



**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at  
Sandyacres Sports & Social Centre on Tuesday, 20 March 2018**

**Attendees:** SLRA Committee: Tony Bartlett (Chair)  
David Porter (Secretary)  
Bryan Biggs  
Fred Dunkerley  
Bryan Hall  
Doug Harman  
Desmond Henley  
John Hobbs  
Evan Thomas

39 members

County Councillor: Charlie Simkins  
Borough Councillor: Larry Krause  
Parish Councillors: Christine Drury, Westwell Parish Council  
Nigel Bunker, Boughton Aluph & Eastwell PC  
Ivor Groves, Boughton Aluph & Eastwell PC

Speakers: Ian Rickards, Ashford Area Warden, Kent Wildlife Trust  
Mike Moulang, Chief Flying Instructor, Kent Gliding Club

The meeting was opened by the Chairman at 7.38 pm.  
The AGM was preceded by the Open Forum (see below).  
The AGM commenced at 8.08 pm.

**Item 1: Apologies for absence**

Apologies had been received from:

Guests: Cllr Winston Michael  
Cllr Simon Howard-Smith  
Members: Howard Preston  
Stuart & Carol Clay  
Chris Taylor & Amanda Townley  
Sue Wood  
John Faulkner  
Heather & Charles Slater  
Sharon & Lee Middleton  
Terry Riley

**Item 2: Approval of the minutes of the AGM held on 29 March 2017**

Proposed by Bryan Hall and seconded by Doug Harman. The minutes were approved as a true record.

**Item 3: Chairman's Report**

Tony Bartlett, the Chairman, presented his report:

"The flyer you have all had very succinctly summarises most of the things we have done during this past, very busy, year. So I won't repeat them now. But a number of them are ongoing.

The final version of the Local Plan was submitted at the end of 2017. This included some major changes to the first draft demanded by central government which resulted in the reintroduction of the development on the land east of Hothfield Mill between Westwell Lane and the A20. Although the housing

development was now relocated to be at the A20 end of the site with vehicle access directly to the A20, not Westwell Lane as was first proposed, the SLRA consulted the residents of Westwell Lane and based on their responses again vigorously opposed this development in particular and the proposed wider A20 Corridor development comprising this housing development and the rest in Hothfield and Tutt Hill, on the basis it was extending the urban sprawl beyond the acknowledged boundary. This would pose a threat to the rural character of our whole area. The Local Plan public examination begins in April and whilst the SLRA has registered to be represented, we will only speak if new evidence is introduced.

Looking forward to the rest of the year our task remains to press for the retention of our rural character in the face of increasing housing demand. To this end, after consulting our members, the SLRA is also opposing two local housing developments outside the scope of the Local Plan, one on Lenacre Hall Farm and the other on the former Sandpit. Both are opportunistic and speculative developments submitted after the end of the Local Plan consultations and both would result in a substantial increase of vehicular traffic accessing on to Sandyhurst Lane, and do irreparable damage to the environmental habitat. We will continue to monitor and oppose these planning applications.

Moving on to our perennial issue of road safety, we know that many members are still concerned about the speed of vehicles in Sandyhurst Lane. Usefully, both the above planning applications include traffic survey data. We will analyse this during the year to see if it provides evidence to support our case before deciding on further action. We will continue to keep the issue alive and would welcome any substantive evidence you get to support the case. Please report it to David.

The SLRA has committee members who are actively involved in the BA&E Neighbourhood Plan evolution, thus ensuring that the views of our local residents are properly represented in its development process. The SLRA committee also continues to scrutinise and comment back to ABC on planning applications made within our area.

Our Neighbourhood Watch scheme has now been operating for nearly five years and is well established and complements, but I am afraid occasionally duplicates, information sent out from our neighbouring schemes in Westwell and Boughton Aluph. But as they say, more news is better than no news

In his report David will also deal with some of the other issues we have dealt with raised by our members. But there will be others of which we are unaware, some arising from our local authorities or relevant consultations but also from you, the community we represent. Bring them to us – it's what we are here for.

By our next AGM we will be preparing to reap the rewards of our various boundary review campaigns. So, in May 2019, those residents now living in Bockhanger ward will become part of the rural Westwell Parish. In readiness for this I have been asked to present an overview of the SLRA to the Westwell Annual Parish meeting next week.

In addition we eventually persuaded the Boundary Commission to move the borough ward boundaries so that those residents living in Bockhanger ward and almost all those living in Boughton Aluph & Eastwell ward will also be included in the expanded rural Downs West ward, Larry, from the same date. This required forceful lobbying to avoid the BA&E residents, in some cases on both sides of the Lane, being moved into the new urban Goat Lees ward. At County level, we had already achieved moving the boundary so that all of the SLRA area is now in your Ashford Rural West division, Charlie.

So if all this makes you want to take a more active role, and would like to join the Committee, please let David know when we get to the election in a minute.

So on behalf of your Committee I would like to thank you, the members of the Association, for your support and remind you it is only through your continued membership and support that the Association has the strong voice needed to represent you and our community. On your behalf, I would also like to thank all our county, borough and parish councillors for their past, and I hope future, support.

And finally on a personal note, I would like to publically thank my Committee colleagues for their time, dedication, help and guidance, without which much of what I have just reported would not have happened, and of course to thank our Secretary, David Porter, for his tireless efforts and without whom, nothing would have happened."

There were no questions on this report.

#### **Item 4: Secretary's Report**

David Porter, the Secretary, presented his report:

"As you've heard from the Chairman, we've had another very busy year. The committee has physically met five times and the meetings have been well attended by an average of six members.

We were sorry to lose John Faulkner from the committee in July, but subsequently welcomed two new co-opted members, Bryan Biggs and Fred Dunkerley. We still have room for a few more and would very much welcome some female members to provide a better balance now that both our former female committee members have moved away from the area.

We're pleased that the SLRA is now represented on the Board of Trustees for Sandiacres, and our representative is Fred Dunkerley.

In addition to the main issues which Tony has mentioned, I'd just like to touch on a few more which have kept me busy as Secretary during the year.

We've been involved in pursuing the extinguishment of footpath AU1 for at least 20 years. This footpath runs through properties in the 140s to 160s Sandhurst Lane, some of which were built over the footpath in the 1930s. I'm delighted to say that, thanks to one of the affected residents who generously paid the necessary fees, this footpath was finally permanently extinguished in August.

Last year we were talking about a water leak by the entrance to Pondfield in Sandhurst Lane. Thankfully, that was fixed soon afterwards by South East Water. This year, I have to report on another water problem, the blocked drain in Sandhurst Lane adjacent to the Hare & Hounds pub, which results in a puddle which spans the entire road in heavy rain. This is a recurring problem that I again reported to KCC on 10 December and I am sorry to say that they have yet to fix it – and for that matter similar problems at Drovers Roundabout. But just to assure you that we do act on these issues.

Last year I reported that some members had suggested we should seek the removal of the phone box at the junction of Sandhurst Lane and Lenacre Street, as it had become little more than a grubby advertising hoarding. We did try to get BT to remove it, but they refused on the grounds that it was "relatively well used". So we took a different tack and, after a bit of a battle with Ashford Borough Council, convinced them that the box is located within the Kent Downs AONB and should therefore carry no advertising. All the advertisements have now been removed.

We've addressed numerous other issues including broadband, motorway noise, road works on the A20, road closures, water pressure, bus services, bin collections, NHS consultations and enquiries about tree felling, reliable tradesmen, and many other subjects.

Our membership has grown over the past year and now stands at just over 40% of the 345 homes in our area. We keep in touch with most members by email, but I must stress that we shall not be able to do so without your written permission after new data protection regulations come in to force in May.

We have that permission for the vast majority of members, but for the remaining few, if you do get an email from me on this subject please respond or we will not be able to provide a service to you after 25 May.

Finally, may I add my own thanks to the Chairman's for the support we receive from all our county, borough and parish councillors; we greatly value our close working relationships with them and the bodies they represent.

And, of course, thanks to you the members for your support and your friendly emails and calls. We greatly value your membership."

There were no questions on this report.

## **Item 5: Treasurer's Report**

Don Murrell, the Treasurer, was unable to be present. The Secretary reported that the SLRA bank balance currently stood at £2,757.31. There were current liabilities of about £250.

A vote of thanks was recorded to Carole Borner for her continued work in the day to day management of the Association's finances.

## **Item 6: Election of Committee**

All of the existing committee members offered themselves for re-election. There were no further nominations. Proposed by Andrew Smith and seconded by Doug Harman, all candidates were duly elected unopposed:

Tony Bartlett	John Hobbs
Bryan Biggs	Don Murrell
Fred Dunkerley	Andy Peddle
Bryan Hall	David Porter
Doug Harman	Evan Thomas
Desmond Henley	

## **Item 7: Any Other Business**

Bryan Hall said that the Boughton Aluph & Eastwell (BA&E) Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, of which he is a member, is considering amenities in the area, including Sandyacres, and asked what developments people would like to see at Sandyacres. Ideas included a hard standing walkway around the site, reinstatement of the tennis courts, an outdoor gym and a children's play area.

Cllr Ivor Groves said that this issue had been discussed by the BA&E Parish Council. The Chairman suggested that it could be explored by a public meeting organised by the Trustees of the Sandyacres Board.

There being no further business, the formal AGM closed at 8.33 pm.

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## **Open Forum**

The Open Forum was held prior to the AGM, starting at 7.40 pm.

Cllr Christine Drury gave an update on the 18 month trial overnight lorry parking ban which had been in place since 30 October 2017 on a stretch of the A20 which included Potters Corner. There were now far fewer lorries parking overnight in the 'layby' at Potters Corner. The scheme had been widely advertised by Ashford Borough Council (ABC), using leaflets in 16 languages, signage, etc. ABC had persuaded the Department for Transport (DfT) to introduce a temporary change in the law to allow clamping on the first, rather than the fourth offence. A further temporary change now meant that ABC was able to charge £150 instead of £40 to remove clamps, making the scheme economically viable. The trial was proving very effective; almost no lorries had been clamped twice.

Cllr Drury stressed the importance of providing well-appointed lorry parks. The existing Ashford International Truckstop at Waterbrook was a "five star" facility. A planning application (number 18/00098/AS) had been submitted for expansion of the site to accommodate 600 lorries and she urged residents to support the application. Without the provision of adequate alternative parking, the future of the overnight lorry parking ban after the 18 month trial was uncertain.

The Chairman congratulated Cllr Drury on the effort she had put into this issue.

Cllr Charlie Simkins provided an update on the review of bus service subsidies being carried out by Kent County Council (KCC). The original report in the Kent Messenger on 29 November 2017, that the Council was to cut the subsidy by £2 million, had caused great concern. After much debate, the subsidy reduction for 2018/19 had been reduced to £450,000 and there will be no cuts in subsidy to bus services in the Ashford area in the coming year.

KCC was now undertaking a “big conversation” with parish councils and communities to explore how bus services, in particular for school children and elderly residents in rural communities, could be restructured to save money whilst providing a good service. This might involve, for example, taxi bus style services. There will be public meetings, starting in April, and Cllr Simkins will provide alerts to these.

Cllr Simkins also provided an update on potholes, a subject which had been raised by member Andrew Smith. The subject was also currently highlighted in the press and exacerbated by the recent cold weather. Cllr Simkins said that KCC had a capital budget of £50 million for roads and a revenue budget of £8.1 million for potholes and a pothole ‘blitz’ was coming. He urged residents to report all potholes on the KCC website or by phone. He acknowledged that Trinity Road (A251) was a particular problem, given the high volume of heavy lorries using that route. Andrew Smith said that traffic had increased very significantly in recent years and there were potholes up to 6 inches deep and 18 inches wide. He had personally experienced damage to his car attributable, at least in part, to potholes.

Cllr Nigel Bunker gave an update on the Boughton Aluph & Eastwell (BA&E) Neighbourhood Plan. There had been some delay in 2017 because the Ashford Local Plan had suffered delays due to changes in Government housing targets. Now that the Ashford Local Plan had been submitted, the BA&E Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was working hard to produce a draft Plan. Residents would be consulted and there would be a referendum towards the end of the process. It was important to get a Plan in place to avoid being at the mercy of speculative land promoters.

In reply to a question about the planning application for development at Lenacre Hall Farm, Cllr Larry Krause said that it was not on the Planning Committee’s agenda at present. Cllr Christine Drury said that some work was still in progress on this application and that for the former Sandpit, Sandyhurst Lane, so the Planning Officer would not yet be in a position to write a report for the Planning Committee.

Derek Petts said that the road surface in Sandyhurst Lane was deteriorating very quickly. Cllr Charlie Simkins said that he would reflect that back to KCC.

The Open Forum concluded at 8.10 pm.

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## **Presentation**

Following the AGM, a presentation was made by Desmond Henley, on behalf of the SLRA, to Ivor Groves (former local postman), who was shortly moving to Wye after a 36 year association with Sandyhurst Lane. He was presented with a book about Ashford, signed by the author and bearing the following dedication:

“Presented to Ivor Robert Groves on behalf of the members of Sandyhurst Lane Residents’ Association in recognition of his valued service to the Sandyhurst Lane community over the past 36 years”

## **Appeal**

An appeal was made to support the Mayor, Cllr Winston Michael, who was making a sky dive in April to raise funds to purchase a minibus for children with learning difficulties at the Wyvern School.

There followed two invited talks:

### **“Nature Conservation in Ashford” Ian Rickards, Ashford Area Warden, Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT)**

Ian said that in the past century, many species had become extinct in Kent (30 wild plants, 8 butterflies, 10 birds, 2 bats). KWT had formulated a 20 year plan to halt these losses. Ashford boasted an excellent variety of geology (chalk downs, weald clay and greensand), with a wide variety of woodland, grassland, meadows, ponds, streams, bogs and heathland. However, there had been a massive loss of heathland over the past 200 years, due to agriculture, development and neglect.

Ian spoke mainly about Hothfield Heathlands, which he spends most of his time looking after. It was now the only significant heathland left in Kent. It had been neglected in the past and used by the military in World War 2. Trees had grown, reducing the heathland and he was now working, mainly with volunteers, to restore it. Techniques included hand cutting and stump treating, preventing the influx of new seed, and grazing by cattle. There were only 53 hectares of heathland in Kent, compared with 46,000 hectares of woodland.

Amongst the wildlife which could now be found at Hothfield were green tiger beetles, minotaur beetles, grass snakes, harebells, bog pimpernels, marsh violets and carnivorous sundews. Looking to the future, the main challenge was balancing accessibility with the disturbance caused by visitors. Birds such as the nightjar were very easily frightened away.

The Chairman thanked Ian Rickards for a very interesting and informative talk.

#### **“Gliding in Kent in the 21st Century”**

#### **Mike Moulang, Chief Flying Instructor, Kent Gliding Club (KGC)**

Mike said that he had been flying since 1979. He had flown gliders all over Europe and over Mount Cook in New Zealand. The British record height gain for a glider was 34,587 ft, the longest three point turning distance 1,108 km and the fastest 500 km triangle was 121 km/h. Britain has a very successful gliding team, which won the gold medal at the 2017 world championships in Australia.

KGC had about 150 members and had been flying gliders from Challock for over 60 years. There was also a very active vintage gliding group. Flights of 300 – 500 km are regularly made, eg to Petersfield and back in 4 hours, or even to Banbury and back.

Gliders can cost up to £250,000 and are very aerodynamically efficient. Their design informs that of many modern aircraft. On board instrumentation includes computers linked to GPS navigation and moving map displays.

KGC has 30 fully trained instructors and offers a course to go solo for £1,000. The club also runs charity flights for disadvantaged young people.

The Chairman thanked Mike Moulang for his very interesting and informative talk.

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The meeting closed at 9.27 pm and was followed by informal discussions over tea/coffee.