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Reg Charity No: 265073

## NEWSLETTER SPRING 2019

### Annual General Meeting 16 May 2019

The 55th Annual General Meeting of the Topsham Society will be held in Matthews Hall, Topsham, on Thursday 16 May at 7.30pm. Doors and the bar will be open from 7pm. The formal part of the meeting will be kept as brief as possible before a short break for refreshments. The second half of the evening will follow up last year's debate on the state of shopping in Topsham. Is it improving, how are we doing? Hear what the business community has to say.

Enclosed with this Newsletter are the Agenda for 16 May 2019 Annual General Meeting, the Nomination form for new officers and members of the Committee with accompanying Notes; Minutes of last year's Annual General Meeting; interim End of Year Accounts 2018 [certified accounts will be available at the meeting], and the Chairman's Report 2018.

### Treasurer's Report & Membership for 2018-19

An interim End of Year accounts accompanies this Newsletter.

Our income is down this year, mainly because it is a "non-calendar" year but also because the reduction in the number of evening meetings has led to fewer annual members renewing their membership. On the other hand, the meetings that were held must have been more convivial, as sales of refreshments increased by 50%.

We were pleased to support the 2018 Town Charter day with a contribution towards the storyboards commemorating the fallen in World War I. We also supported the Love Topsham initiative with a contribution towards the Christmas lights.

The net result is that funds have fallen by about £400 (from £9,307 last year). While this seems a large reserve for the Society's regular commitments, the Committee considers that this is not an unreasonable sum to hold in view of the potential cost of any professional advice that we may need to take at short notice.

My thanks to Peter Betteridge, who kindly carried out a review of our 2018 Financial Statements.

As noted, membership of the Society has fallen to 338 (378 in 2017/8), of whom 111 are life members (was 111) and 227 are annual members (was 267).

Everyone for whom we have an email address on the database should now be getting regular reminders of forthcoming meetings and other notices from the Topsham Society. If not, please let know at [charlesjduthie@gmail.com](mailto:charlesjduthie@gmail.com).

## Planning Update

David Burley RIBA, Chair of the Topsham Society Planning Group, writes:

Again, the Planning Panel year has been busy and dominated by a large-scale, edge of town development, namely Towerfields.

Despite strenuous submissions by the Society, the appeal for 155 houses with a 60-bed retirement home at Towerfields (17/1148/OUT) was resoundingly lost. As previously seen with the land off Exeter Road adjacent to Topsham Rugby Club, Exeter City Council's failure to progress their 2015 site allocation policy was key. Submissions showed ECC have only 2.1 of the 5 years required housing supply, amounting to a 3,500 dwelling shortfall. At normal 30 dwellings/ha density, this would require a huge 120ha of land just to satisfy the current need. ECC concurred with the appellant that the shortfall can only be met by developing protected landscape setting land, such as the Topsham Gap, until such time as the emerging greater Exeter Plan (GESP) is in place (target 2021 but behind schedule/may not be operational until 2024).

Topsham's Councillors were contacted to urge ECC to take action to prevent the further compromising of landscape land around the city. There has been no meaningful response/action to date. Topsham Society (and the town) need to urgently consider what action could be taken to protect the town from what increasingly seems an unstoppable thrust to fill the Gap.

In amongst all of this the Planning Group has continued to monitor and where relevant make representations about other smaller applications: for one modification was successfully obtained; in the case of the Rydon House change of use application, refusal was granted and we have acted to protect facilities for local businesses.

Progress on our two vacant banks is slow. NatWest: we are still assured that a planning application for a ground level commercial use and two flats over will be submitted shortly. In the meantime the owner has carried out some welcome cosmetic improvements. With Lloyds Bank, investigations have suggested that a buyer with an unspecified intended use, has been identified but sale has been delayed due to a "defective legal title".

## 2020 Topsham Calendar

Next year's calendar is in production and should be on sale (£5) from August onwards. Thank you to everyone who supports our calendar, especially our valued sponsors.

## Guided Walks

The ever-popular guided walks start again Wednesday and Saturday afternoons at 2pm as of 1 May. Leaflets can be downloaded from our website [www.topshamsociety.uk](http://www.topshamsociety.uk) or are available from Topsham Library and Exeter Visitor Information, Dix's Field, Exeter EX1 1GF (01392 265203).