

CHAIRMANS REPORT JANUARY – DECEMBER 2020

LCT have continued with the theme of protecting Littleborough's heritage and history by working with other groups/agencies in an attempt to conserve the village we currently have, in a state of equilibrium amenable to all concerned.

At the 14th January A.G.M. The following were duly elected into the following positions:

- Chairman – Ian Jackson
- Secretary (incl. membership) – Michael Price
- Treasurer – John Kay
- Minute Secretary – Gillian Price
- Trustee - Daniel Ames

January

Planning applications for the AKZO site and Honresfeld were discussed; again, the committee noting that despite all attempts, no infrastructure projects are forthcoming from Rochdale Council.

Work is ongoing on the Café Boat with Trustee Julian Farnell donating his own time and effort refurbishing it, with materials donated by his suppliers.

Members of the Flood Resilience Group received training on the data loggers installed by the Environment Agency at High Peak on Blackstone Edge to enable them to collect the data for various interested parties.

February

Local councillors were invited and four of them attended February's meeting.

Star Academy, who will provide the proposed new high school, had contacted the Secretary to inform him that there was nothing for them to report at this time.

Concerns were expressed that small developments are being built, over and above the building that is proposed within the GMSF. These developments are having a detrimental effect on the infrastructure of Littleborough.

A productive discussion took place and all parties agreed to work together to address the issues raised.

March

The meeting was informed that funding from Crook Hill had been applied for, to use on LCT's 50th Anniversary celebrations. Cllr. Paolucci advised the meeting that she was willing to apply for sponsorship/funding.

The Chairman and two more members attended Wardle and Littleborough Forum to inform the wider public re infrastructure concerns.

The national Covid-19 lockdown then interrupted meetings until a 'catch-up' meeting via Zoom was organised for 30th June.

June

Matters discussed were mainly around the amount of planning applications, both potential and proposed.

Funding was secured to the amount of £2k from Crook Hill Wind Farm; and further funding was being applied for from the Co-op Community Fund for the LCT 50th Anniversary.

July

The Flood Resilience Group informed the meeting that they had been holding regular Zoom meetings with the National Flood Forum throughout most of the lockdown period; mainly discussing the proposed changes to the Govt's planning application process and its potential effect on flood risk areas.

It was requested in June that the Rochdale Rail Corridor Strategy, being championed by a councillor be an agenda item and thus, the Chairman opened the discussion, outlining information from the public domain and potential conflicts of interest. However, another local councillor and also one Trustee took great exception to this and protested and interrupted what was being discussed.

The Chairman agreed to write a Planning Strategy document which he would send to the membership for their approval.

August

One Trustee called for a proposal for a Vote of No Confidence in the Chairman.

The motion was proposed and seconded by at our last meeting 11th August 2020
This Trustee meeting was convened to take this vote

The Chairman read out facts against the allegations made, namely bringing the LCT into disrepute at the meeting held 14th July 2020

At this point the Secretary called for the vote to take place by a show of hands.
Result of the vote:

Votes for the motion included one proxy vote

- Votes for the motion including one proxy vote 3
- Votes against the motion 6

The motion was not passed and the meeting was concluded.

September

The Chairman questioned the meeting as to why LCT have 'Planning Application Updates' as a standing agenda item, when previous comments and emails from a local councillor indicated to members and Trustees that Rochdale Council's Planning Committee members are 'unapproachable'.

No answer to the Chairman's question was forthcoming.

A discussion took place regarding the Café Boat project, due to a Trustee sustaining an injury, thus delaying the project. The request was to see if any other options were available.

Constitution reform

The Secretary opened the item by stating that events of the previous few weeks had shown that the constitution may need to be tweaked in order to deal with certain situations.

Before the January 2021 AGM the membership would be invited to submit any suggestions that they might feel are needed to be discussed at the AGM.

Several attendees expressed the opinion that no-one in political office should be a Trustee.

The Chairman reminded the meeting that he believed that the Constitution at 11.2 (e) had been breached by a certain faction within LCT, (who had attempted to take political control), indicating that he had been the victim of a concerted effort by the same faction to remove him from office.

One Trustee resigned as both a Trustee and a member.
Another Trustee stood down as a Trustee.

October

Current Covid – 19 restrictions still hamper the Café Boat project.

The Save our Greenbelt Group are planning to launch a social media campaign once more information is available regarding the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework document.

The Trust, at the request of Juliet M de Little from Sheffield University has distributed her advert for volunteers to take part in her research on the psychological effects of flooding. The advert has been placed on the Trust's Facebook page and also on Discuss Littleborough.

It was recognised by all that the Trust should attempt to promote itself within the community and that social media was probably the best way forward. Most members though, are not experts of Facebook etc.

The Trust issued a comprehensive 'press release', to highlight and consolidate all proposed/potential planning applications for residential development, both within, and areas surrounding Littleborough. This would assist the residents of Littleborough to appreciate the impact on infrastructure etc., if they were to go ahead.

The press release would also demonstrate LCT and the Greenbelt Group working together to minimise any such impacts.

Funding application (in June) applied for from the Co-op Community Fund for the LCT 50th Anniversary was unsuccessful.

November

Albeit a 'brownfield' site and a derelict building, it was noted that demolition work had started on Phoenix Iron Works on Newall St., and concern was raised that the surrounding streets are inadequate to handle current traffic and that the traffic that will be generated by the proposed 20 residential properties will further exacerbate the situation.

The Canal/Café boat project was discussed due to significant ongoing delays due to various reasons.

It was decided that it would be prudent at this stage to make enquiries further afield to ascertain if the project was still viable.

The Save the Greenbelt Group have put out a petition which has been overwhelmingly received by Littleborough residents; culminating in over 2000 signatures opposing current GMSF proposals and other planning strategies.

The Crook Hill grant application was successful and monies have been awarded for promoting the Trust's 50th anniversary in 2021. This will be used for the printing of banners to hang on the various shopfront flagpoles around the borough and also to cover the cost of printing literature to showcase the Trust's 50-year history.

Member Frank Carter has put together a DVD featuring photographs with an audio background of Rochdale Canal between Sowerby Bridge and Manchester and ending with a photo of the unveiling of the memorial to Brian Holden in Littleborough. Frank very generously offered copies of the DVD free of charge.

Controversy surrounds the fact that Rochdale Council's resolution to dispose of surplus assets, one of which is Hollingworth Lake Visitor Centre. Reasons given being that it was not feasible to continue with little investment to enhance the visitor experience.

The Visitor Centre has been leased to the RSPCA, it seems it was a done deal and not put out to tender as one would reasonably expect with a publicly owned asset.

An article in Littleborough United Reform Church parish magazine reports that the Church Elders have been approached by a councillor who stated that Rochdale Council would be interested in purchasing the church with a view to developing a Community Hub.

It was commented that "Are there not community hubs"? Hollingworth Lake Visitor Centre, Hare Hill House, The Coach House and Littleborough Boxing Club?

Several Trustees/Members expressed their disbelief that our local councillors will not engage with the Trust, constructively or otherwise; acknowledging that the situation is continually unacceptable [as they are our democratically elected representatives].

The discussion terminated with a request for attendees to highlight where this situation could possibly be reported.

December

One of the local councillors had a conversation with the Chairman and was asked why our local councillors were not prepared to interact with the Trust, as stated by another local councillor at a previous Trust meeting. The councillor replied that as far as he was concerned, this was not the case and would engage as necessary.

The Canal/Café boat project has come to a halt and will now be the subject of a feasibility study.

The Save the Greenbelt Group informed the Trust that sales of a 2021 calendar they have produced are going well. The funds raised by them will contribute towards funding professional legal services to challenge planning matters. The Group's website is now up and running and they are to produce a newsletter shortly.

The Secretary accompanied a representative of the National Flood Forum to the New Street development. The Flood Forum representative raised a number of questions concerning the Artesian Well which she will pursue with the relevant bodies.

Link4Life [which is in reality, a standalone arm of Rochdale Council] has contacted The Trust and has offered to provide regular updates of their activities.

The Rochdale Rail Corridor Strategy which should have been discussed at the July meeting but was postponed was raised. It was decided it should be an agenda item at the January 2021 meeting.