

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

As the new councillors find their feet in the workings of Breckland and the Town Councils we continue to campaign to see action to regenerate the town centre in the short term. The window dressing to the empty shops has improved the look of the empty shop fronts but until landlords can be encouraged to charge affordable rents it is unlikely these units will be taken by long term tenants.

At our April meeting, an overwhelming majority of people wished for us to campaign against the bus station being moved to Minstergate given the lack of new facilities and the constraints of the new site. The petition raised was presented to local MP Elizabeth Truss (see Environment Report)

The Thetford Area Action Plan has now been submitted and this will be examined in public by the Inspector later in the summer. The Society's committee still feel that the 'bolting on' a new suburb to the north will not help the town and that Thetford should be allowed to grow more organically.

At our last committee meeting it was decided to explore by what means the Society could campaign for the young people of Thetford. A sub-committee lead by Mike Brindle will look at what provision there is already in place (youth groups, scouts & guides, etc) and what voids have been left with the withdrawal of public funding. Anyone wishing to help with this project should contact Mike on (01842)753566.

Radio Norfolk's Treasure Quest programme asked for our assistance once again and Stuart Wilson was the link as the programme visited the Priory Gatehouse in April.

The AGM in September is on the horizon and we will be looking for members who wish to serve on the committee especially a Membership Secretary, as Mrs Pearson has indicated her intention to step down after many years of service.

The Thetford Tourism & Heritage Partnership (TTHP) is again co-ordinating a Thetford Festival from 26th August - 3rd September. Many groups will be delivering their own events during the festival period with the TTHP providing an umbrella to promote the festival. For more information or to get involved, contact David Brooks on (01842) 751975.



Thetford Priory Gatehouse

Future Activities

Meetings

All at the United Reformed Church at 7.30pm unless stated

- Jul 5th Gary Sander – Perception
- Aug 2nd Elizabeth Truss MP - One year in office
- Sep 6th AGM
- Oct 4th Yvonne and David Leonard - Botanical highlights
- Nov 1st Mike Clarke - Guide Dogs For The Blind

Outings & Events

- July 23rd Barbeque at St Audreys, courtesy of Paul Clark - 6pm start
- Sept 15th Buckingham Palace - coach and entrance - cost £39. A few tickets left
- Oct 8th – Society Quiz - URC.

There is a proposal for a weekday trip to the Cromer Christmas end of pier matinee show. Feedback required to gauge demand, please let Pat or Wendy know if interested.

To book any of these events contact either: Wendy Raphael on 01842 755962 or 07712347822 email wendyraphael@gmail.com or Pat Smith on 01842 752854 email pms42@tiscali.co.uk

Other Forthcoming Events in Thetford

August 26th – Sep 3rd Thetford Festival. See www.thetfordfestival.org.uk for programme.

For details of the many other events in the town visit the calendar of events on www.explorethetford.co.uk/events or check in the *About Thetford* magazine.

Contact Tourist Information at Belmont House, 20 King Street, Thetford (01842) 751975 or email info@leapinghare.org.



The roof of the north aisle/vestry of St Mary the Less, which needs repairs.

ENVIRONMENT

St Mary the Less

The appeal against Breckland Council decision not to grant planning permission for the conversion of the building into a dwelling failed.

The Government Inspector concluded that:

“Despite the general acceptance that the proposal demonstrates an imaginative design for the reuse of the Church without appearing to harm the existing fabric, this has not been adequately demonstrated.”

This decision was disappointing in that it leaves St Mary’s in its present condition for the foreseeable future. If the owner does not present another ‘acceptable’ application then we will be urging Breckland Council to impose another Urgent Works Notice on the owner so that the remaining works can be carried out to prevent further deterioration.

Ramsey Close

Following lobbying by local residents, the Thetford Garden and Allotment Club and our Society, Breckland has now agreed to hand over ownership of the site to Thetford Town Council. We are delighted with this outcome and would like to thank those who supported the issue.

Bus Interchange

The Society’s petition against the move of the bus station to Minstergate was handed to Elizabeth Truss MP on Friday 3rd June. Nearly 900 people (referred to as the vocal ‘minority’ by Breckland Leader John William Nunn) signed with just two people supporting the move.

Committee members Pat Smith and Wendy Raphael together with Corinne Fulford and Tony Lewis discussed their concerns with our MP. Breckland Council had attempted to highjack the meeting by sending along two MTF Board members along with the Town Mayor. Fortunately, our four were in fine form and Elizabeth Truss suggested that the Society be fully involved with the planning and development of the Anchor site.

We intend to pursue a number of matters

related to the proposed move to Minstergate. For example, why has public money (£1.2 million) been allocated to refurbish the Cosy Carpet Warehouse when it will have nothing to do with the bus station and there is, at present, no idea about what it will be used for?

Biomass Power Plant along Mundford Road

The determination meeting for the planning application related to this Power Station has been postponed yet again. We are hoping that this may be a sign that the project is unsuitable for that particular site. If/when the meeting takes place we intend to be present.

River Corridor

Digby Smith and his group of workers are continuing to make Thetford a much more pleasant place to live. Removing litter, cutting back invasive species of plants and clearing the river are back breaking tasks – we are most grateful for your time and energy.



Wendy and Pat with their petition.

ACTIVITIES REPORT

Meetings

David Osborne gave us an insight to the development of education in Thetford in April. Danny Jeffrey spoke on the unique, but often overlooked church of the Canon’s of the Holy Sepulchre in May. Paul Stancliffe joined us from the BTO in June to talk about their well respected work.