



KEEPING OUR TOWN SPECIAL

Annual Report 2018



Tree-planting on the Nevill Estate in the November

THE FRIENDS OF LEWES - THE LEWES CIVIC SOCIETY

Lewes Town Council Offices, Town Hall, High Street, Lewes,
East Sussex BN7 2QS (Registered Charity No 258756)

Web site : www.friends-of-lewes.org.uk E-mail address: enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk

Personnel at 31st December 2018

President	Baroness Kay Andrews of Southover OBE
Vice-Presidents	Jim Franks, Peter Mettyear & Maria Caulfield, MP
Honorary Life Member	John Davey

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Officers	Chairman	Robert Cheesman	(12/12)
	Vice-Chairman	vacant	
	Secretary	Marcus Taylor	(12/12)
	Treasurer	vacant	
Elected members	<u>At March 2018 AGM</u>	<u>At March 2017 AGM</u>	
	David Hutchinson	(10/12)	Roger Beasley (10/12)
	Chris Kneale	(6/12)	Phil Green (9/12)
	Neil Merchant	(10/12)	Audrey Jarvis (12/12)
	Ruth O'Keeffe	(6/12)	Roger Maskew (11/12)
	Janet Kennedy	(9/12)	
Co-opted in 2018	Paul Myles	(5/8)	
	Peter Earl	(3/4)	

(The figures after each name above indicate the number of actual and possible attendances at Executive Committee meetings in 2018.)

The Mayor of Lewes has the right to attend Executive Committee meetings.

PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

* indicates member of Executive Committee

Chris Kneale (Chairman) *
John Kennett
Bronagh Liddicoat
Roger Maskew*
Frances Tufnell
Nick Wiseman
Carolyn Beckingham (minute-taker)

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS GROUP

David Attwood
Paul Benjamin
Judith Davies
David Hutchinson*
Peter Mettyear
Mike Swift
[Advisory non-members in italics]

Membership Secretary
Website Manager

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE

Marcus Taylor (Chairman) *
Audrey Jarvis *
Neil Merchant *
Marietta Van Dyck

TREES SUB-COMMITTEE

Audrey Jarvis (Chair) *
Dean Bell
Phil Green*
Nick Jones
James Newmarch
Keith Sacre
David Saunders
Peter Thurman

Paul Mockford
Barbara Merchant

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Friends of Lewes – the Civic Society for Lewes - is an unincorporated association founded in 1952, the constitution of which was reviewed at the March 2017 AGM, to bring it in line with contemporary requirements and good practice. It is a registered charity (No 258756) usually known as the Friends of Lewes, and referred to throughout this report for the sake of brevity as FoL.

Communications to it should be addressed to enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk.

The postal address is: c/o Lewes Town Council Offices, High Street, Lewes, BN7 2QS

Membership is open to all, on payment of the relevant subscription.

Members of FoL's Executive Committee are the charity trustees. Officers are elected at the AGM for one year whilst half of the ten elected members retire each year, but are eligible for re-election. In addition, up to four members can be co-opted to the Executive Committee during the year. The trustees in office on 31/12/18, all of whom are FoL members, are listed above. During 2018 Mike Stepney & Anthony Dicks resigned and we thank them for their years of service.

The Executive Committee, which meets monthly, manages FoL's affairs but annually appoints sub-committees - one to examine all planning applications affecting Lewes and the surrounding area, another to provide services and events for members, and one to manage its tree interests. It also has a group that organises Heritage Open Days.

FoL had a membership of 401 at 31st December 2018. After some adjustments over the year, departures and arrivals were broadly similar to last year. New members are most likely to be achieved by word-of-mouth contacts and by presentations to groups where likely members are to be found. If you can tell others why you belong to FoL that would help; if you know of a group that might like to hear of our work and plans, do let Robert Cheesman or Marcus Taylor know.

The Charities Aid Foundation holds FoL's liquid assets. Its accounts are examined by Ian Clifton, 21 Seabright, West Parade, Worthing BN11 3QR

FoL employs no staff and has not incurred fees from professional advisers during the year.

On 31st December 2018 FoL's representatives on external bodies were: -

Lewes Conservation Area Advisory Group	Nick Wiseman & Peter Earl
Lewes District Council's Planning Service Users Group	Robert Cheesman
South Downs Network	Robert Cheesman

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The Charity is established for the public benefit to pursue the following Objects in the area of benefit which is the area comprising the Town of Lewes and its immediate surrounding area:

(1) To promote:

- (a) high standards of planning and design in or affecting the area of benefit and ensure that new development is sensitively sited in relation to the surrounding environment.*
- (b) the conservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest, and the physical and natural environment in the area of benefit.*
- (c) enhancement of the built environment in, and the social, cultural and economic well-being of, the area of benefit.*
- (d) free access to the public realm in the area of benefit.*

(2) To stimulate public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the area of benefit.

(3) To co-operate with public authorities and other bodies in fulfilling these objectives in the area of benefit.

This is achieved by arranging meetings on related issues; lobbying relevant bodies to protect the historic environment of Lewes, whilst recognising that the town needs to remain an economically vibrant place, and by supporting projects that fall within its objectives. The main risks faced are a failure to find sufficient volunteers to undertake activities, a decline in income through lower membership and a lack of legacies, which would limit the projects FoL is able to fund. The Executive Committee is very aware of the need to plan for the smooth replacement of the Society's officers when necessary.

PERFORMANCE

The Executive Committee considers that during the year the activities, projects and services to members, details of which follow, fulfil our declared objectives and that they are beneficial to the town and its inhabitants. The Committee therefore considers that FoL has complied with the public benefit test that applies to all charities.

PLANNING POLICY ISSUES

Keeping abreast of changes to planning policy remains a key activity where they are likely to affect Lewes. At national level the Government made revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework in light of experience gained since its introduction some six years ago but with an implied emphasis towards securing more house building.

Following public consultation the Neighbourhood Plan for the town, which FoL broadly supported, was submitted to the National Park Authority who passed it to an examiner appointed by the Planning Inspectorate. The plan is making provision for 283 dwellings to be provided on a number of brownfield sites in the town, which was in excess of the number set by the National Park Authority. At the turn of the year the Examiner's findings had just been received; having since been accepted by the Town Council and National Park Authority a town referendum will be held. Provided that a majority of those who vote are in favour of the Plan it will then move forward for adoption.

The South Downs Local Plan also moved forward in the year. Whilst generally content with it, FoL objected to the policy for some 220 houses to be provided on fields adjacent to Old Malling Farm as it considered the inclusion of this policy was inconsistent with its landscape led approach. Not only is the site conspicuous from the various hills around the town but there are good agricultural, landscape and archaeological reasons why it should not be developed when FoL believes that this number of houses can be provided on other sites in the town, after excluding the North Street Quarter and those mentioned in the Neighbourhood Plan. FoL has argued its case before a Planning Inspector whose decision is awaited. In the meantime the agents acting for the owners of the site have submitted a planning application for housing but it is hoped that this will not be determined until the Inspector's decision is known.

One issue arising in both the Neighbourhood Plan and South Downs Local Plan is that of affordable housing. FoL realises that there is a great need for more affordable housing in the town and thus supported the National Park Authority in requiring all developments of 11 or more dwellings to provide 50% of them as affordable. But even if this provision is adopted it will still be necessary for planning officers and committees to rigorously enforce it and not be swayed by arguments from developers that to do so is not viable on a specific site as happened on the site between Tesco and Homebase.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

In December it was announced that the pre-commencement planning conditions for the North Street Quarter site had been met. Gosnells have now relocated to new premises on Malling Brooks and Wenban-Smith to the former Carpetright premises in Brooks Road, so the buildings on Phase 1 of the development, from Phoenix Causeway to North Street, can now be demolished. It is understood that this will be in the early part of 2019. The site owners, North Street Quarter Ltd and the District Council, will shortly be appointing a developer to construct Phase 1 in accordance with the approved plans.

Plans for the demolition of Springman House to provide for a new fire station on the site and possibly a budget hotel are still being drawn up. As it is likely that this development will do away with the existing public car parking on the site FoL has already flagged up its concern over this loss. The District Council have said that the total number of car parking places in the town will not reduce as a temporary facility will be provided on the site of 20-24 North Street until such time as the new parking facility in the North Street Quarter development is open.

During the year it has been good to see the completion of the conversion of the Canon O'Donnell building into housing and the first of the houses on the former Lewes House vegetable garden site finished. Other significant planning permissions including that for South Downs Road and the land between Tesco and Homebase have not yet started whilst details of what the County Council have in mind for the St Anne's and Pells School sites are awaited. FoL is content that the former site should be used for housing but

would prefer that the Pells site remained in educational use, particularly in light of the increased population that should arise as a result of the North Street Quarter development for which it would be the nearest primary school.

PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

The Planning Committee met monthly to review each planning application submitted to the National Park Authority which falls within the Town Council boundary. The District Council is the delegated planning authority which determines most planning applications on behalf of the National Park Authority, except for those it 'calls in' because they could have a material impact on the statutory purposes of the national park.

Merging of the planning departments of the District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council was completed during the year, with a local planning team retained in Lewes to deal with planning applications in the area. Some functions, e.g. conservation and planning enforcement, are shared across both councils. The reorganisation resulted in significant staff changes and shortages, which reduced the level of service planning staff could provide. It is hoped that matters will improve as the new structures settle down.

In 2018 the Committee examined 249 planning applications and submitted formal objections to 61, made comments on 12 and wrote in support of 5. Representations are now submitted directly to the National Park authority via its online planning portal to ensure representations are received directly by the planning officer dealing with the application without delay.

FoL objected to various development proposals at the Old Lewes Racecourse and the diversion of the public footpath to an alternative route, which had been constructed without planning consent. It was pleased when the County Council refused the application for the footpath diversion and the National Park Authority refused applications for equestrian facilities to be expanded onto open downland. FoL will press for enforcement action to get unauthorised development removed and the land reinstated.

Applications are now only published on line and the Committee continues to find that some have been validated despite inadequate supporting information being provided. On several occasions the Committee has been unable to assess the full impact of development proposals from the information provided. The Local Validation List (LVL) sets out the minimum information required to be submitted with a planning application before it can be deemed valid. In its response to the recent consultation on the future requirements in the LVL FoL commented that validated applications in Lewes do not always meet the existing requirements as set out in the LVL. The National Park Authority has promised to review the matter and has asked to be informed of applications where the requirements are not met.

Historically, the District Council has always sent out weekly lists of planning application received in the Town Council area and published the details in the Sussex Express. However, it gave notice in October that it would end this practice following revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework which reduced advertising requirements. The Committee has been very concerned at the impact this has had and the consequences of applications not being widely visible to interested parties. Although weekly lists have subsequently been reinstated, they are not as user friendly as the previous issued.

FoL notifies the Enforcement Officer when it becomes aware of development that has been undertaken without consent, especially in the conservation areas. Although FoL notified the Enforcement Officer about construction of the smoking shelter at the Volunteer public house in Eastgate Street without consent, it remains in place over a year later. Despite an unsuccessful planning appeal the owners have not taken steps to remove the shelter and have now appealed against the enforcement notice. The progress of enforcement action at this site and at other locations is frustratingly slow.

The Committee always aims to work constructively with both developers and the local planning authority and invited the newly appointed Conservation Officer to its June meeting. Discussion covered whether conservation advice is provided on the District Council's website could be improved, including mentioning the FoL Planning Advice Notes on it.

There have been no changes in membership of the Committee during the year and anyone who is interested in the planning system and would be willing to join it would be welcome.

TRANSPORT ISSUES

FoL officers have continued to meet with County Council officials and contribute to consultations.

At a meeting with the District Council's Conservation Officers and ESCC Highways' Head of Contracts in August, FoL secured an assurance of greater sensitivity and consultation in future, especially in the Conservation Areas, the status of which is not always well-remembered.



It has been most pleasing to see that our persistent pressure over the years about pavement parking and the damage it causes eventually resulted in a ban on all stopping on the pavement on the north side of the High Street between Westgate and Eastgate, together with a ban on all loading and unloading at peak hours. Two more 'Deliveries Only' bays are to be created on the south side. Implementation of this was begun in December and should be completed early in 2019. As ever, enforcement will be crucial.

TREES COMMITTEE REPORT

A busy year saw planting of another elm on St Anne's Hill and trees on the green beside the Highdown Road shops on the Nevill Estate, as shown on the cover of this report. Plans to plant "landmark" trees on the main routes into Lewes at or near the town boundary are moving forward.

Visits continue to all the trees which we have planted over the past seasons to clear weeds from the base of each tree and then mulching around it, both to promote tree growth and to prevent any accidental strimmer damage.

Keep up to date with our planting by visiting this page www.facebook.com/LewesUrbanArboretum

OTHER ISSUES

Officers from FoL have met regularly with the CEO Rob Cottrill and other officers of the District Council. Discussions involved housing policy, on-going developments, future use of the old Turkish Baths building in Friars Walk and also changes to planning and other services as a result of reorganisation as the closer links with Eastbourne Borough affect more aspects of the Council's work. In particular, it was pleasing to note that the concern we expressed about the initial reduction in staffing in relation to Conservation Areas was followed by the appointment of an additional Conservation Officer, Jenny Martin who, together with Chris Connelley was given a tour of Lewes by FoL officers in the summer. This was reciprocated when FoL members were shown around key features of central Eastbourne. This is a valued relationship.

Liaison meetings between FoL committee members and Town Councillors occur roughly twice a year, where matters of mutual interest are raised and updated. The support and advice of the Town Council in several of FoL's projects is much appreciated, as well as their financial support for historic plaques and the Garden of Peace.

Respect for FoL's knowledge and experience of the town continues to be evident in all our relations with these and with other authorities and agencies.

Coverage of FoL activities in the Sussex Express and in regular articles in Viva Lewes has continued throughout 2018.

In October FoL hosted a mini-conference for some 30 planning professionals on design issues, particularly in the Conservation Areas, and heard from the National Park Authority's Design Officer about their emerging Design Code.

PROJECTS

Historic Plaques: Two new plaques were installed in 2018, one outside Depot Cinema and one near the Maltings building in the Castle Precincts.

If you have not done so recently, why not check out the list of 78 plaques at:

https://friendsoflewes.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/lewes_plaques_and_photos_asj_160120.pdf

Kilns in Pipe Passage:
An information board about
the history of these kilns is
now in place.



A Peace Garden for Lewes: 2018 has been a year of real progress on this long-running project. After a tricky first few months, with concerns about costs, the involvement of Paul Myles as lead on this project for FoL and the willingness of the District Council to make a financial contribution and to be the primary deliverer were both crucial.

An archaeological investigation revealed nothing to complicate the plans and the application for Scheduled Monument Consent was made to Historic England in December.

In addition to the contributions from the District and Town Councils, monies will also come from the Section 106 funds, arising from recent developments in the town, held by the National Park Authority. Completion of the landscaping work is now being planned for June, 2019.



An artist's impression of the finished Garden of Peace

Lewes Town Maps for tourists: At the request of the District Council revisions to the tourist maps in the town were put forward and it is hoped that the updated maps will have been printed by the District Council for display in the various map cases shortly.

Litter Free Lewes: Just over a year ago the voluntary group *Litter Free Lewes* was founded with the support of Transition Town Lewes and the District Council and has since carried out over 25 community litter picks, clearing approx. 400 bags of litter. FoL decided to sponsor their activities by getting badges and their hi-vis jackets printed and several FoL members are regulars on their litter-picking weekend trips.

For details on dates/ times/ locations or to
get in touch –
find *Litter Free Lewes* on Facebook,
@litterfreelewes on Instagram or
email Milly litterfreelewes@yahoo.co.uk



HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

Another successful year of organisation by the FoL team and enthusiastic response from the public: Over 3000 visits were logged, and the sunny weather ensured that not only Lewesians, but many visitors to the town either saw the posters, or picked up a leaflet, and set out to explore: some buildings recorded over 400 visitors. Again pre-booked events filled up quickly, the online booking system working effectively. FoL's thanks go to our sponsors and to the volunteers – over 50 of them - who either open up their buildings or provide stewarding. If you would like to be involved, either in the planning progress, as a building owner, or by stewarding over the weekend, then we would be pleased to hear from you. You can contact us on leweshod@gmail.com

Please note: The Heritage Open Days dates for 2019 are 12th to 15th September.

SERVICES FOR MEMBERS

Four talks took place in 2018: In January David Smith (Flintman) showed us the huge range of his work and the many ways in which this unique building material is used locally.

In February Dawn Whittaker, Chief Fire Officer for East Sussex and Giles York, Chief Constable of Sussex Police talked about their work and the challenges they face.

In September, Eleanor Austin told the story of her family's work to restore Fitzroy House from a derelict Victorian Library to a family home. This was a rare chance to see Jim Franks (her father)'s photographs for the first time and was much appreciated.

The October talk by Frances Stenlake marked the centenary of Suffrage for Women, telling us about those ladies who were locally most active.

At the AGM in March, Dr. Graham Mayhew shared his own personal views on the town he has lived in and served for most of his life.

Participation in the town's annual Societies Fair in the Town Hall in September provided another opportunity for FoL to explain to the public the wide range of its activities and interests. Accurate awareness of this has to be where the path to membership begins.

In December a number of people in the town who were not yet FoL members were invited to a reception where a presentation of the many aspects of the Society's work was made. Marketing activity of this sort needs to be continued to increase awareness of all that FoL does to try to keep Lewes special.

Three illustrated newsletters were sent out during the year. FoL's Facebook page now has over 310 'likes' (an increase of almost 60 over the year) and the website is well-used and is worth exploring. Work by Barbara Merchant to improve its layout and scope has been well-received and is continuing.

Sincere thanks are due to all who serve on FoL committees, give their time organising and staffing events, provide services for members or carry out other work. Additional offers of help to ensure that all our activities continue would always be appreciated.

FINANCIAL REVIEW (subject to independent examination)

Receipts and Payments

Both our income and expenditure were distorted by the receipt of some £35k from a local resident who wished to remain anonymous but wanted it used as a contribution towards the pedestrian crossing that has been provided on the Brighton Road. However FoL also benefited from this donation by being able to claim gift aid /on it and so a total of over £9k has been received from HMRC in 2018.

Grants have also been received from the Chalk Cliff Trust and Groundwork for our tree work on St Anne's Hill and in Highdown Road. Possible sources for grants are currently being investigated so that further tree planting can continue in 2019. Donations towards this activity are also very welcome.

Our total expenditure on the Peace Garden project to date is just short of £7k, whilst an overall total budget of £80k has been approved for it. Sums promised by the Town Council and National Park Authority will be passed directly to the District Council which has agreed to be responsible for meeting the major invoices after they have been approved by our project team. The District Council will also maintain the finished work as it will be part of their land-holding.

Our trading activities continue with negligible expenditure in 2018 but income of over £1k. As our stock of Inns of Lewes and Twittens is running low steps have been taken to revise and reprint these books for publication in 2019.

With no remuneration being paid to, nor any benefit obtained from a related entity by any trustee and with only minimal travel expenses incurred in the course of FoL's business being reimbursed, the cost of running FoL in 2018 was £1.8k against £1.2k in 2017. While currently the recurring costs of running FoL remain below the 2018 ordinary membership subscription income of £3.2k it is nevertheless hoped that those who can afford to pay more than the minimum subscription will continue to do so in order that we are able to continue to support small enhancements to the town.

Balance Sheet

At the end of the financial year, FoL's total monetary assets on the unrestricted funds account amounted to over £45k and over £5k in the restricted fund, making a total of over £ 50k, all of which is held in Charities Aid Foundation bank accounts.

The Executive Committee considers that a cash reserve of around £40k is appropriate. This comprises continuation of a £10k operating reserve, a further potential £15k contribution towards the Peace Garden project, £5k to other projects for which commitments have been made and some £15k being held so that funding can be provided for unforeseen small projects, specialist advice if needed and funding the reprinted books or further supplies of tea towels.

OUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

FoL continues to seek more opportunities to present its aims and activities to the public and will maintain a professional approach on all issues that arise. However, what it is able to do is and will be constrained by the resources, human and financial, that are available. It would like to assist in advancing and funding more projects or activities which enhance the townscape of Lewes and believes that its support could help lever funds from other bodies such as the National Park Authority.

Members are also encouraged to check out our website www.friends-of-lewes.org.uk and its Facebook page for updates on many of the issues mentioned here and for copies of FoL's contributions to consultations and press releases.

Approved by the Executive Committee on 23rd January, 2019 and signed on their behalf by

Robert Cheesman Chairman