



THE STEYNING SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 269859 www.steyningsociety.org.uk

October 2020 NEWSLETTER

Dear Members,

We hope that you are continuing to keep well and have made the most of the good weather this summer.

Talks

Due to current government legislation, it won't be possible to hold the Christmas Supper or to have meetings or outings until at least the New Year. However, we will continue to make the monthly talks available online. You will be reminded of each forthcoming talk, which will go online on the Monday before the date in the programme and will remain on You Tube for a month. The three talks given so far have been very successful and enjoyable. Janet Pennington's talk: "**An illustrated walk around old Steyning town**" had over 100 views in the first few days and will remain online until the next talk from 12 October given by Hilly Sloan on "**Goodwood House**". We hope this can be followed up by a visit next year. From 16 November you can access Douglas J. Eaton's talk called "**Mad Cap ideas – Quality Inventions**" and from 11 January Geoff Mead, a regular speaker, will entertain us with "**Brighton before the Pavilion – a different aspect of the city's history**".

If you are receiving this as a paper copy please send us your email address if you have one to cmantsteyningsoc@gmail.com If you are not online, try to get family or friends to help you get online and see our Talks, especially Janet Pennington's by going to www.steyningsociety.org.uk then to Talks.

Local outings

Although we are unable to organise any outings for the time being, there are walks and places to visit in the immediate areas. For instance, Bramber Brooks Nature Reserve is a pleasant walk, accessed from Bramber High Street opposite St Mary's, which can be extended to the river. The Old Vicarage, Washington, is due to open on Sunday 11 October for the National Gardens Scheme, though it would be wise to check first, tel. 07766 761926.

Subscriptions

There are still thirty-five members who have not paid their subscriptions. Many thanks to those who responded to our reminder letters sent out in August. If you no longer wish to be a member please let us know.

Steyping Society Grants

Twice a year, in May and November, the Committee considers applications for grants, up to £500, from local organisations which aim to improve and maintain the amenities of Steyping. If you know of any such organisations which might be interested in applying for one of our grants, please do encourage them to contact the treasurer: adriangobat@hotmail.co.uk Our next deadline for applications is November 1st 2020.

Steyping for Trees (SFT)

As many of you will know Steyping for Trees is affiliated to the Steyping Society and we have given them a grant to aid their work. Thanks also to over 40 Steyping residents who have donated to Steyping For Trees (SFT) and chosen a tree to have planted on a verge near them through the West Sussex County Council (WSCC) scheme. These will be planted during this winter season in 7 different roads. These trees will help to combat climate change and pollution, and provide shade and beauty for us and future generations in this lovely town. WSCC will have responsibility for these trees apart from watering in the first few years. Anyone who is interested in the second phase next year can contact SFT via our website : www.steyningsociety.org.uk/steyping-for-trees

SFT will also be planting a hedge on Parish Council land at Abbey Road. The 400 plants have been “nursed” through the summer! Finally, please do go to the SFT stall at the Steyping market on 3 October where they will again be giving away some saplings.

Steyping Museum

The Museum was thrilled to reopen to the public on Wednesday 16 September, of course following current government legislation. The new opening days and hours are Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday from 10.00 – 16.00 and on Fridays from 10.00 – 13.00, subject to any further changes in legislation. If you are planning a visit, it might be worth checking in advance to make sure the Museum is open, rather than have a wasted journey. There is a new exhibition The Toy Theatre, which is a colourful and entertaining history from the Regency period to the present day and also a new permanent exhibition covering football in Steyping over the years.

Steyping Neighbourhood Plan

The plan has been out for consultation between 17 July and 11 September. The consultation has now closed. We have submitted comments, which can be found on our website. We have supported the plan but have sought to strengthen the policies on vision, green infrastructure, biodiversity, responsible environmental design and Steyping's distinctive character.

Government changes to the planning system

Radical changes to the planning system, including the method by which housing targets are determined, and the role of local planning authorities, were published in two separate but related documents, by the Government in August. The first sets out a new standard method for assessing local housing need; a policy to secure developer contributions to affordable homes; proposals to support small and medium-sized developers and extending permission in principle for major development.

In essence these will impose top-down housing figures on each Local Authority through a new

standard method for calculating housing figures. In theory this would ensure enough land is released where affordability is worst and factoring in land constraints e.g. Green Belt, flood risk etc. The new method will distribute the national housebuilding target of 300,000 new homes annually and very importantly the housing figures will be binding on Local Authorities.

However, the devil is in the detail and this approach takes no account of local conditions nor does it allow local democracy to assess and plan for local needs. Our MP Andrew Griffith has described the 'new method' as “*a 'mutant algorithm' cooked up in the wet market of Whitehall*”. He has said that the proposal is ‘*fundamentally flawed*’ because “*it appears to be entirely blind to geography ... as in West Sussex, much land is physically incapable of being developed or is protected in law, the algorithm appears to completely ignore this*”.

The second document is a White Paper '*Planning for the Future*'. This proposes radical and fundamental changes to the existing system, with a new role for Local Plans. These will identify land for development and protection and set clear parameters about what development can take place in those areas. Plans will be required to identify three types of land only – growth areas, renewal areas and protected areas.

It is not possible to summarise these changes easily but many commentators have been extremely critical. Dr Roger Smith CPRE Sussex and representative for Horsham says - “*The Government's proposed new method for calculating housing targets would increase the minimum housing target for Horsham District from the current 800 houses per year to an unprecedented 1,175 per year, amounting to 30,870 over the period of HDC's new local plan (yet to be approved) ...*

The Town and Country Planning Association's verdict is “*The government's planning White Paper will completely rewrite the English planning system ... we are deeply concerned that the proposals will undermine local democracy, marginalise local councils and fail to achieve the kind of high quality places that the government is committed to delivering*”

Dr Smith is also concerned that it is proposed that site specific surveys of bio-diversity and the natural environment should be reduced. He suggests “*this would have catastrophic consequences for flora, fauna and bio-diversity.*”

The CPRE has a petition that can be signed at <https://takeaction.cpre.org.uk./page/66589/petition/1?ea.tracking.id=cpre-web-take-action> or you can write to Andrew Griffith, MP for Arundel and South Downs, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA or email: Andrew@GriffithMP.com

U3A National High Street Project

The Steyning and District U3A is taking part in a national research project to look at local high streets before and after Covid-19, recording details of premises in Henfield and Steyning, noting the businesses and photographing the shop fronts to create a data base. The high streets will be revisited in 18 months time to note any changes and the findings will form the basis for a landmark report to be published by the U3A Trust in 2022. Committee member Tony Struthers is undertaking the survey together with a colleague Geoff Phoenix. They are hopeful that this will provide an essential data base for the town to show the impact of Covid-19 on our High Street.

Speed Limit

The increase in car use and in speed is having an impact on Steyning. The Committee believes there are strong reasons to support a campaign for a 20 mph speed limit in Steyning, for the safety of school children, pedestrians and cyclists and to save fuel.

Church Lighting Scheme

Many of you will have read in the Church Magazine that the Church is required to update its electrical system to remain safe. This is seen as an opportunity to enhance the beauty of the Town's only Grade 1 Listed Building by installing a new and exciting lighting system.

If you wish to contribute email lettherebelight@gmail.com or ring 01903 813276.

And Finally...

Our final item is a very welcome contribution from our Honorary President Peter Harris, who was our Chairman for many years, before moving in 2018 with his wife Diana to Norfolk to be near family members. Those of you who came to our Christmas Supper last year will remember that Peter joined us and showed that he had lost none of his enthusiasm since leaving Steyning!

North Norfolk News

We now live in North Norfolk in a large village, Briston; it is pleasant but not fashionable like Blakeney on the coast. Briston has a Co-op and another shop, both about ½ mile away and it is a nice stroll for me to do the shopping. Recently as I walked there, past the self-mocking road sign "SLOW YOU DOWN", I recalled the first line of the WW1 poem: "I can't forget the lane that goes from Steyning to the Ring". Not like the South Downs here, but North Norfolk is not flat, more undulating. Our bigger place nearby is Holt, a fine Georgian small town that reminds me of Steyning. Obviously, after 46 years in Steyning I do miss it and, of course, the splendid people.

Best wishes to you all,

Peter

Looking ahead

Covid does offer us an opportunity to stop and think about how much we value living in such a special town and how important it is to support it. The Planning Section in this Newsletter is particularly important and Tony Struthers, as a former Chief Planner of the UK, speaks with considerable authority about the dangers of National Government overriding local policies. We need to keep alert and take an interest in all matters local.

Despite the difficult times we are living through, the Steyning Society continues to be actively engaged in supporting issues and initiatives that preserve the integrity and character of this lovely community. Next year we hope to participate in the Heritage Open Days from 10 – 19 September, which had to be cancelled this year. When life returns to normal, we plan to hold a party to celebrate: this will give us something to look forward to!

With very best wishes from your Committee