

HEVER RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION
Annual General Meeting
Friday 30th January 2009

Present: Alan Townsend (Chairman), Jan Ryan (Sec/Treasurer)

Committee Members: Katherine Storey, John Scott, Jeanette Flockhart, Gerry Ryan

The Meeting was also attended by a further twelve members and guests.

This was a disappointing half of the attendance for the previous year.

1. CHAIRMANS WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION TO DAVID MUNN , AREA MANAGER (WEST KENT PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY) KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

The Chairman opened the Meeting by welcoming all present and thanking the Guest Speaker for agreeing to attend the Meeting and give a short talk.

David Munn began by outlining the work done by the PROW Office, stressing that this is entirely separate from the function of the Highways Dept. West Kent is sub-divided with a separate Officer responsible for some 400/500 miles of pathway.

Nicky Biddle is the Officer for the Hever area. She prioritises complaints, requests etc reported to her, but cannot act without the consent of the relevant landowner. Identifying the landowner can often be difficult, especially as not all land is registered, and local knowledge is vital for this.

Although PROW can supply gates, etc., they become the property of the landowner once installed, and for maintenance reasons these are generally metal not timber. Stiles are no longer being installed, and where possible are being replaced with gaps or gates as being more readily accessible.

Landowners are also responsible for keeping their footpaths clear and passable, and this is often difficult for PROW Officers to enforce.

Under the Countryside Access Improvement Plan there is a move to add directional signs to footpath signs (e.g. to School, to Church etc), but as there is a greater cost, the difference must be paid locally, usually by the Parish Council.

The PROW Office has adequate income for its needs, due largely to frugal measures, with Officers frequently doing repairs etc themselves.

David then invited questions from the floor, of which there were many.

These elicited further information, viz: -

- Stiles/gates do not remain the property of KCC because they are present at the request of the landowner – where possible a gap is left instead.
- New paths can be created as long as the landowner and PROW agree, or where a path already exists by common usage. Once designated, a path cannot be closed except by statute.
- There is no requirement for paths to be made dog friendly. Dogs must be on a lead or walked to heel. Although trespass is not illegal, trespass with damage is, and that can include dog fouling (e.g. on grassland intended for silage)
- Horse riders using footpaths as bridleways are not committing any offence. Footpaths must be a minimum of 2 metres wide, and this is planned to be increased to 2½ metres. If a landowner moves a footpath arbitrarily this is an offence, and if not rectified will attract a fine.

- The ongoing problems at Stanford Water Lane were inevitably mentioned, but as this is being dealt with as a separate issue, there was no further discussion.

The Chairman then closed the session as it had already over-run the allotted time. He thanked David Munn for an extremely interesting talk and regretted that there was no more time to take further questions.

The Chairman then moved the meeting on

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

These had been received from Committee Member Elly Heard, and a further two Members.

3. MINUTES OF THE 2008 AGM

These had been distributed in advance of the meeting, and were accepted without amendment. Proposed by David Baron and seconded by Pat Humphreys.

4. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

5. CHAIRMANS REPORT

The Chairman began by reporting that the Marquee had had to be sold. This had for many years been managed by Gerry Ryan, but he was unable to continue, and no-one had been willing to take over. It had been intended to sell on the attendant trailer, but this had been stolen. It is expected that some insurance money will be forthcoming.

On the ongoing problem with aircraft noise, the Chairman thanked David Baron for continuing to maintain pressure on the Authorities. David had distributed copies of his annual report, and confirmed that the information was available on the HRA web site.

The benches which had been installed by HRA on the Parish Field were being used regularly. HRA had also had the fence between the Field and the Pub car-park mended. Although this is probably the responsibility of Shepherd Neame, it impacts on the Village, and if HRA had not had the work done, no-one else would. The bottle banks are now situated where they should have been in the first place, thanks to HRA and the then Committee Member, Terry Dell, who had conducted the negotiations. HRA had also paid for the base for the 3 banks to be installed, and the banks had proved so popular that they were often full. The Chairman urged all present to request emptying when necessary, using the telephone number shown on the banks.

The Village Hall had raised an appeal to pay for necessary repairs and drain improvements, and HRA, in line with other Village bodies had donated £500.

Re. The ongoing problems with the road surface at Stanford Water Lane, it would appear that there could be progress in sight.

Illegal works on land opposite Lodgewood Cottages had been halted.

Plans were in train to replace the notice board, which stands on land opposite the King Henry VIII Inn, and has been leaking for some time. There were also plans to replace the broken road finger sign at the junction of Rectory Lane and Wilderness Lane, also any others which need attention.

The success of Hever School has meant that parking for staff etc has become problematic, and ownership of the area used is unclear. HRA had

organised a site meeting with all interested parties, from which it had emerged that neither the area nor the school itself are registered with the Land Registry. As a consequence the School intends to carry out its own improvements.

It had been reported that the Memorial Oak had a fungal infection, which is slowly destroying it from within. The Chairman asked if anyone could throw light on its ownership. Pat Humphreys responded, saying it was originally HRHS, but became part of the Pub holding when it went back into Castle Ownership, so it is probably the responsibility of Shepherd Neame.

The Chairman then voiced thanks to David Baron for his work on aircraft noise nuisance; thanks to Kevin Agate for all the work he had done at cost or below, for the Village; thanks to Andy Barnett (who had resigned from the Committee during the year), but still runs and maintains the HRA Website; thanks to all Committee Members for their hard work; thanks to all Members for their support, both moral and financial. He closed by calling for more volunteers to join the Committee

6. TREASURERS REPORT

Copies of this had been distributed in advance of the Meeting. The Chairman said that although there was a high bank balance, the loss of the marquee hiring income would mean an annual reduction of some £950. The Chairman also thanked all the generous sponsors without whom the Village Fireworks Display would not be possible. In reply to a question from Rosemary Bayford, the Treasurer said that insurance for third party and employers liability was always obtained for the fireworks display and for the summer event when there is one. Fireworks insurance costs £270 approx.

Both reports were then adopted, proposed by John Scott and seconded by Rosemary Bayford.

7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

The Chairman, Alan Townsend, and the Secretary/Treasurer, Jan Ryan, were willing to stand for re-election. This was done on a show of hands.

Committee Members John Scott, Elly Heard, Katherine Storey, Jeanette Flockhart, Gerry Ryan and (sometimes) Adrian Maurice were all willing to stand for re-election, and this was also done on a show of hands.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Summer Event – This had not been held in 2008 as attendances had been down in previous years and it had made a loss for two years running. The Chairman requested ideas for ways to appeal to more people. Pat Humphreys suggested another ceilidh. Jan Tolfree suggested a quiz. Gerry Ryan suggested an evening concert, possibly at the new venue for what had been Hever Lakeside Theatre. This would involve other Village organisations including the School, and would bring in talent from surrounding Villages. This idea met with general enthusiasm. Jane Higgs asked if HRA could join with the School for more cohesion, including the School Fete. The Chairman explained that HRA already supports the School in many ways, but there are many practical reasons why a joint fete would be difficult.

Timing of AGM – The Chairman said he was disappointed with the number of residents present at the AGM and asked for ideas to improve the situation. It

was pointed out that attendance might be improved if the AGM was moved to a warmer time of year. Most of those present did not remove their coats throughout the evening. The Secretary said the last Friday in January was the date of the first HRA meeting in 1990, so the date is set purely for historical reasons. This idea will be discussed in Committee.

Station Parking – Terry Bayford asked if the parking area at Hever station could be improved, as it is full of ruts and pot holes. Gerry Ryan explained that space for only 6 vehicles is for rail travellers. The road is actually private land, and the owners receive nothing for maintenance. A recent meeting with the owners and a representative from Southern Railways had put forward some ideas to resolve the problem, and the situation may change when the new franchise is awarded in September

Pat Humphreys called for a vote of thanks to the Committee for the work they continue to do for the Village.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the Meeting and invited all present to partake of the food and drink on offer at the back of the Hall.

Finger foods are provided by Committee Members, each of whom contributes a dish. For 2009, the honour of the Most Popular Platter goes to Jeanette Flockhart for her mini pumpernickels and her curry puffs