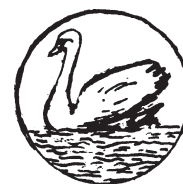


THE SWANAGE INDEPENDENT



The Newsletter of the Swanage Residents' Association

MAY 2007 ISSUE 55

The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

will be held at

The CATHOLIC HALL, Rempstone Road

on

Tuesday 29th May at 7.30pm

* * * * *

This meeting will be open to all with an interest in local issues. Please try to be there - you'll be very welcome

CHAIRMAN'S VIEW

Yet another year has gone by in the life of Swanage and The Swanage Residents Association. Little seems to have changed and many of last year's topics are still unresolved.

Swanage Community Plan

At long last the Swanage Community Plan is to be adopted and launched on 1st May. So we may have some definitive answers for the questions and concerns expressed by our members a year ago. We hope to be in the position to report back to you at our AGM.

Pier Head Development

Do you remember the Pier Head Development talk and demonstration that Nick Storer and his architect Barry Chapman gave at our last AGM? Well, as you know, they were turned down yet again by PDC. Questions have been asked as to why the development of the new block of flats in Gannetts Park were able to get pass the planners but the Pier Head designs are continuously turned down. The Gannetts Park Flats are very striking and modern in

design; they are in a very conspicuous position and are very different from any of the nearby buildings. The Pier Head designs are just as striking, are in a less prominent position but a much more important location. They are also close to a number of Georgian and Edwardian buildings. The suggestion now is that the planning problem is not the modern design but the size of the development relative to the existing Pier Head building i.e. it not having a similar 'footprint' as the old building. Nick and the PDC must come to some sort of compromise.

As I said last time 'this really should be resolved, for the shabby site reflects poorly on the image of the town'. Further problems have also just come to light - the Environment Agency has objected to the development because of concerns of flood risk management. They 'strongly recommend a re-appraisal of the redevelopment proposal ... suggest that a far more rigorous analysis of flood risk is necessary'. Sorry Nick, it never seems to get any easier for you, never gets any nearer to a solution. If this development has such a large risk of flooding what about the rest of the Lower High Street etc?

Proposed Closure of Shore Road

The Town Council has proposed to close off to traffic all of Shore Road (from Ocean Bay to The Mowlem) for the summer season. Dorset County Council were unable to sort out the details for this year and as there were also a few complaints the proposal has been postponed. However, the part of Shore Road from Victoria Avenue to The Mowlem will be closed for 24 hours every day for this summer. There have been mixed views expressed about this proposal: there have been objections, mainly from people living where the traffic would be diverted to and those who like to drive along Shore Road to look at the sea, and there have been supporters who point out the safety benefits of its closure and a range of suggestions as to how the closed road could be utilised by entertainers and where a 'cafe culture' could flourish. Rowland expands this in his section of this newsletter!

Purbeck Housing Action Group

Many of you will have seen in the local Press that a fledgling new Action Group has been set up in Swanage. The Purbeck Housing Action Group had its first meeting in April. This group, led at the moment by Nico Campbell-Allen, are fighting for positive action to try and get something done about the lack of affordable housing in Purbeck, the high cost of rental property and the high levels of second home owners etc. They are now seeking to expand their area of interest to cover 'all local issues'. Mike Hadley is in contact with Nico to see how our two organisations can interact. Maybe we could work in conjunction with this Action Group or even consider the possibility of a merger? What do you think? Further information on the Purbeck Housing Action Group can be found on their website (www.purbeckhousingaction.co.uk). Please come to our AGM on the 29th May and give us your views or let Mike or me know beforehand.

Finally, once again I am asking for help. Is there anyone out there who would like to take an active part in the Association, acting on the committee or being one of its officers? We need your help.

Annual General Meeting. 29th May Draft Agenda

1. Annual Report (John Leach)
2. Treasurers Report (Rachel Kerley/John Leach)
3. Membership Report
4. Election of Officers
5. Minutes of AGM - 17th May 2006
6. Matters Arising
7. Minutes of Open Meeting - 20th Nov 2006
8. Matters Arising

9. AOB (to include)
Swanage Community Strategic Plan
Purbeck Housing Action Group
10. Date and time of next meeting

John Leach, Chairmam
johneleach@yahoo.co.uk or 07815 427215

In My Opinion

I'd like to express my personal opinions on a few of the current issues concerning Swanage, almost all of them criticising our authorities and their actions - or the lack of them. I would like to emphasise that these are my own views and not necessarily the opinions of the Association

Tree Felling

Readers will doubtless have noticed considerable tree-felling taking place locally - for instance around the National Trust estate, the golf course, Washpond Lane etc. I was dismayed and phoned Mark Eldridge - currently working at Purbeck DC on secondment from DCC. He tells me that along with the National Trust, the Council has felled many trees as a consequence of the discovery of Dutch Elm disease. On account of the lifestyle of the Elm Bark Beetle, it is best to take out all of the trees in a particular area, which will get rid of the beetles and the trees will then grow again in the course of time. Safety was also a major concern in making these decisions, he said. Be this as it may, and I'm no tree expert, but this butchery looks like wanton destruction to me, and a great number of the trees attacked are not Elm at all, these must be the ones that are "unsafe" then But while the 'Dutch Elm' example may be necessary, albeit with a lot more care being taken, whilst complaining some time ago about large scale tree felling near Creech, I discovered that unless trees are in a protection zone, which few are, they are virtually at the mercy of whoever owns the land. Similar examples of 'tree surgery' are widespread, such as along the A351 adjacent to St Michael's Garage. Which brings me to the point: with all the lecturing we get from know-it-all government and councils on 'protecting the environment', how about some legislation and enforcement from them to do just that? And also how about the authorities protecting the environment from their own actions? More horror when I walked into Forres Field the other day to see that the Council had crept up on the unsuspecting trees and hacked off many of their branches, now, in Springtime, the worst time of the year to do anything like this anyway, and why? I suspect that they think that someone may, just possibly, get a branch or tree on their head, and we

couldn't have them suing the Council could we? In this age of bureaucracy and the nanny-state much wiser to attack the trees. More tree news in the May Gazette - pages 6,7 & 14. One other thing to the National "Trust" - I don't pay £77.50 membership a year to the National Trust for them to kill goats.

Recycling

Another council/authorities issue. With the authorities suddenly so keen for everyone to "re-cycle", which I have incidentally done (reluctantly) for the past 25 years, where are the re-cycling bins around town for visitors to deposit their cans, glass, paper etc.? Nowhere to be seen. The last time I asked the council this question, the usual reply came back, no money. Hypocrisy I say, and do as we say, not as we do. I also say I'm a 'reluctant' recycler because recycling as it stands is not correctly addressing the issues. The government should legislate on wasteful packaging, items such as white goods should arrive (by law) in re-useable enclosures, to be the obligation of the manufacturer to remove and re-use, and so much more. As usual, politicians are fond of talking the talk and doing little more. Agreeing with David Hollister in his recent letter to the Advertiser, while the local recycling lorry sits in the road belching diesel fumes and being an environmental stinker, the recycling workers are separating mouldy baked beans tins from old newspapers ... how environmentally sound is this? I would imagine that this method, and the mileage to and from the depot, saves little, if anything, environmentally. How about this as a suggestion? Try asking residents that - if they want to, they can separate their recycling to save the guys on the truck the time and effort, and diesel. If this is too much trouble, no worries, the workers will do it for you. I already separate my re-cycling to save them the hassle, and by merely making the suggestion, I bet they would save hours of labour and gallons of diesel and lots of our money. I have many other such bright ideas

Puffin Crossings & Road Safety

Our authorities have recently replaced Pelican Crossings at the Kings Rd/Station Rd/Rempstone Rd junction with Puffin Crossings. Why? What is the difference? The old crossings worked perfectly well. albeit that they are totally ill-conceived in the first place. I ask: 3 sets of lights within a few yards of each other If I ruled the world there would be a pleasantly planted and decorated central roundabout with zebra crossings leading to a safe walled central reservation for pedestrians. And some traffic calming measures. It would cost less, be more efficient, permanent and pleasant, not to mention safer. I am always reluctant to trust my life to a light bulb. I would incidentally also replace the current dangerous

situation at the Institute Road/ High Street junction with a similar island to the one described above, I would make Kings Road East exit single lane and give pedestrians priority to cross at the junction, and many more simple road-safety improvements that seem glaringly obvious. Despite the Residents Association making similar suggestions to our authorities on many occasions over the years, none have been acted upon, and in fact the contrary, it almost seems that if they didn't think of it, the authorities don't want to know

Shore Road

What a good idea to close the whole of Shore Road for the holiday season, I congratulated our Council. I had a vision of little kids running safely across the road to Sandpit Field, traders and market stalls, a diddy train, four wheeled bicycles going up and down, candy floss, artists working and displaying their creations, musicians, toffee apples, face-painting, and no cars. My imagination went further to two-way traffic with traffic lights alternating the flow on Kings Road East and on sections of the High Street, enabling the whole of Institute Road and Station Road to be pedestrianised, deliveries only being permitted. Dream on! Pop went the bubble and the car lobby won, with people citing how pleasant to drive in, park and watch the sea. It's illegal to park there and watch the sea! If you want to watch the sea, take your car to the Downs Car Park for a much better view, if you can see over the ludicrous and expensive wall with which the Council (them again) surrounded Albert Gardens. Then we had the 'traffic down De Moulham Road' argument, mainly put forward by (very) local residents and one letter to the Advertiser by a road safety expert, who lived in Battlemead. The solution to this objection is of course not to send traffic down De Moulham Road, but to divert it earlier, by widening Washbrook Lane to Ulwell Road and sending vehicles up and down the wider, quieter and much safer Northbrook Road route, helping most of North Swanage into the bargain. But of course that proposal would have cries of anguish from Northbrook Road residents, wouldn't it??? So, no solution and cars continue to rule Shore Road, with no traffic calming other than vehicles getting in each other's way ... I hope no injuries occur as a result of this decision. I am incidentally a car owner, but a place for everything, and town centres and town beaches are for people wherever possible, in my opinion. Cars should be sent off elsewhere.

Road Works

Still on Shore Road, the DCC road works and traffic lights at Ocean Bay have been there for weeks and every time I pass, there's no-one working there. Isn't

this such a familiar tale? If it isn't councils directly involved with their own engineering, then surely they should be able to instruct contractors all over the country who are unnecessarily holding up the general flow of things to finish up and clear off. You can also be sure that such inefficiency is always at the public's expense one way or another.

Blue Shelter

Regarding wasting money in Shore Road, after mooted the ridiculous proposition of flattening the Blue Shelter to curb bad boy behaviour, a U-Turn was made by the Council and suddenly expensive scaffolding was set up to re-furbish the structure. What's wrong with a ladder or two? Once again, it's not their money that the Council are spending, but ours.

Pier Head

Another Purbeck DC planning refusal for no good reason that anyone can see, and this time with the unanimous support of Swanage Town Council in favour of the development. What on earth do PDC want?

* * * * *

Having said all of the above, thanks for the "sensible" decisions and efforts made by the "good" Councillors ... you know who you are and so do we!!!

*Rowland Hughes, SRA Deputy Chairman
6 Argyle Road, BH19 1HZ
Tel. 423222 rowland@showcad.com*

Swanage Museum

You just can't get the staff!

It has been both encouraging and discouraging recently in the run up to the local elections to observe whether a wide spread belief in civic duty still exists. It is surprising how many people flatly refuse to even take part in the democratic process, let alone when they perhaps do have the time to even consider becoming more active in their own town.

To support an organisation such as the Residents Association it is a vital first step to participate in doing something positive for Swanage. A considerable army of often quite extraordinary individuals do take the next step in making a real difference, and put time aside in serving our many organisations. Whether volunteers are to be regarded as the amateur professionals or as professional amateurs the level

of skills and expertise to be found locally is prodigious. From, for example the apparently seamless mix of paid and voluntary staff at Swanage Railway to the incredibly patient folk who watch out for our dolphins our local heritage orientated organisations deserve much more active support to keep them viable.

As one example, Swanage Pier only closes usually for one day each year and yet visitors frequently complain when they discover that it isn't actually open all night as well! They complain too, often extremely vigorously that they have to actually pay to walk on its carefully and expensively preserved boards. They have a fixed belief that the Council run it and that it should be free to all! The original band of volunteers who were in at the start of the pier's regeneration are admitting to be beginning to run out of steam now and yet there are individuals close on their nineties who continue to carry out their duties without fail.

It is a growing dilemma within probably all voluntary organisations as to how to recruit key staff. Do you for example pay for treasurer support? Swanage Museum at one point would have had to cease trading if it hadn't decided to do so. The investment has been well worthwhile, but how far does an organisation go down this road to maintain its activities or services.

To recruit and retain volunteers is probably the major concern of most of our voluntary organisations and to take that next step on from supporting an organisation, as perhaps a fee paying member, to becoming an active participant is what will make the vital difference to the very existence of that organisation. Take the time to make the time or perhaps even introduce someone else the pleasures and perils of volunteering.

I am willing to pass on offers of active help to a range of local heritage orientated organisations and even to talk through the range of opportunities that are available. The Museum and Heritage Centre will accept a 'paper' introduction from potential volunteers and also requests for help from local organisations. I welcome your views or active help in developing a 'Community Notice Board' for volunteers at the Swanage Museum and Heritage Centre or even support in for example developing a volunteer link up scheme through the local press. A more co-ordinated and pro-active approach to 'staff recruitment' would seem to be necessary even in Swanage where 'active service' is so much part of many people's lives. Thank you.

*John Page, Chairman
Tel. 427474*



Play in Swanage

Good news for King George's Playground!
The Phase 2 - Young People's Area should be installed this summer following recent success with a funding bid to Viridor Credits Environmental Company through the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme. £12,500 has been awarded to Play in Swanage for the purpose of providing an area for teenagers within the playground, for details of what to expect please visit our website www.playin swanage.org

Although a fantastic boost to King George's Playground the award fell short of the £19,000 requested. If you have been considering a donation to Play in Swanage and would particularly like to assist with this much needed phase for the young people in our town please do contact me Gill Dight on 424026, donations can be posted to 3 Stafford Road, BH19 2BQ payable to Play in Swanage. Thank you for your support.. The other group who desperately need equipment at King George's are the age 6 and unders. I am delighted to say that this Phase 3 is being included in the 'portfolio of projects' submitted to The Big Lottery Fund in September by Purbeck District Council. £155 million has been allocated for play in Britain to be distributed on a district level. I very much hope that the funding allocated for Purbeck will be released and the younger children's play area will be created at King George's. It looks very promising that the goal of 'a playground of excellence for all ages and abilities' will happen this year!

There is still more to do to complete even with these likely funding sources so if anyone is able to help with fund-raising or interested in helping in any way please do get in touch.

Our Treasurer Regula Wright would like to step down. If you might be interested in taking on this essential role and have accountancy skills please get in touch. Meantime I would like to thank Regula very much on behalf of the Committee for her time.

There is still a way to go with this project but things will be happening at King George's this year, I will keep you informed as the year unfolds.

Gill Dight, Secretary
Tel. 424026

Membership

As mentioned in the last Newsletter we passed into the new year with 361 paid up members. So far this year 285 have paid their subs. If you haven't done so already please do pay up.

I'm afraid the general membership trend is down and as I am not able to devote the time to active recruiting this may very well continue. There is no substitute to going out and 'knocking on doors' to recruit new members, I did it for many years and increased the membership from 345 odd up to 924.

If any member is interested in doing this type of work please do contact me.

Stewart Borrett
Membership Secretary
Tel. 554482

If you have a friend who would like to join the Swanage Residents Association, please get them to fill out the form below and send with cheque to the address below.

Title/Initial/Surname

Address

Tel: _____

The amount of the subscription is £3 per person. Please make cheques payable to "Swanage Residents Association" and send to Stewart Borrett, 34 North Street, Wareham, Dorset BH20 4AQ

