisher from the RCC had agreed to update the meeting later on the current position.

IS explained that following the RCC's planning application in 2020, the Trustees recognised that the RPS did not have a policy or procedure for considering planning applications, not having had a situation previously when one was required. The Trustees therefore established the General Committee consisting of the six Trustees and seven other members. The General Committee was given responsibility for considering planning applications in the context of an agreed policy and procedure including consideration of the effect which an application might have on the objectives of the RPS. In drafting the policy and procedure, the aim was to ensure the GC was not acting as a vigilante by interfering with everything that owners wanted to do with their properties; it is their property and they should be allowed to do with it what they want within the planning and other relevant regulations. It was decided to concentrate on applications which the GC felt would have a significant adverse effect on the community and/or the objectives of the RPS. IS said the view previously taken was that it was not for the Trustees to suggest to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) that their views were those of the RPS. That is why they did not give the LPA their views last year on any application and to his knowledge had never done so previously. The practice has been to inform members of an application, give the relevant details and encourage them to express their views to the planners. Now there is a policy whereby the GC will keep members informed of proposed development - unless it is unlikely to have any relevance to the RPS objectives - and in the case of significant cases, be more proactive. In such cases, if 80% of the GC decided that, if granted, a consent could have a significantly adverse effect on the community or the objects of the RPS then, in addition to informing the members how to make their individual comments to the planners, the GC could-not would-also decide to inform the members of the GC's opinion and also could -not would- inform the planners of its view. In the latest draft of the policy, the 80% threshold has been changed to 75% and when reached, the GC will be required to inform members of the RPS's opinion while encouraging them to make their views known to the planners. That opinion will not be required automatically to pass to the planners. This will remain a decision for the Trustees. IS stressed the policy was in its infancy and may require further amendment in the light of subsequent experience.

At this point IS said that Tim Wallis (TW) had submitted two questions as AOB items in relation to planning that were probably more conveniently dealt here. His questions are:

“There are people who live all year round at Ringstead who welcome the respite from tourism during the winter months when the car park, shop and caravan site close. Why does the RPS support the extension of occupancy for the caravan site when the permanent residents, general public and the Parish Council consider and I quote: ‘the current 7 month season is a reasonable balance between the business interests of the caravan park and the interests of the local community and the need to protect the special landscape character of this unique section of the Dorset coastline.’”

“How does the RPS's support for extension of occupancy fit with its aims and objectives?”

IS replied by saying the RPS had never to his knowledge contacted an LPA with its views on planning applications and did not on this occasion. It did not support the application. There were no current applications for planning at Ringstead. The officers will not speculate on how the GC will view any applications until they arise, when they will be viewed against the new planning policy, which includes consideration of the objectives of the RPS.

TW disagreed with the assertion that RPS had not given its views to planners on a planning application before as he believed it had objected to plans for a permanent shop in 1987. He took up the point about the RPS not wanting to interfere with what property owners did saying that caravan sites were very different. Merete Bates said she was concerned about the local camping sites where the time limit on when they could operate had been extended. Tim asked that members be given more than three weeks' notice if there were another RCC application. IS suggested TW let officers know if there were new applications. Paul Thomas said more notice was vital. David Arkell said it was important to get the planning policy right and it looked roughly right. TW said the word tranquility was in the RPS constitution and how did it feel about potentially 150 people being on the caravan site in the winter months when there are usually only a few residents at Ringstead. NW said the RPS could not second guess what might happen and would wait until any application was made.

Portland Waste Incinerator

VB reported that Powerfuel Portland wanted to build a £100 million Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) on Portland capable of converting more than 200,000 tonnes of non-hazardous, non-recyclable household waste a year into energy – enough to power around 30,000 homes. It will need planning permission and an environmental permit. The Environment Agency (EA) public consultation on the permit closes on September 22. The site already has permission for a facility fuelled by vegetable oil and rubber but this was not built and Powerfuel Portland has put in a new application because its plans are substantially different. Dorset Council is considering it and consulting the public before discussing it at a Strategic Planning Committee in the early autumn. A campaign group is objecting, saying Portland is the wrong place. The group is worried about traffic, possible pollution and impacts on the Jurassic Coast and tourism. VB asked the meeting if it would like the GC to consider the plans under its new planning policy. Sue Kirkpatrick said it would be good to understand how the company was countering concerns. Other members asked about emissions and air and water quality and whether Ringstead might be affected. Members voted to ask the GC to look into the matter.

Caravan Site - latest

Hilary Fisher, on behalf of RCC, thanked the RPS for the opportunity to explain its plans and apologised for not being in a position to do so before. Until agreement had been reached with the shareholders, it had not been able to share its vision for the site.

Hilary's great aunt, Hilda, bought the land for the caravan site in 1924 and it was run as The Creek Caravan site. She organised the building of utilities, including the road from the turning to Ringstead Farm, just below the barn, to where the shop is now. RCC bought the caravan site from Hilda's heir in 1979. It was set up by Hilary's father and mother with shareholders from families who have owned caravans on the site for many years. RCC is preparing to repair and renew the site's infrastructure having cleared it, made it safe and secured it. Improvements will include sympathetic landscaping and planting of native trees and shrubs in keeping with its coastal location. Hilary regretted having to remove the trees her father had planted in the '70s but this was done so that the improvements could go ahead. Some were found to be rotten or encroaching on pipes. No decision on lighting has been made and there are no plans to put in overhead lighting nor a clubhouse. There will be 30 pitches as before. The caravans will be new, two-bedroom with larger living, kitchen and dining spaces but restricted, as before, to sleeping six. It is likely to be several years before all of them are on site. The site will remain a quiet family site. Hilary said RCC would be updating Ringstead and Upton Residents and the Chair of the RPS as the work progresses and posting information on the website: ringsteadcaravans.co.uk. She said that if members had concerns, they should come and talk to the family. Paul Thomas asked Hilary's update could be sent to members and this was agreed.

Upton update

Derek Thomas said he expected the new tent field at Upton to be open for the normal 28 days next year. In the associated yard, two lodges for use by the owners were expected to replace two old caravans in November. Traffic through Upton had been truly horrendous in 2020 but improved by the two temporary signs. The Highways Authority was not supportive of more permanent traffic calming measures. The Waterside application to have the lodge sites in Osmington Mills open for 12 months of the year had been declined as NW had reported but DT expected an appeal. With car parking at Osmington Mills so limited, more visitors come to Ringstead where, DT suggested, all land and property owners had a collective responsibility to protect it. DT requested nothing was done to encourage yet more visitors as traffic through Upton was sometimes at saturation levels.

Any Other Business

Merete Bates was concerned about protecting the western side of Ringstead from development. NW replied that the land was owned by JR who could do what he wished with it within planning regulations but he had said he had no intention of doing anything in his lifetime. Lydia Lebus mentioned that the overspill car park was being used at night by drivers racing round it and members were urged to report such activity to the police. Alfie Kirkpatrick said he continued to see people digging into the cliff for fossils and that this was illegal. It was agreed to ask JR to put up a sign pointing out the practice was against the law.

The meeting was closed by the chairman at 11.55.