

## **BODIAM PARISH ASSEMBLY 2024**

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### **The Minutes of the Parish Assembly held in the 6<sup>th</sup> Form Centre, Claremont School, on Thursday, 2nd May 2024 at 6.30 p.m.**

**Present:**

**For Bodiam Parish Council:** Councillors: - (Chairman) Linda Stevens, (Vice chair) Tim Porter, Graham Peters, Darren Page and Nick Gilbert

**For RDC:** Cllr T Ganley, Cllr T Biggs

**For ESCC:** Cllr P Redstone

**In attendance:** Clerk Lynsey Willard. Guest speakers and approx. 40 members of the public

**Apologies:** Bodiam C of E Primary School, their report can be found on the Bodiam Parish Website

Councillor Stevens took the Chair and opened the meeting by introducing the Councillors and Clerk and members of the public and guests welcomed.

The minutes of last year's parish assembly were confirmed correct and signed as a true account.

Out of respect for a longstanding councillor and chair of 30 years and resident of Bodiam for 75 years, a minute silence was held for Geoffrey Goodsell. The funeral will be at 2.30pm at St Giles on the 13 May 2024.

**ESCC Cllr Paul Redstone** covered three topics, County budget, Fostering and Potholes. County is in a good state this year and they will be supporting their budget by using a reserve of £14 million. There will be no cuts this year, but the future is not looking so good if the government does not contribute more. The council is well run according to an independent peer review.

**Fostering:** If anyone is interested in fostering, it can be very rewarding. Three councillors are currently providing career advice to young people in care and are looking for businesses willing to provide work experience for these young people. Please contact Paul Redstone if you can help.

**Potholes:** Balfour Beatty took over the contract a year ago and things have got better but to get the roads to a green status would need £3-4million. The annual budget is £25million. There have been problems with subcontractors and the quality rejection rate has sat at 30%, it should be no higher than 10%. One resident commented that there are 140 potholes from the Curlew to Hurst Green! Paul asked that people keep reporting the potholes online and send him the case number and he will chase it up.

**Lucie Bolton – Climate Strategy Officer** – provided a presentation on Rother's climate strategy which was refreshed in 2023. A climate emergency was declared in 2019 for Rother. The aim is to be carbon neutral by 2030. The carbon footprint is reducing due to the move to using more renewable energy. Rother already has a lot of trees so are limited on planting more. The slides will be added to the Bodiam Parish Website.

**Holly Harrison – presenting Regulation 18' consultation on our new Local Plan 2020 – 2040.** The plan is up for public consultation for the next 12 weeks until 23 July 2024 and hard copies are available in public libraries and the Town Hall. They aim to be bold and dynamic with housing, the economy, health and wellbeing and infrastructure – Green to the core is the headline. If you want to look at the plan and provide comments it can be done so via Rother Council's website. 5000-7000 new dwellings could be built in Rother by 2040. No plans have been identified in Bodiam. If anyone would like to see an online presentation (made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee) it can be found on here: [Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Monday 19 February 2024, 6:30pm - Start video at 0:01:40 - Rother District Council Meeting Webcasts \(public-i.tv\)](#)

**Rother District Council Cllr Tony Biggs accompanied by Cllr Tony Ganley** reported on what has been happening in Rother over the last 12 months. The council have a shortfall of £3.8 million this year and have been out to public consultation with businesses asking what can be done to reduce costs. Garden waste bins have gone up 47% to £81 a year. This will help raise £1.8 Million towards the shortfall. Tourism weeks was held in April and Councillors met up with staff of KESR and RVR and local wineries. Once the railway is complete in 2027 it is expected to bring in an extra 20,000 tourist each year, this is considered good for the local economy, and it is hoped that local businesses in the Bodiam area will have the opportunity to get together and maximise the potential. Concern was raised by a resident that the extra tourism is of no benefit to residents as business rates are not paid into the Parish.

**Mel Porter – Bodiam Pre School – (Mel Mel to our younger residents)** The pre-school provides sessions for 15 children at a time. The environment helps the young children grow in confidence and independent learning. For the latest Ofsted they achieved Outstanding for development and welfare. The link in with Bodiam school and if the volunteers are available, they may join the reception class for their forest school.

**Amy Hammond – Bodiam Primary School PTA** – Amy took over as chair last year and now has a very new and small committee. They are now registered as a charity. In the last year they have had a parent and student BBQ, Spooky Trail, Lights at the Castle Pub bonfire, Christmas Fair and crafts, Easter egg hunt and a bunny hop event. They are trying to open events to the community. There is a dwindling number of children at the school and only four parents on the fun day committee for the 22 June. The funday relies on the use of the pavilion for water and electricity and the committee members did a thorough job of cleaning the pavilion in the Easter holidays – Thank you! A suggestion was made that they look into becoming a PTFA so nonparents can join their committee.

**Ed Dickie – Headmaster of Claremont Senior School** -reported that it has been a quiet year for the school with no major developments and there are no plans for

developments for the year ahead. They did well in their Autumn Ofsted. They won National School of the Year for Performing Arts for Independent schools. Next month they will be holding their summer Shakespear production, residents are welcome to these events and there is no cost for the tickets.

The pool has been a problem and was closed from October until the end of last term. For several years the damage to the verges, from the coaches parking on them in Levetts Lane, has been reported and promises made to make them good. It was raised again that this still hasn't been done. The fence along the footpath from the rear entrance also needs replacing. Ed promised both these issues would be sorted.

**Rachel Piper – St Giles Church** – gave a resume of the last year, Canon Chrstopher retired in October 2023 and there was a wonderful turnout for his farewell. A core of retired clergies have taken service since and the process continues to find a new priest. Please let Rachel or Cllr Graham Peters know if you would like to receive email notifications of services. And let Cllr Linda Stevens know if you are interested in bell ringing.

**Karen Stafford – Manager for Batemans and Bodiam Castle – National Trust** – received 150,000 visitors last year. They still haven't recovered numbers since the pandemic and overseas visits from schools have dropped off due to new regulations. The National Trust continues to safeguard the Castle for future generations. Conservation repairs were done on the Postern Tower last year using complex and expensive scaffolding which had to be suspended above the moat. They are in talks with the Environmental Agency regarding the flooding of the carpark. The outdoor team continue to look after the land and veteran trees. Will got a mention as he has worked for the Castle 40 years this May! Residents are reminded they can still get free resident passes to the grounds.

**David Nibloe – Director Kent & East Sussex Railway / Gardner Crawley – Rother Valley Railway Heritage Trust** – gave a joint update on the construction process. The fencing is in place and the turntable that has been constructed has been listed for two awards. They will be holding a Gala day on the 1st & 2<sup>nd</sup> July celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary since it was opened as a heritage railway. You can catch a steam locomotive from Robertsbridge Station to Northbridge Street and then a bus to Bodiam to enjoy the full Gala. Half price tickets are available for Bodiam and Ewhurst residents. Copy of the flyer with the links will be added to Bodiam Parish Website.

**Cllr Linda Stevens - Future of the Pavilion** – seeking public opinion, Linda gave an overview of the current situation with the pavilion and the costs it is still attracting even though it is not used and is currently boarded up after a spate of vandalism last year. The pavilion is 29 years old and is in poor condition. A suggestion of it becoming a local shop was made but it was pointed out that it is too wet to get to it four months of the year and regularly floods in the winter. Another pointed out that if there were only 19 responses out of all the flyers put out then interest must be very low in what happens to it so what is the point in keeping it. The costs to decommission are unknown. There was a concern that if it was removed that there would be no changing rooms for younger people in the future. The field is unusable for 4-6 months of the year and it was pointed out that even at the Herdman, the changing rooms are not used as the children arrive kitted up due to safeguarding.

The Herdman Pavilion, Ewhurst and Staplecross village hall are both available for hire. The pavilion will never be viable due to flooding and the lack of parking. When the village hall was knocked down there was no interest shown by the village at the time. The school use the pavilion for their sports day and funday but currently they are not charged. In the last 12 months it has cost in the region of £2000 to maintain and insure the pavilion and this is charged to the residents. Maybe it would be more cost effective to hire in facilities for events rather than have yearly costs for the pavilion. Units can be hired with water and electricity. It was questioned if the school could approach National Trust about using their land for events.

A show of hands was called, and the majority supported the decommissioning of the pavilion.

**Close of Meeting** - There being no further business the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.