

RINGSTEAD PROTECTION SOCIETY (RPS)
www.ringsteadprotectionsociety.org.uk

Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting held at Shambles
Ringstead Bay on Sunday 27 August 2023 at 10.30am

The Chairman, Nigel Williams (NW), welcomed members to the meeting and reminded members of the RPS objectives.

An attendance register was circulated.

NW recorded with sadness the loss of two long-standing members, Judy Elliott and Ian Scott. Judy stayed in Ringstead every year for more than 50 years. She met Mike Elliott while he was working as a ship's doctor on the Union Castle Line to and from South Africa. Ringstead was an important part of their married life, carrying on the tradition of family holidays started by Mike's grandfather when he built Muscliffe in 1928. Ian Scott grew up locally coming to Ringstead regularly. He built the stonewall around Moonfleet on a summer job in 1959. The house was owned by the parents of his wife Mary. He joined the RPS at its inception becoming chairman in the nineties before handing over to John Young in 2007. When it became a CIO, he was a founding Trustee. Ringstead mattered to him and he loved everything about the place.

1. Apologies: Julian Arkell, Steve Arkell, Terry & Jo Alldridge, Tess Banham, Susan Blane, Phillipa Bomford, Jillie & Rupert Edwards, Tim Elliott, Tessa Scott, Tom & Emma Shelford.

2. Minutes of the 2022 AGM

The draft minutes of last year's website were posted on the website and members were asked to accept them as a record of what took place. Tim Wallis (TW) said he believed there were inaccuracies in them relating to the item on the Ringstead Caravan Company under planning matters. It was agreed that the minutes would be amended. Members were asked if they agreed to accept the minutes if amended. This was proposed by David Young, seconded by Liz Carter and approved by a majority show of hands.

3. Matters Arising

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

4. Chairman's & Trustees' Report

NW said much of the Executive Committee's time had been taken up in dealing with the complaint that would be covered later but he wanted to thank them for their hard work during the year.

The Portland Waste Incinerator (Planning application WP/20/00692/DCC) was back in the news as Powerfuel, the company wanting to build an Energy Recovery Plant at Portland Port had been refused permission by Dorset Council and launched an appeal. Merete Bates (MB) wanted the RPS to add its voice to those protesting against the plan. Vicky Banham (VB) said the General Committee had discussed it briefly and decided that under its planning criteria it was a case where it would not be writing as a Society to DC but individual members could do so if they wished. It was agreed a link would be added to the meeting's minutes for members to follow:

<https://planning.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/plandisp.aspx?recno=386721>

Asylum Accommodation provided by the government on a vessel in Portland Port was in the news with people speaking passionately for and against. It is unlikely to have any potential impact on Ringstead.

Chairman's meeting with Johnnie Russell (JR)

The new sign near the top of the hill down to the bay is to be removed (as are others) in the off-season months and the frame will be cut to size.

A proposal was made last year for a sign near the top of the slipway saying 'To the Beach' to encourage its use and save some of the damaging foot traffic in front of Over the Hills. JR said the sign has been made but overlooked due to other pressing matters. Hopefully it will go up soon.

A Land Drainpipe, similar to the one to the west of JR's fishing hut in the woods, was proposed last year to be placed out of sight beyond the footbridge by The White House. It would lead down to the beach to stop water leaching into the lateral crevices which facilitate cliff slip all the way to the east well past Shambles. JR does not oppose it in principle. NW agreed to check with the relevant authorities in DC if it were permissible.

Last year remedial work to the road edges of the Ringstead access road was discussed. A few months ago, some crushed stone was laid which has improved the situation. Potholes which needed to be filled in the track on seafront to the west and the track inland had been mentioned also. These have been filled. JR said he has no intention of doing any remedial work on potholes in the track on seafront to the east towards the caravan site.

On car parking, it was felt that Mitch and his team were doing a good job. Bottle necks remain an issue at Upton. JR asked again that homeowners would close the new wooden gate by the shop as a means of traffic control as often the shop attendants were too busy to keep an eye.

The Trustees' Report had been posted on the website:
www.ringsteadprotectionsociety.org.uk

NW proposed a vote of thanks to Tim Williams for updating the website including adding photographs and reports. Tim asked that members contact him on the address under the photos if they had any they wished to add.

Minutes of the 2023 AGM will be posted there no later than 30 September.

5. Treasurer's Report

The RPS is in a sound financial position and NW expressed thanks to Rupert Edwards for auditing the accounts and to Tim Pratelli (TP) the treasurer. The report is on the website. TP gave a summary saying that the society's assets were down on the previous year mainly due to spending £4,800 in relation to obtaining counsel's opinion regarding planning matters connected to the Ringstead Caravan Company.

David Burden (DB) asked if the RPS did anything with its assets in terms of investment. TP replied that funds were placed with reputable banks where some interest was earned but the RPS did not speculate with its funds.

6. Election of Trustees and Officers

NW said that Ian Scott's loss as a Trustee was huge. He announced that John Young had indicated he wished to resign. NW paid tribute to John and thanked him for all he had done. He reminded members of some of John's achievements on behalf of the RPS including liaising with householders to get them onto the Wessex Water sewerage scheme and

liaising with BT, Southern Electric and householders on the west side to have their electricity and telephone cables moved underground. Under his leadership, RPS had a major input to the National Shoreline plan and in 2014 RPS funded an independent report on the cliff slippage which concluded that it was mainly due to the loss of beach at the toe of the cliff. JY replied by thanking NW for his kind words. He said the timing was good as it was time for younger people to take over and the RPS was fortunate in having a talented group of people on the committee who did what they did for no personal gain but for the love of the place. There will be change and change is constant, he said.

NW said the General Committee had asked Simon Walker (SW) and Louise Scott (LS) to join the Trustees to fill the two vacancies and asked for the appointments to be ratified by the meeting. Ratifying the appointment of SW was proposed by Sue Kirkpatrick and seconded by Paul Thomas and agreed by the majority show of hands. Ratifying the appointment of LS was proposed by Louise Young, seconded by Mike Carter and agreed by a majority show of hands.

In accordance with the Society's Constitution, Nigel Williams and Lucy Kirkpartick retired as Trustees by rotation but being eligible, offered themselves for re-election. NW asked if members were content to vote for them en-bloc. This was proposed by David Young, seconded by Katie Scott and agreed by a majority show of hands. Their election was proposed by Mike Howard-Tripp, seconded by Alfie Kirkpatrick and agreed by a majority show of hands.

The current Officers are Nigel Williams (Chairman), Vicky Banham (Secretary) and Tim Pratelli (Treasurer). In accordance with the Constitution, all retired but offered themselves for reappointment. NW asked for a proposer and seconder for them to be voted in en-bloc. Simon Walker proposed, Lydia Lebus seconded and the proposal was agreed with a majority show of hands.

7. The General Committee

The General Committee comprises Liz Carter, Mitch Charles, Will Edwards, Paul Thomas, and the six Trustees. Paul Thomas has decided to step down. He, together with Ian, Simon and Vicky made up the Complaints Sub-Committee. NW thanked him for his huge contribution and said the GC had met and agreed to invite Debs Peele, Will Scott and Tim Elliot to join them and they had accepted.

The role of Watchdog had been important over the years as the person with an ear to the ground to alert the Committee to good and potentially bad things that might affect Ringstead. The post had been filled by Sheila Saddler and recently by Ginny Rolls who had decided to step down. Merete Bates (MB) had agreed to take this on.

8. Complaint against Trustees by Tim Wallis

The secretary had emailed members a package of papers covering the Complaint with one paper excluded at Tim Wallis' (TW) request. NW said the Trustees had followed the RPS complaints procedure and now considered the matter closed. He added that while the parties had not agreed on a number of issues, the whole process had enabled the RPS to improve some of its governance and policies, which he hoped would set it up well for any future issues. He invited TW to explain his position to the meeting. TW said one of his reasons for joining the RPS was so that he could discuss issues pertaining to Ringstead with the Trustees. He thanked the Complaints Sub Committee and chairman for looking into his complaint. His reason for raising it was that he felt the RPS was failing in its charitable purpose to protect and preserve the area and he could not understand its support for the caravan site nor for DC's policy on tourism. He said he opposed any extension to the caravan site's season for fear it could lead to year-round and residential use. When the

chairman had urged Ringstead householders not to vote for the formation of a Parish Meeting, TW said the chairman had argued that the RPS already acted as a forum for discussion. TW hoped he would stand by that and added that if anyone had any questions for him, they could be addressed to him on email via the secretary.

Nigel Hensman (NH) asked TW what he was trying to achieve and whether he thought the complaint had helped. TW replied that he felt the caravan site use should remain seasonal. NH said he understood the RPS had joined TW in resistance to 12 months residential use. TW cited the Osmington site that had been given ten months use and was now year-round. Simon Lebus agreed with NH that it was not clear what remedy was being sought by the complaint and pointed out that the RPS was not a planning authority. TW said the RPS had found 11 months use of the site acceptable. NW disagreed saying that 'no comment' by the RPS did not equate to 'support' of the Application. Simon Walker said the complaints process had taken a vast amount of time but lessons had been learned. There were now clear policies and procedures for RPS responses to future planning applications. MB said TW was not alone in his opposition to an extended season for the RCC and that Ringstead was coming under huge pressure especially since lock down with hundreds of cars coming down. Sue Kirkpatrick said she supported the comments by the complaints subcommittee in its report and thanked its members and the chairman for the amount of time and effort put into it. David Burden agreed with MB and said it felt at times as if residents were not listened to. He sympathized with TW's concern about 'creep' with any extension to the RCC's use. NW felt some people overestimated the influence of the RPS which was unlikely to be much greater than a well-argued case from an individual.

9. Proposal to modify our objectives

If the RPS wished to modify its objectives, and there had been some discussion around this among some members, it would have to speak to the charity commission. SW said the GC had not had sufficient time to debate the matter so any proposal would be premature at this time.

10. Planning Matters

We have a working Planning Policy, thanks largely to Ian Scott, which we use to look at any Planning Applications that might relate to Ringstead. It is a live document – with changes made through experience.

This year we looked at:

- Neptune House. This Application by the Parrys was withdrawn before determination and is being refreshed to make its aspect narrower as viewed from the coastal path. The GC had considered the original Application and agreed to forward it to members for their own consideration.
- The Orchard. JR made an S192 Application to regularize by precedent the use for storage of land he owns east of the car park facing the Fisher's Place track. Normal Planning Rules do not apply for an S192 which relies simply on evidence of past use. A case was made by a resident against the application. DC has decided that the buildings there can remain but would not accept a formal change of use.
- The Bunkers. JR had permission to convert the Transmission Bunker, in the woods near Pitt Cottage, into a holiday unit and everyone NW has spoken to thinks it is a sympathetic conversion. JR also has consent for similar work on the Standby Generator Bunker by Spinney Brook and hopes to start in the Autumn.

- Caravan Site. Historically, the caravans have remained on the site all year, being unoccupied during a closed season of five months. The RCC applied in 2020 for an extension of the holiday season and were granted ten months. As the result of a Judicial Review, the decision was overturned. The RCC then made an S192 Application which sought the removal of two of the Park's extant planning conditions which were for six months annual holiday use only of the caravans and for their removal each year at the end of September. The RPS became involved as it was advised that had the S192 Application been successful, it could have allowed year-round Residential as well as Holiday use. We spent RPS funds (£4800) to employ Queen's Counsel for an opinion which we forwarded to DC. Our concerns were shared by many others. The S192 Application was rejected. The company is seeking advice on a way forward. NW added that the GC supported the existence of a caravan site for holiday use which had been at Ringstead since before many of the houses were built. Any new application would be viewed in accordance with the RPS planning policy.

11. Caravan site update

Hilary Fisher thanked the meeting for the opportunity to give an update on the progress on the Creek Caravan Park. She said the infrastructure had been updated with new fences, upgraded services, grass, new natural stone paths, small solar lights for safety and 30 new caravans replacing the old ones. The planned replanting and landscaping that RCC said it would be doing, to help the park settle back into its surroundings, would begin this autumn with some tree and shrub planting. The next few years would see remaining work undertaken on the refurbishment of existing park buildings at the rear of the site. Hilary reiterated that the park would continue to be run as it had been since the early 60's with only 30 caravans. It remained, she said, a quiet, family holiday site with families that have been on the park long-term as well as new families, all of whom knew and loved Ringstead and many of whom were local to the area. No cars were allowed onto the site itself, only into the car park and only one car per caravan was permitted. This meant that even if the park were full, which was very rare, there would be a maximum of 30 cars on the site. It would continue to have a limit on the season length and limited letting. The RCC's planning aims were still for a holiday site with a longer season and a maximum of 30 static caravans that remained on the park all year. All the work undertaken is designed to comply with health and safety and improve the look of the Caravan Park helping it fit into its surroundings. RCC had hoped the work would have been finished sooner but it had been complicated and several factors had caused delays beyond its control. She apologized if people felt RCC did not communicate with them as much as they would have liked. She said RCC would continue to work with other homeowners to help protect Ringstead and had a strong history of this. One issue she wanted to raise was the significant increase in litter and the use of disposable BBQs and fires on Ringstead beach, which were often left to burn when visitors left. RCC was asking caravan owners not to use disposable BBQs on the park and the National Trust also requested visitors not to use BBQs on their land. DC is campaigning to ban fires and BBQs across Dorset and has already banned fires and disposable BBQs at country parks and high-risk areas. Hilary said that if the campaign was something other landowners at Ringstead and the RPS would be interested in supporting, RCC would be happy to work with them.

NH asked about the chalet style vans at the eastern end of the site. HF said there were four large units there but they were made up in parts and qualified as caravans that could be moved.

12. Upton Update

Col Derek Thomas (DT) said the road had been far less busy this year primarily because of the weather and flowed freely if people followed the signs. The small tent side on the west side had not been used and he believed it was not going to be used.

13. Osmington Mills Protection Group (OMPG) Update

The chairman, Jill Dunning, had supplied NW with a written update.

At the well-attended AGM, a key issue had been Eweleaze Farm's planning application to open for 42 days, which was largely opposed by members. Jill attended the Planning Committee meeting when the application was called in for the councillors to debate. The planning officer had recommended it be rejected. Along with two other local residents, she asked for it to be refused on the grounds of the impact on the AONB and other issues but with the backing of the local district councillor, it was granted. There were certain conditions although Jill says it is unclear whether these have been met. The second major issue was an application by John Coombe to demolish the shacks / cabins along the path linking Upton with Osmington Mills and replace them with considerably larger buildings with hot tubs and parking. This was turned down, but Jill believes he intends to reapply for smaller units on the same footprint of the existing dilapidated shacks, which have not been occupied for some time. The OMPG will be keeping a close eye on any future applications. OMPG remains opposed to the unnecessary spread of leisure industry developments in Osmington Mills and the surrounding area, which it believes is already well-served by tourism facilities and accommodation.

14. Any Other Business

In advance of the meeting, David Burden had asked about the possibility of installing a mirror on the A353, opposite the Ringstead turning, to improve visibility of traffic approaching from Poxwell. NW said he thought mirrors were only installed if the Parish Council supported the case and the DC was generally not in favour. Gill Walker said she thought such mirrors could be deceptive and it was better to rely on one's own eyes. DB was keen for any members who agreed with him to get in touch using his email address:

david@grapevineltd.co.uk

Louisa Macpherson had written noting that the slipway onto the beach had been eroded and damaged by recent storms. She asked if the RPS could request the council to 1) repair it as a matter of urgency and 2) provide protection for the cliff in front of Seaspray to prevent further erosion. SW wondered whether the RPS could inquire as to the possibility of self-funding repairs to the slipway. NW agreed to investigate the matter.

NH said he raised the issue last year that the path up to White Nothe was in a poor condition and had been given a contact but nothing had come of it. He reported that the path was still not of a reasonable standard despite being part of the England Coast Path. The path to Osmington, by contrast, had been improved. NW said the matter should be reported to DC and the relevant contact was on its website. Tim Williams added that there was useful information on the RPS website and if people wanted more links to let him know.

The meeting was closed by the chairman at 11.45 and refreshments were served.