

**Minutes of the
Annual General Meeting
Of the Fairlight Preservation Trust**

Held in the Village Hall on Sunday 19th November 2023 at 14.30

Present: David Shortman (DS - Chairman), Issy Horsley (IH - Vice-Chair), Paul Capps (PC - Secretary), Nick Booker (NB - Treasurer).

Members of the Executive Committee: Lyn Cooke (LC), Trevor Lewing (TL), Jill Lewing (JL), Alastair Mitchell (AM), Keith Somerville (KS), Martin Usher (MU).

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the AGM. 46 people were present, including the Committee.

1 Apologies for Absence: apologies were received from:

Valerie Hornsby,

Jennifer Annetts

Ruth Kosmin

Leslie Kosmin

Mary Stewart

Cas & Ian Barlow

Paul Draper

Mr and Mrs Baines

Denise Lamb

Councillor Tim Grohne

The Minutes for the AGM Meeting held on Sunday 13th November 2022 were approved by those present. Proposed by Carol Shortman; Seconded by Lyn Cooke.

2 Chairman's Report:

This year has been another year of sustained progress in all areas of the work of the Trust. During the year we have held three committee meetings and one meeting with Rother District Council (RDC) and the East Kent Engineering

Partnership (EKEP). In addition, the committee has kept in contact with each other on a regular basis by email as needs arise.

The Trust has continued to place pressure on RDC to ensure that cliff defences are properly maintained and expenditure monitored. The Trust has also been placing pressure on the Council to repair and maintain the Rockmead Road wells and slopes since a number of the wells have not been working efficiently. Our Secretary PC and our Vice Chair IH have been mainly responsible for dealing with the continued negotiations with RDC and EKEP. I do not propose to give any more details of the matters I have mentioned as after my report there will be separate reports from both PC and IH. As mentioned in my report last year, RDC after representation made from the Trust, Fairlight Parish Council (FPC) and our District Councillor Andrew Mier, agreed to introduce an Article 4 Direction in respect of planning applications for clifftop properties. This has now come into effect and it is hoped will either reduce or eliminate property development which could damage the cliff.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank IH for all the continued work she has done on behalf of the Trust including monitoring the wells on a voluntary basis and keeping RDC and the Trust informed. I would also like to thank her for the support that she has given to me and for the work that she has done as Vice Chair.

Thanks must also be given to Laurie Beetham for the continued help that he has given to IH in the monitoring of the wells.

I do not apologise for again stressing that although we are very fortunate to live in such a beautiful village, there is always a risk of coastal erosion.

Although the Trust has been very successful in obtaining the three berms and ensuring that they are properly maintained, there is no room for complacency and constant vigilance is needed if we are going to continue to protect the village from coastal erosion. For the Trust to carry out its purpose, membership is very important. The more members we have, the easier it will be to spread the work of the Trust and to have more influence in making representations to RDC. I would again ask all residents of the village who have yet to join the Trust to strongly consider doing so.

I would like to thank Jill Lewing for all her hard work as Membership Secretary including chasing up membership subscriptions, maintaining membership records and encouraging residents to become members of the Trust.

I would also like to thank PC for all his hard work over the year as Trust Secretary, and for his substantial part in dealing with the continual negotiations with RDC. His knowledge and experience of water and drainage matters have been a considerable benefit to the committee. Thanks must also be given to AM who earlier in the year took on the role of Assistant Secretary of the Trust, and provided assistance to PC in secretarial matters such as dealing with the minutes. AM is using this position to gain experience of the work of the Trust Secretary in order that when PC retires he is in a good position to carry out this function.

I would like to thank Nick Booker for his continued excellent work that he has done as Treasurer over the last year.

Thanks must also be given to Keith Somerville for his work as a committee member and for his continued considerable contribution in ensuring that Trust circulars and notices reach the membership.

I would also like to thank Lyn Cooke for her contribution and support as a Committee Member. Finally I would like to thank our District Councillors Andrew Mier and Tim Grohne for their support over the last year.

I am pleased to report that TL and MU volunteered to join the Committee and were both co-opted onto the Committee at our last meeting on 10th November 2023. I am sure both of these new Committee members will be useful additions to the Committee and a benefit to the Trust.

Having previously been Chairman of the Fairlight Coastal Preservation Association in the 1980s and early 1990s and Chairman of the FPT for the last seven years I now feel it is time to stand down. It has been a tremendous privilege to serve the Trust and I wish the new Chairman and Committee all the best in continuing the work of safeguarding the village from the effects of coastal erosion and associated water and drainage problems.

3 Report on the Fairlight maintenance programme and related matters:

The report was given by IH, who expressed regret that the white board was not available for this meeting, which meant she would be unable to share photos she had prepared, other than on her small tablet. However, she described how barren the cliffs in Fairlight looked from the beach, and pointed out rivulets which ran down in certain places which were caused by running water. Water plus clay was a recipe for slippage. Where there was vegetation on the cliffs, it indicated that those areas were more stable. Maria Blain asked if Channel Way

was in an unstable state, and IH was able to assure her that the cliffs at Channel Way were in a stable condition.

Moving on to the pumps and wells, of which there are 56, IH said that increasingly more and more were not working. She showed a graph to those that could see which showed that while rainfall had increased over the year, the amount of water being pumped out of the cliffs had decreased. The committee realised that an overhaul of the system was urgently needed, and the French company TPGeo that had installed the system had been approached to carry out an overhaul.

IH also mentioned that there had been damage to the Smart Ditch, caused by a landslip. The Ditch has been repaired, but ways to prevent further landslips need to be found, especially where the land is much higher than the Ditch.

Other problems included biofouling, which clogged up the wells with deposits. Tests carried out by Southern Water (SW) revealed that e-coli was found in the wells, which must have come from SW foul water drains that were leaking. SW had agreed to inspect and reline the sewers.

IH thanked MU who had agreed to update the website. IH thought it important to have a full historical archive present so that members could be reminded of exactly what had been required, and had taken place over the years since the first efforts to provide coastal protection had been instigated.

Finally, IH thanked AM, and also Kevin LeGrand, both of whom had joined IH in opposing a recent application to build a house near the cliff edge. The application was turned down. She also thanked Councillors Andrew Mier and Tim Grohne for their support in this matter.

4 Planning and Development Along the Cliffs:

PC then gave further details, following on from IH's presentation, but he was keen to emphasise that the AGM was for members, and they should not be afraid to ask questions. He was pleased to record that the FPT had secured £1,500.00 from SW towards the cost of repairing the smart ditch. The Trust had suggested that some of the cause of the landslip that displaced the ditch might have come from water leaking from SW pipes. Unfortunately, this sum was paid to Rother rather than to the FPT, and it now sits in the Fairlight Maintenance Fund (FMF), the bulk of which consists of money left over from the creation of the third berm. He explained that this fund originally contained over £300,000.00, but it now stands at approximately £215,000.00, and is there

to be used on major capital projects. The exact definition of a major capital project, as opposed to maintenance work, is not entirely clear, but the Trust is always keen to remind RDC of their maintenance role as Coastal Protection Authority. PC emphasised that the FMF really was village money, as it had contributed over £150,000.00, partly through the Fairlight Parish Council (FPC), and partly from fund-raising by village residents when the berm was constructed.

At this point, a member of the Trust, Paul Dayrell asked if there was a responsibility of Central Government to maintain the cliffs. DS explained that before the first berm was constructed, RDC, in their role as Coast Protection Authority, was unwilling to do anything to protect the erosion along the coast at Fairlight. However, the Trust (as it then was) was able to invoke Section 29 of the Coast Protection Act, 1949 which forced RDC to see what could be done. The end result was the first berm.

PC stated that servicing the pumps and wells was going to be an expensive business: the only company capable of carrying out the work was based in France, and they will be charging £11,000.00 just to come and assess what work was needed to get the system fully working again. The actual work itself would be very much more expensive, and it was not yet clear who would be paying for what. The most important thing at the moment was to get the work done.

PC then drew the attention of the meeting to the problem of too much water flowing down Channel Way. The original idea was to pipe it into the mains drainage system, but given that there is now an excess of water flowing through the village, it is just as well that that never happened. Another idea was to channel it over the cliffs – there is a plastic pipe there in place which is broken at the top. A stronger metal pipe would do the job, but Laurie Beetham was of the opinion that to construct one down the cliff would be extremely expensive, and difficult to execute for reasons of Health and Safety.

PC suggested that it was important for the Trust to voice concerns over building projects that might jeopardise the stability of the coastal region, as they had done recently, but in the end it had to abide by the decisions of the planning authorities. It had carefully monitored the work at the Market Garden site, insisting that a pipe there was not sufficiently large, and it had also alerted East Sussex County Council Watercourse Consent Department to a problem at the

far end of Stream Lane. A problem with the pipe in Rockmead Road had now been corrected.

PC thanked AM for his work as Assistant Secretary, and also Carol Shortman, for the years of support she has given to her husband in his role as Chairman.

5 Treasurer's Report:

NB thanked Martin Cutmore for his work as the Trust's accountant.

He stated that total funds belonging to the Trust stood at £36,300.00.

£11, 904.77 was held in the HSBC account, and the rest (£24,395.00) in accounts with Barclays and Nationwide.

Income this year was £1,083.00, mainly from membership subscriptions, and expenses for the year were £551.00. The profit therefore was £532.00 which is slightly more than that raised last year. Members were encouraged to contact NB if they needed more information.

NB extended thanks to JL and TL for their work connected to membership, noting that the number of members stood at 242, which was only 15% of the village population. The meeting agreed that residents should be encouraged to join.

Approval of the accounts was proposed by John Pulfer and seconded by Carol Shortman. They were passed by those present unanimously.

At this point, IH reminded members of the Easy Fundraising scheme, emphasising that it would cost nothing, but could raise substantial funds for the FPT. Many online retailers were willing to give a small percentage of every sale to the charity of your choice if you signed up for the scheme. At present 36 members are enrolled, and last year £760.00 was raised, most of this amount by just 6 members.

6 Election of Officers:

The following were elected:

Chairman: TL.

Secretary: PC.

Treasurer: NB.

Executive Committee: IH, KS, LC, AM, JL.

There were no nominations for the position of Vice Chairman.

7 Any Other Business:

IH gave sincere thanks to DS for all his work over the years, remembering in particular his work on the first and third berms, and his 7 years as Chairman. She also thanked Carol Shortman for her invaluable support throughout this time. A presentation was made to both of them.

The meeting ended at 15.28.