

TBS AGM 10 November 2017

Chairman's Report

Celebrate the past, promote the present and influence the future

I am pleased to say I can report activity and progress on all fronts.

Celebrating the past

Alison Uttley talk, library and children's event so ably organised by Kari Dorme, John Burton and Liz Stevens.

We installed 3 super display Boards thanks to the BCF Independent Electors donation and have used these to promote Alison Uttley and some excellent photos of the hidden corners of the Town. Our curator, Deirdre Smaje has lots of ideas for future displays so keep your eye on the corner of Maxwell road in the months ahead.

Heritage visit to Hall Barn, thanks to Jenefer for hosting us and the informative talk.

An activity from the past we have brought to the present this year, the Saturday Market coffee mornings, Judy McDonell and Jackie Dawes with lots of committee helpers have taken this on for half of the year.

Promoting the present

Beaconsfield NOW aka Awareness day is a showcase for community groups in the town. Move to Rugby club was a departure and not without risk but I think all agree it was a very successful event, perhaps attracting a different, but certainly bigger, attendance. The format with attractions and more for families was well received and clearly helped footfall. The work involved in the preparation and organisation on the day is tremendous and credit to Debbie Marsden, Nanu Hodson (and their families Rod and Andy get roped in, literally with all those marquees!)

I am tempted to say well follow that..... Well watch this space because there are some exciting plans for 2018 that we will share with you all very soon.

I am ALSO pleased to say we now have a vehicle to raise awareness of the Town 365 days a year not just 1. Our On-line Social Media presence has made great strides forward. We have a new and more comprehensive website, a FaceBook page, Twitter and Instagram accounts.

Before you glaze over, why? Well that gives us a way to reach a large section of the Town efficiently and effectively within seconds and minutes rather than days and weeks. Don't worry if you are not up with the technology we will continue to deliver our Newsletter, under the excellent Editorial leadership of Tony Bristow, to members who would like one.

On the new website, you can sign up to get information, volunteer, join or renew membership and pay all on-line, you can get tickets for our events. Book the use of banners and noticeboards.

Importantly there is a new calendar that anyone can post their events and once approved will be seen by all. We will be directing all our followers to regularly check this diary.

A few figures of interest for you we have:

1500 followers on Facebook

770 followers on Twitter

130 on Instagram

Looking at FB specifically

Gender breakdown...

71% female

28% male

1% unknown

Age breakdown ...

14% age 18-24 years

10% age 25-35 years

18.5% age 35-44 years

45% age 45-65

22% age 65+

We did a special post to a wider group about WP Outline planning application and that reached 7500 people.

And there are perhaps 13000 persons of all ages in the Town!

We have approaching 1000 people who have signed up to receive information and we can email them on matters of interest and import in the town. Thanks are due to Rachel Ferguson for getting our mailing lists in order and compliant.

Some will remember the V4B work some years ago and one message was that people didn't know what was going on in the town.. Well we are trying to do our bit to fix that.

A huge thanks is due to Peter Foster for the work he has done on this. Peter has stepped down from the committee and work commitments mean he is winding down his involvement but is still a source of expert guidance on the black arts of social media, thank you Peter. I am pleased to say that our banners on 4 lamp posts and 2 noticeboards are being well used, with a capacity issue at peak months. Thanks to Nanu, Graeme and especially Colin Mitchell for the work they do there.

Influencing the future

We are being challenged on many fronts but particularly with planning. Your committee has continued to fight the good fight against the worst excesses of over development and in-filling, has highlighted the anomalies in the current system that allows affordable housing provision or contributions in lieu to be avoided and continued to point out the pressures on infrastructure.

We have challenged the Inland Homes planning application as it fails to address affordable housing needs and the SBDC area local plan 2016-36 that threatens to release large pieces of Green Belt land. In this, the Society and the Town should feel very lucky to have the dedication and knowledge of Alison Wheelhouse. I think Alison knows more about planning policy than those directly engaged in it! She has led our responses to WPW and LPW, plus the myriad of individual applications, 40 and 48 Penn Road, 2 Knottocks Drive, 15 Curzon Ave, Corner Cottage, Holtspur Top lane... the list goes on.

A critical deadline is coming up on the Wilton Park proposals as comments must be lodged with SBDC before 5pm on Tuesday next, 14th November. Details are on the website. You will be aware that the A355 relief road has been approved, running from Pyebush roundabout to Maxwell Road. We are told work will start 2Q2018. There is considerable debate as to the impact on traffic flow and the unintended consequences elsewhere in the town. Insofar as it keeps HS2 traffic out of the town, on balance, we welcome it.

Another challenge is the pressure on Local Government budgets and the impact on the town. We have lobbied about the roadside weeds, litter and maintenance of open spaces. We joined other groups to do the annual Litter pick (Heineken litter pick as I call it reaching parts of the town that others do not, collecting an incredible 369 kilos of rubbish) and have been planting bulbs. Jeannette Buckle and Nanu Hodson and Will Story have been heavily involved in these activities

We have made great progress in getting our message out on planning issues, parking and pride in the town and it's encouraging that it is clear there are a huge number of people who care about the place where they live, work or play. We are encouraging them to add to our voice, to support our initiatives, perhaps to volunteer and ultimately be the membership of the future.

One issue where social media has been particularly effective is to highlight the crass, inconsiderate and in some cases downright dangerous parking. We have made some progress through TVP on the central reservation in London End but the random parking on the common land is proving more intractable.

Before I finish I should mention our two "sages", Les and Sandy and thank them for their experience and good counsel throughout the year.

I have done my best to weave the names of all the people who have made things possible into this report, and apologies if I have missed anyone. One person I have left until last is our Secretary who is standing down at this AGM. Laurence Smaje has worked many hours on behalf of the Society and carried out his duties so diligently for 6 years. I could not have wished for a better Secretary to keep me on the straight and narrow and attend to those important details that means this organisation moves forward in the right direction. Laurence my sincere personal thanks to you, and that of the Society.

Finally a few calls to action:

Do visit our new website

Do become a member or if you are, renew.... Either on-line or in the usual way.

Do sign up on the website if you are not already registered to receive information.

Do tell you colleagues in other societies about banners, noticeboards and on-line events calendar.

If you wish to "promote" your event or organisation in the Town then do get in touch and we we are glad to help.

And don't forget the Wilton Park date, comment in by 5pm Tuesday next.

So you can tell it has been a busy and challenging year but a lot of progress has been made and I think the Society is in good health, sadly not so of all community groups in the town.

