

RYE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

OFFICERS, COMMITTEE MEMBERS, CONSULTANTS AND TRUSTEES 2019

President (vacant)

Vice-Presidents

Kenneth Bird
Robert Bromley

Executive Officers

David Bookless, Chairman; 01797 224650, *drbookless@gmail.com*
Tim Gorman, Hon Secretary; 01797225772, *gormantimothyj@outlook.com*
Julian Lockett, Vice Chairman; 01797 252114, *millhousenorthiam@sky.com*
Diana Hajikakou, Hon Treasurer; 01797 224046, *kyriacos2010@hotmail.co.uk*
Wayne Jones, Planning Liaison; 01797 229795, *waynethurstonjones@me.com*
Andy Stuart, Publicity & Membership Secretary; 01797 223831, *nikiandandy@hotmail.co.uk*

Executive Committee Members

Mike Stott	224614, <i>mstott@btinternet.com</i>
Allan Thomson	07971 785492 <i>allan.r.thomson@gmail.com</i>
John Spencer	07957 971331, <i>jds@winsea.plus.com</i>

Planning Committee Members

Julian Lockett, Chairman
Alan Dickinson
Rae Festing
Wayne Jones
Mike Stott

Honorary Consultant

Alan Dickinson	Historical
----------------	------------

Trustees:

David Bookless
Diana Hajikakou
Andy Stuart

Front cover Photo: Rye Railway Station and renovated signal box looking to the west by Julian Lockett

Rye Conservation Society Forty-Seventh Annual Report for 2019

1 Chairman's Report *by David Bookless*

I am pleased to present Rye Conservation Society members with a brief Report on our activities. Since the arrival of the pandemic and lockdown in March 2020 these activities have been curtailed and in particular the inability to meet face to face means we have so far been unable to hold social events for members or an AGM.

On a personal note I fell seriously ill last winter and was not been able to play an active role for some time, only recently becoming more engaged. I have to thank committee members who in these trying times have continued to make the views of the Society known on planning issues and have represented our views on roads, parking and other local issues. In particular I would like to thank Julian Luckett, our Vice Chairman, for covering for me in my absence and making our detailed comments to Rother DC on planning proposals, many of which have been rather complex.

This Report covers a period that now seems long ago, but I do recall, a lively and tasty Mermaid lunch after the 2019 AGM and a successful summer garden party followed by a well attended Christmas party to close the year in the Town Hall where we presented our annual awards. We were unable to finalise a visit to Charleston in November and unfortunately by the time it was to held in Spring 2020, visits were cancelled by the virus.

You will find officers reports covering our activities and the Accounts for which I thank our esteemed treasurer Diana Hajikakou. I am conscious that we are a well supported Society for which I thank all of you as paying members who help keep us going and make sure that the voices of people with the interests of the town are heard.

Some of what we make judgements on is controversial, development affects neighbours in different ways, but we attempt to reflect the interests of Rye within the planning laws. Developers understandably seek to make a profit and sometimes their plans need to be scaled down or amended, but the pressure on land use and parking becomes greater each year and we live in a very attractive area for housing. It is a major concern that there has been little or no new social housing since the building of Valley Park and I wish I had a solution but current developments are all expensive and beyond most local means.

We have still to arrange an AGM, but realistically a members meeting in person is unlikely to be possible for some months. Some people have suggested a virtual meeting using Zoom, but this would preclude members without the facilities from taking part. We are, however, going to restart monthly committee meetings using Zoom and we maintain our web site to provide information for members. We are always interested to hear from members who would like to play a role by either joining the committee and/or helping with social events if and when we can hold them. In particular we would welcome a qualified legal consultant to provide advice.

Unfortunately we had to say farewell to John Griffiths, our previous Chairman and latterly President, who died in April 2020 and to John Royle who died in November 2019, John Royle had advised us on maritime affairs for many years and contributed much to our activities as well as to many other local organisations. I will miss them both.

2 John Griffiths

It was with great sadness that Rye Conservation Society announced the passing of its President, John Griffiths, who died in St Michael's Hospice on 13 April 2020.

John knew and loved Rye all his life. He spent school holidays in Rye staying with his grandparents in their house in Watchbell Street, where his mother had been born and where he and Helen lived for many years following his retirement. His grandfather had a building firm and, after the Second World War, undertook war damage repair work.



John's interest in building conservation began then. He qualified as an architect and worked in northern Nigeria for the international architect Maxwell Fry before returning to the UK to become Staff Architect for Granada Television. He was Founder Director of the Manchester Building Centre and the Manchester Design Centre, the latter affiliated to the Building Centre and Design Centre in Haymarket, London. For this he was named 'Man of the Year' by the Architects' Journal.

John joined the Civil Service as Head of Technical Information for the Ministry of Public Building and Works (now DEFRA, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), responsible for government building exhibitions, films and HMSO leaflets on good building practice. Seeing a need for more public involvement, he set up the Building Conservation Trust which established a permanent exhibition in Hampton Court Palace, where the public could access practical building conservation advice. Amenity and civic matters were always an active concern of John's, wherever he went. He became a trustee of the Surrey Historic Buildings Trust and was Clerk to two livery companies: the Worshipful Company of Tylers and Bricklayers and the Worshipful Company of Chartered Architects from 1995 to 2000.

Upon moving to Rye following his retirement, he was invited in short order to join the committee of Rye Conservation Society and became its chairman in 2011, stepping down in 2018 when he was elected President. During his time as Chairman he helped to forge links with other amenity societies. This has given members a practical first-hand insight into conservation issues experienced and fought in other historic towns in the South East. Together with Helen, who personified the saying 'behind every man is a great woman' he took great pleasure in arranging study visits. I have always suspected however that John and Helen took more pleasure in the advanced reconnaissance for suitable eating places and comfort facilities than the actual visits themselves, which on more than one occasion John described as 'trying to herd cats'.

John had a fund of jokes which he used to entertain members at the Christmas party and Annual Lunch although, unlike his predecessor as President Sir Donald Sinden in later years, he usually remembered the punch line! Above all John loved Rye, its old buildings, cobbled streets and its setting, a love which is vividly illustrated in his book 'A look at the buildings of Rye' which also highlighted his skill as a photographer. He also cared passionately about the future of our town and the Society hopes that it can mark his contribution to its work when the current emergency is relaxed.

3 Membership and Publicity *by Andy Stuart*

Since the last report I am pleased that Membership levels have remained strong with new Membership pretty much balancing those we have lost – some because they have moved from the area and others because they have sadly passed away. And it is with this in mind that I would like to note that in recent months (since the lockdown) we have lost John Pope (who served diligently on the Committee as Planning Liaison Officer for many years before becoming a deserving Vice President) and also Priscilla Ryan, Freeman of Rye, long-term member of this Society and one of the town's most prominent, most engaged, most engaging and most loved citizens.

All Members are welcome and thanks are due to those who have renewed their Membership this year and also to those who have joined us for the first time – you are all the Society's life blood and we are delighted that you are supporting the Society. The pandemic has put paid to all social occasions this year, but hopefully we will all be able to meet up in 2021. And please can I encourage all Members to encourage others to join the Society – either newcomers to Rye and the area or those who have simply 'go through the net' till now?

In the past year the Society has gained plenty of publicity in Rye News, thanks to the excellent work put in by Julian Luckett on planning issues affecting the town, and also Allan Thomson's work on traffic Civil Parking Enforcement. The welcome reduction in 'Dalek'-like ticket machines cluttering our pavements as originally proposed is in no small measure due to their efforts.

We also supported the creation of a monumental plaque highlighting the site of RAF Rye, a former WWI airfield on the fields between Rye and East Guldeford, and used some of the Society's funds to help support this fitting memorial to the brave few of the Great War. A moving unveiling ceremony led by Colonel Anthony Kimber, who drove the project wearing his British Legion hat, was attended by David Bookless, representing the Society.

4 Treasurer's Report *by Diana Hajikakou.*

I am pleased to be able to report to members that the Society is again in a sound financial position. This is despite 2019 being an unusual year. An EGM was held which led to extra expenditure. A planned outing had to be cancelled; this necessitated some expenditure but no income to set against this.

The Society's accounts are in a satisfactory state which led to the Society being able to make a number of donations - to the RNLI (90th anniversary commemoration of the Mary Stamford lifeboat tragedy), to the Town Council (a donation towards a World War 1 RAF memorial in East Guldeford) and to the Royal British Legion (a wreath on Remembrance Sunday). In addition, the Society sponsored a talk at the Rye Arts Festival.

Thanks are due to Mr. Mervyn Hayes, our Independent Examiner, for agreeing to audit the accounts.

The balance sheet as of 31st December 2019 and income and expenditure account for 2019 appears on the following pages.

RYE CONSERVATION SOCIETY
Balance Sheet at 31 December 2019

Assets at 31.12.19	£
Bank balance Lloyds Bank	21,083.06
Less debts (1)	43.92
Total assets	21,039.14

INCOME 2019 AND 2018

Income	2019	2018
Events & outings	1743.97	2288.75
Subscriptions	1127.00	1159.00
Donations	0.00	50.00
Gift Aid	171.08	207.97
Bequest	0.00	283.17
Total Income	3042.05	3938.89

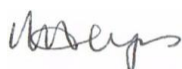
Income minus Expenditure

Notes

(1) Uncashed Cheques

Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2019 prepared by Hon. Treasurer,
Mrs D J Hajikakou

I have examined the income and expenditure accounts of the
Rye Conservation Society for the year ended 31 December 2018
and have compared them with the books and vouchers supplied.
In my opinion they are correct and in accordance.



Independent Examiner, Mervyn Hayes
Date: 30/01/2020

Assets at 31.12.18	£
Bank balance Lloyds Bank	22738.65
Less debts (1)	134.00
Total Assets	22604.65

EXPENDITURE 2019 AND 2018

Expenditure	2019	2018
Events & Outings	1164.00	962.34
Affiliation fees	174.00	174.00
Insurance	212.80	212.80
Printing/Stationery	425.77	230.60
Post/telephone	311.76	295.85
Administration (website)	321.14	97.50
AGM/Awards	1415.00	1547.57
Sundries	503.25	345.84
Total Expenditure	4527.72	3866.50
	-1485.67	+72.39

(1) Uncashed Cheque

5 *Planning Committee Report* *by Julian Lockett, Chairman Planning Committee*

In any normal year, the Annual Report looks back over the preceding year and records the significant planning actions that have taken place and the Planning Committee's views and activities. In addition I have in the past taken the opportunity at the Annual Meeting to comment on that part of the current year that has passed and, where appropriate, on what the future may hold in terms of planning.

Given that it is now almost two years since the start of 2019 I would like to combine all these three elements into this year's report. First however I must thank the members of the Planning Committee, Mike Stott, Wayne Jones, Allan Thomson, Alan Dickinson and, when health permitted, Rae Festing for their invaluable contributions both in person and since March 2020 online.

2019

During the year the Planning Committee and sometimes, because of the importance of the application the whole Executive Committee, considered 56 applications as well as providing comments on the various consultations sent out by Rother and Rye Town Council.

By far the most important were the comments on the final draft of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) submitted in January. Following examination by an independent inspector, the NP was voted on at the referendum in June and following approval was adopted by Rother in September. Rye Town Council and Anthony Kimber in particular are to be congratulated. The other policies that the Society commented on were the Rother draft Development & Site Allocation Plan, the Civil Parking Enforcement proposals and Rother draft Public Realm Strategy.

Sadly two major consents were granted during the year to which the Society strongly objected. In March the Tennis Club was granted outline consent for the indoor tennis courts which lie outside of the development area; in our view they are excessive in scale and will be inappropriate in the setting of Rye and the Marsh. In December outline consent for 65 dwellings was granted on the Thomas Peacocke site. We objected to this on the grounds that no affordable housing was to be provided and because of the total loss of the tree belt along the railway line. The loss of any affordable housing was supported by a viability study focusing on the high cost of development arising from flood defence requirements and infrastructure costs such as drainage. It remains our view that Rother pushed through this application in order to boost their housing numbers and because they were exposed by the length of time that they took to consider the application.

One success was the revised submission for the old nightclub at 48 Ferry Road with a much improved elevational treatment although we still had reservations as to parking and access. Consent was granted in April but in December Mike Stott was able to gain access to the ground floor and found the decorative cast iron column and beam structure that had been exposed by the initial stripping out. Following this an application for spot-listing was made which was unsuccessful.

During the year Rye College made two applications for flood lighting for a new all-weather pitch and for the car park. The Society objected to both on grounds of loss of amenity for the

neighbours due to noise, light and hours of use. August saw the granting of planning approval for six houses to be developed in the yard behind Webbe's at the Fish Café.

In September a revised application was submitted for the Gristmill on Winchelsea Road which consisted of two flats at first floor over a commercial unit below. It is a much better scheme and we have supported it. This application was made by Martello Developments who in June submitted an application for the old Bourne's site on Rock Channel to create a new arts facility supported by riverside housing and a restaurant. The arts buildings would be formed from the converted existing warehouses which, together with the new housing, restaurant and the recently-completed Bridge Point houses, would be set in a landscaped riverside setting. The Society supported this exciting initiative.

Sadly no report on 2019 would be complete without recording the fire in July at The George Hotel which left major extensive damage both from fire and water and led to its immediate closure. The Society was concerned during the period following the fire up to the turn of the year at the apparent lack of protection to the structure that was exposed to the elements and raised this with both the owners and with Rother, but better news was to come in 2020.

2020

In January planning applications for change of use of the old NatWest building and construction of seven houses on Mill Lane next to the railway line were received and approval was granted for the Gristmill site. We have objected to the application for Mill Lane on various grounds including scale and massing.

In February the likely effects of Covid-19 were understood and in March with the lockdown, the world of planning in Rother came to a temporary halt. With the closure of the planning office and with officers working from home, planning applications for the Committee to consider dried up and did not really resume until June. Since then the work of the Committee has continued online.

June saw consent granted for Bridge Point Studios and, as importantly, the application for two schemes for The George. These cover both a like-for-like reinstatement and an up-grade scheme with four additional bedrooms and an improved restaurant. The month also saw an application by Martello Developments for Sandrock Marine on Rock Channel. Although we have no objection to the design, we do have concerns as to the provision of another restaurant and by extension the level of parking and ease of access. June also saw the application to extend The Globe Inn on Military Road which did not seem to address the question of parking for the additional public space. This application was joined in July by another for additional first-floor accommodation.

August also saw consent granted for an additional flat as part of the Kettle o' Fish. The Society is very concerned at this addition. Together with the existing consent for four flats granted in 2018 and an existing flat, six flats are therefore being developed. There is no provision for any on-site parking, which will place great pressure on on-street parking in the area particularly given the Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) that was approved in March 2020 for implementation by the end of the year.

The future

In August the Government published for consultation its White Paper 'Planning for the Future' which sets out a radical overhaul and simplification of the planning system in order to achieve the Prime Minister's desire to 'Build, build, build'. I have attempted to set out the basic nature of these and other potential changes in the section below.

However whilst we await what may befall us, a major change has been brought in which will have a potentially significant effect on Rye and particularly its High Street. This is the overhaul of the Use Classes Order which came into effect on 1 September. Up to now individual uses such as shops, offices, cafés and restaurants have each had an individual Use Class and, if you wanted to change from one to another, you would need planning permission. Although recently some short-term changes have been allowed by permitted development rights, what is now proposed is the combining of all the original A uses (shops, services, food and drink) with the B1 office use, in a new broader Class E (commercial, business and service). In addition two new specific F classes have been created, F1 Learning and non-residential and F2 Local Community. As in any new system there are anomalies such as pubs and drinking establishments which are considered in a class of their own, as are hot food takeaways. What a restaurant that does a takeaway service is has yet to be decided. One for the courts I suspect!

In addition new permitted development rights allow two additional storeys on existing dwellings, the demolition of existing buildings for new dwellings and the addition of extra storeys on commercial or mixed-use buildings, again for dwellings.

The potential dangers of broad permitted development rights are illustrated by the introduction earlier in the year of a requirement for developers of housing in former commercial buildings to provide adequate light and ventilation to all habitable rooms. In plain language this means providing windows to all living and bedrooms! This followed publication of the Government's own report on housing created by this scheme which showed that the standard of dwellings created was poor and in some cases they were described as 'new slums'. Additional information on design and layout will be required, which I think we used to call a planning application.

The White Paper: The Future of Planning

The Government's White Paper 'Planning for the Future' proposes a radical overhaul of the current planning system, which originated back in 1947. It aims to reform the planning system to streamline the planning process and accelerate delivery of new homes. The Government blames the current system for the failure to build the number of houses, the necessary infrastructure and whatever else is required for the country to prosper. Whether this is correct is questionable as there are many contributory factors such as the lack of Central Government funding which has resulted in much-reduced planning departments. It's worth noting that the Coalition government brought out the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012 with the same end in mind.

One of the principal changes is a move towards a zonal system with areas of England allocated as Growth Areas, Renewal Areas or Protected Areas. Local Plans will be digitised, with increased emphasis on map-based planning to make development plans more accessible and reduce their length. The nature and process of public engagement will radically change, with increased emphasis on digitalisation of plans and method of engagement with increased

interaction during plan-making. Whilst zonal planning is already part of Local Plan making, what is radical is that, once zoned, it is assumed that the land designated has ‘permission in principle’ – a zoned system with no further controls.

Another change will see the demise of the S106 Agreements between developer and local authority, together with the current Community Infrastructure Levy, and their replacement with a single Infrastructure Levy. Although on large schemes finalising the 106 Agreement could cause delay, it did have the effect of linking local needs and infrastructure to the actual development rather than relying on a higher authority to designate funds. It helped to ensure mitigation at a site level was adequately funded and delivered at the time it was required.

All these changes have been put forward in order to increase the number of homes built to meet the anticipated need. The number of homes that a district such as Rother needs to build is set out in its Local Plan, currently Rother’s Core Strategy 2014. In 2018 the Government amended the methodology of calculating housing numbers, which resulted in an increase across the country. This is now to be changed again with the introduction of a new Standard Method which has further raised the number of houses to be provided. What is significant is that in 2018 the numbers required were set out as the ‘**demand**’, now they are to be a ‘**requirement**’. What the penalty will be for not meeting the required number is not spelt out, but could be financial or the imposition of planning consent against local objection or both, as one of the proposals is for planning fees to be refunded if a planning appeal is successful.

In the case of Rother, the increase in numbers is likely to be significant. Based on figures produced by Lichfields, the planning consultants estimated that the new annual requirement will be 1173 against a current Local Plan requirement of 335. Currently even this number is not being achieved as the average number over the last three years has been 241.

Great emphasis is placed on the delivery of affordable housing, but First Homes are now clearly expected to take priority over other forms of affordable home ownership. For example, if a local plan required 30% of affordable housing to be shared ownership before, under the new rules it should require 25% First Homes and just 5% shared ownership. Sadly there is no mention of delivering housing to rent, a significant recent contributor to meeting the range of England’s housing needs.

The revision to the National Planning Policy Framework in 2018 means that the current Rother Local Plan needs to be updated. This in turn will mean an update to the Rye Neighbourhood Plan. Given a Government majority of 80, it is likely that the current planning reforms will be adopted and it is likely that the revised Local Plan will have to take them into account.

The reforms envisage that Local Plans, which will now apply for ten years rather than fifteen, will be digitised, with increased emphasis on map-based planning to make development plans more accessible and reduce their length. As referred to above, the nature and process of public engagement will radically change, with increased emphasis on digitalisation of plans and method of engagement with increased interaction during plan-making. The ability of local authorities such as Rother to adopt new technology for consultation and plan production needs further understanding to ensure this is adequately resourced. Past experience suggests that change on this scale has a potential downside risk of causing delay in the delivery of new plans and in timely decision-making, particularly if they coincide with reform of local government.

The days of the ‘pink notice’ are likely to end and there will be an enhanced need for bodies such as Rye Conservation Society to monitor what is going to be ‘online planning in the digital space’.

Local Government Reform: Will we see the end of Rother?

Finally, if these changes weren’t enough, this autumn should see the publication of a White Paper setting out the most significant changes to the structure of Local Government for fifty years. What is likely to be proposed is the creation of unitary authorities which will bring together existing borough, district and county councils. This approach has already been adopted in Buckinghamshire and will next year be the format for change in Nottinghamshire. The size and geographic range of each unitary authority will depend on population size. In East Sussex it could see the creation of a Brighton and Lewes Unitary Authority with the rest of the county, with the borough and district councils of Eastbourne, Hastings, Wealden and Rother being joined together within an East Sussex Authority. However, as the population of Brighton and Hove is around 300,000, there may well be a case for a single unitary authority covering the whole of East Sussex. This would mean that Rother along with the other borough and district councils would cease to exist together with their individual councillors, to be replaced with councillors serving the Unitary Authority from larger constituencies across the County.

Given these likely changes, it is possible to conceive of an updated Local Plan being developed against the current planning framework by a district council that then shortly afterwards ceases to exist and which, as soon as it is published, is superseded by a new planning structure. It is to be hoped that the Government has thought of this potential scenario.

Whatever changes are made, it does not seem that the voice of Rye, far out on the extreme edge of East Sussex, is likely to be heard any more clearly, or our level of representation be any more effective. If the Government’s appetite for change means that they are looking to bring in this and the planning proposals within the term of the current Parliament, then we are in for an interesting if potentially bumpy few years.

6 *Planning Liaison Report* by Wayne Jones

The Society monitors, where possible, infringements of planning laws that negatively impact on the appearance of the town and the relevant buildings. This has been especially the case over the last six months as the lockdown has resulted in several such infringements, some quite blatant.

However, we continue to be indebted to Dan Bevan, the Rother planning liaison officer, with whom we have a productive mutually beneficial relationship and is consequently investigating several planning breaches.

We are happy to informally communicate with property owners and businesses about the rules and the planning requirements, but would recommend in the first instance a look at the Rother District Council web site which contains full details of all current and previous planning applications in the Rother District together with comments from members of the public and statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency.

7 *Society Socials - a Threepeat* by Andy Stuart

During 2019 there were three excellent social events that we hope will be repeated in 2021.

Following the AGM in late spring a celebratory luncheon was held in the Mermaid Inn, where a happy throng of committed conservationists enjoyed a delicious three-course meal lovingly prepared in the iconic and aged hostelry's kitchens by the chef and his talented brigades. Washed down with fine wines, lively conversation was the order of the day and filled the Tudor Room to the rafters. Someone might have given a speech, but informality ruled the day and jokes were served off the cuff.

A couple of months later the Society's annual garden party was held in the secret garden at Little Orchard House in West Street, Rye, hosted by Niki and Andy Stuart and their two boisterous dogs Maddie and Tilly. The weather was fair and an air of bonhomie and conviviality made for a lovely Sunday afternoon as Members, friends, family and tourists shared a natter and nosh! Tea was largely brought back to a classic cream tea – scones, jam and cream, served the proper Cornish way with jam first rather than the Devonian heresy of applying the dairy before the conserve!

And in early December about 50 people enjoyed society in the Town Hall, where delicious nibbles supplied by Pete Anderson at Fletcher's House accompanied fine wines sourced and served by



Allan Thomson and Kevin McCarthy, who had been carefully trained for the role in recent years by Kyriacous Hajikakou in an exhaustive apprenticeship. The old chamber was a cornucopia of Christmas cheer and Shiraz!

Little did we know on that cheerful, pre-Christmas evening that this was to be the last gathering by the society for at least a year! Happy times and hopefully they will return in 2021!

*Presentation of Society Award to Network Rail
by Chairman David Bookless and Mayor Mike Boyd*

8 *Traffic and Parking* by Allan Thomson

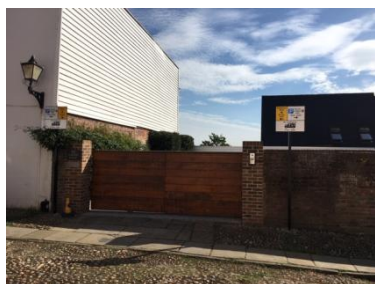
Transport and Highways

On transport matters, as with other parts of this report, we will take a look back to both 2019 and 2020, so far. Much of the activity in this period has involved consultation and discussion, mostly concerning parking, however, at long last we are seeing some changes on our streets, with possibly more to come.

Parking

To date, the absence of parking controls has continued to have a detrimental impact on the town. To address this, and in the absence of any better alternative, the Society has supported the principle of introducing Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) in Rye as part of a wider introduction across Rother. CPE was approved by East Sussex County Council (ESCC), the relevant highways authority, in March 2020 followed by final approval by the Secretary of State in September. This will see CPE come into effect by the time you read this report when,

hopefully, we will begin to see a reduction in illegal and hazardous parking in the town centre. During ESCC’s consultation on Rye’s CPE proposals we raised concerns with the impact of payment machines, both in size and number, and the visual impact of signage. On machines, there has been some progress as, since the initial proposals, they have been reduced from sixteen to nine, a number of which are in less detrimental locations. The large size of the machines remains a concern, as is the location of one machine opposite the George Hotel that further reduces pedestrian space at an already constrained point on the High Street. Our recommendation that signage is sensitively installed has not been taken on board at all the locations, as illustrated below, for instance a number of large signs at entry points to the Citadel controlled zone obscure lamp posts, buildings and partly block narrow pavements. We will work with Rye Town Council to press ESCC to make remedial improvements. As CPE comes into effect, the impact of parking ‘overspill’ on streets immediately outside the control area remains to be seen, this is an issue that will be considered as part of future transport review plans described later in this section.



Tall CPE signs on Watchbell Street



Large CPE signs at Pump Street



Road markings on the High Street

Funding – or not!

The Emergency Active Travel Fund is an HM Government nationwide initiative to promote walking and cycling and safe social distancing as the first part of a wider £2 billion active travel programme. The ‘Emergency’ works element is to address the immediate impacts of COVID and ESCC had been invited to bid up to around £2.4m to enable two phases of short term works across East Sussex, with an emphasis on schemes that will reallocate road to create safer, more pleasant streets to facilitate social distancing. For Rye, ESCC had initially proposed the part time closure of the High Street in order to enable social distancing during busy periods. For a number of practical reasons, this proposal was not welcomed by stakeholders. A less radical approach supported by RCS would have been to suspend some parking bays on the busiest section of the High Street in favour of more space for pedestrians and businesses. In the absence of any supported proposals, however, Rye will now lose out on this tranche of ‘Emergency’ funding which is a pity considering the poor quality of the pedestrian environment in many parts of the town and the continued popularity of Rye as a visitor destination during these troubled times.

Ensuring things join-up

This year we found out that Rye is likely to be a missing link in a new national coastal footpath. Natural England, the body behind the England Coast Path, could not identify safe routes to and through Rye and its Golf Club, so this could see the path ‘broken’ between Rye Harbour and Camber Sands. RCS have raised an objection to this as, with its many visitor attractions and transport links, Rye should be a key gateway to this important new path. Related to this, we have continued to impress the need to address capacity and safety shortfalls at the Rye Harbour Road junction with the A259 before approving any further

development in the area. This is an issue that requires leadership, collaboration and coordination between authorities rather than the ‘this isn’t our responsibility’ response we tend to hear. In recent weeks we have campaigned to ensure that the 1066 Country Walk footpath is signposted from the centre of Rye rather than at the disused water works on the edge of town as proposed. These examples illustrate the importance of RCS engaging with the relevant organisations to ensure that the six way-marked paths and the national cycle routes in and around Rye continue to be developed, connected and promoted for the benefit of the town, its residents and visitors.

Looking ahead

Returning again to parking, CPE is not considered as a comprehensive or long term solution to the town’s transport issues. In approving the scheme, ESCC promised a post implementation review of CPE along with a wider transport study for the town. To guide community input to this, a working group of local stakeholders has been established. As a member of this working group, RCS will be seeking to ensure that the review and study addresses not only a comprehensive view of parking, but other measures to improve mobility and access for all users of our streets. These measures should balance the needs of visitors, traders and residents and should capture long standing issues such as improved signage, measures to optimise the provision and use of Rye’s numerous car parks, measures to control speeding and noise from speeding vehicles and to improve the generally poor provision for pedestrians throughout the town. On this final point, station approach (pictured) is a fitting example of where improvements to the pedestrian and public transport user experience would be beneficial. We’d particularly like to hear from our members on what you consider to be the key priorities.



Station Approach – an equitable allocation of space for all users?

Our experience with the Emergency Active Travel fund has demonstrated that, if Rye is to be in a stronger position to bid for available funding, we need to develop a prioritised list of transport schemes, from quick wins to more comprehensive improvements, that are supported by the local community and stakeholders. Armed with this, we will be better able to ensure that this particular ‘far-flung’ corner of East Sussex doesn’t continue to lose out.

9 *Conservation Society Awards for 2019*

The Committee agreed to present four Awards for 2019, covering a range of buildings in the town. We felt that the following were worthy of an Award and these were presented at our well attended Christmas Party in Rye Town Hall.



Network Rail were commended for the excellent restoration of the Grade II listed Victorian signal box at Rye Station. NR representatives picked up our certificate at the Christmas Party and I learned recently that our photograph of the box adorns their offices in London.



A deserved Award went to Merchant and Mills whose shop is a major asset on Cinque Ports Street. People come from far and wide to purchase their unique range of cloths and the building restoration both internally and externally is most impressive.



The Society had been concerned that following the removal of the vine growth from the White House in the High Street that the building was shown to require extensive repointing and given its prominent position on the High Street, this work needed to be done sympathetically. We were very pleased to witness the final outcome and commend James Tomlinson for his excellent restoration work.



Since it opened in May 2018, the Waterworks has grown to be one of the most popular pubs in Rye. It is certainly unusual, being a conversion of a pump house which later became a soup kitchen and eventually a public toilet. David Roder is to be congratulated for overseeing a great conversion of use which shows what can be done with vision and hard work.



One of our members put forward a terraced house in Ferry Road for consideration and the Committee agreed that the conversion had been done in keeping with the neighbouring houses using the correct materials and serves as an excellent example of restoration of older, but not particularly ancient property.

We invite members to propose suggestions for 2020 Awards

10 Affiliations

The Society is affiliated to the Campaign for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) and to the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings (SPAB). Individual members may also of course join these organisations which do much important work educating and campaigning. To give a flavour of their activities we reproduce CPRE comments on the Planning System to be found on their excellent web site and a piece outlining the work of SPAB which I hope is of interest.

CPRE on Proposed Changes to Planning System

Robert Jenrick, Housing Secretary, proposed changes to reform an ‘outdated’ planning system. The government says that the changes are intended to speed up the planning process and allow more building as the country recovers from the coronavirus pandemic.

But we at CPRE, the countryside charity, are raising queries about elements of the proposals, including the risks of community voices being lost in the process. The government’s *Planning for the Future White Paper* includes plans around potential zoning systems and spells out plans for more consultation and planning to take place digitally. But as Tom Fyans, our deputy chief executive, notes, bringing activity online can risk excluding some voices: ‘As things stand, the government seems to have conflated the ‘digitalisation’ planning with democratic planning – they’re not the same thing.’

Consulting communities

CPRE has long argued that the voices of local people need to be more included in planning developments so that communities can ensure that they get the developments they need and in the right places. But the new proposals aren’t clear on how this democratic approach to The key acid test for the planning reforms is community involvement and on first reading, it’s still not clear how this will work under a zoning system.

Although we welcome the government’s commitment to all areas having a local plan in place, we also need robust legal guarantees that the public are consulted regarding new development. Red lines on a map are not going to build trust in the planning system.

Carbon neutral, affordable housing: missed chances

We also campaign for action to address the climate emergency, and the way that new housing is built can play a significant role in this. New homes should be built with the climate crisis in mind – but we feel the government miss the mark on this, lacking ambition. Tom Fyans expresses our disappointment at this missed opportunity.

‘The government’s aim to deliver carbon neutral new homes by 2050 is pitiful and represents 34 lost years given that the Code for Sustainable Homes aimed to achieve the same thing by 2016 and was dropped by the government. If this government is serious about tackling the climate emergency, it needs to be much, much more ambitious on new builds.

And we are also concerned about how the government will ensure that new homes built in rural areas are truly affordable, supporting the needs of local people in areas at crisis point with a stark lack of available housing – not least for key workers.

On affordable homes, our concern is how this approach might play out in the countryside. In many rural areas, house prices are often more than ten times average earnings, and so the 30

percent discount won't cut it. Local authorities should be able to provide the sorts of homes needed in their area – homes that local people can afford.'

Brownfield-first

The government's proposals include reference to building on brownfield land (that is, land that has been previously developed) – an area that we've long campaigned on. Making use of this neglected land before greenfield sites should be a priority. But we emphasise the need for local authorities to be a part of this process, to ensure that much-loved green spaces are protected. Tom urges that this consideration not be overlooked, saying:

'We have long advocated for a genuinely brownfield-first approach and on this aspect, the government seems to have listened. But if a brownfield-first approach is to work, local authorities need to be able to prioritise the building of those sites and reject unnecessary losses of greenfield land.'

Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) believes old buildings have a future. From cottages to castles and from churches to cathedrals we are here to help buildings and the people who care for them.

Through our unique training schemes, courses, advice and research we help people put our expertise into practice.

Founded by William Morris in 1877, the SPAB was established in response to the work of Victorian architects whose enthusiasm for harmful restoration caused irreparable damage. Today the SPAB encourages excellence in new design to enrich and complement the built historic environment. We train new generations of architectural professionals and building craftspeople to shape this landscape with sensitivity and skill, and we play a statutory role as adviser to local planning authorities. In our casework we campaign actively to protect old buildings at risk.

The SPAB Approach

The SPAB Approach to building conservation combines well-proven principles with practical repair techniques. It has influenced building conservation worldwide and underpins much in UK heritage legislation.

Other conservation approaches exist, but the Society's principles are viewed by most as the yardstick. The SPAB Approach began as an outcry against destructive work, but the guidance the Society offers today is practical and positive. It aims to promote the value and good sense of caring for the fabric of old buildings. The SPAB takes a long-term view, urging that in our own actions we consider the legacy we will leave to future generations.

The SPAB Approach is based on the protection of 'fabric' - the material from which a building is constructed. A building's fabric is the primary source from which knowledge and meaning can be drawn. Materials and construction methods embodied in building fabric illustrate changes in people's ideas, tastes, skills and the relationship with their locality. Fabric also holds character and beauty; the surfaces, blemishes and undulations of old buildings speak of the passage of time and of lives lived. Wear and tear adds beautiful patination that new work can only acquire through the slow process of ageing.

Building fabric is precious. A concern for its protection helps ensure that the essence of an old building survives for future generations to appreciate. The SPAB Approach therefore stands against Restorationist arguments that it is possible and worthwhile to return a building to its original - or imagined original - form. Equally, the SPAB Approach generally rejects arguments that original design or cultural associations are more important than surviving fabric. For the Society, protecting fabric allows meaning and significance to be drawn from it by individuals, groups and successive generations.

11 Rye Town Model and Heritage Centre

In 2019 Rye Town Council took the difficult decision to close the Heritage Centre (HC) on Strand Quay which would have resulted in the closure of the HC and the end of the Town



Model (see picture) which was a main attraction. When these proposals became known there was a major campaign to retain it which led to a well attended meeting in the Centre and the formation of a local group to run it on a five year lease from the Council. Plans were drawn up and agreed and the future of the HC once we emerge from the Pandemic is looking good under the auspices of the Rye Heritage Centre CIO although for obvious reasons the opening has been deferred.

12 The Fire at the George Hotel

Rye residents woke early on a Sunday morning in July to the news that a major fire had broken out overnight in the iconic George Hotel in Rye High Street. Despite the fact that the



hotel was full with wedding guests there were fortunately no injuries thanks to well organised rescue services and the work of the hotel staff. Unfortunately there was major damage to the building caused not only by the fire but also from the gallons of water required to put the fire out.

There were stunned scenes the following day as people stared at the smouldering roofless building in the High Street. The owners have worked tirelessly to get a skilled high level group of experts in to plan the restoration of the building and plans, supported by the Society have been submitted to Rother for approval. Clearly there is an enormous amount of work involved to get the building rebuilt but it is looking hopeful that next year there will be a new and even better hotel in the High Street.

I hope that you have found this Report an interesting reminder of some of our activities during the past eighteen months since our last AGM. We can only hope that there will be better news in the months to come and that we will be able to meet up and work to improve our wonderful town of Rye. In the mean time I wish our members good health for the future.

David Bookless

The Purposes of the Society

The Society was founded in 1972 and under the Constitution, which it later adopted, is concerned with the area comprising Rye Town, Playden, Rye Foreign, East Guldeford and the Rye Harbour area of the Civil Parishes of Icklesham and Camber.

The principal objects of the Society within that area are: to stimulate public interest in the area, to promote high standards of planning and architecture, and to secure the preservation, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest.

In the course of promoting its work the Society has secured registration as a charity. It is a member of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Association of Small Historic Towns and Villages and the Campaign to Protect Rural England.