

TENBY CIVIC SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER
AUTUMN 2021

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Members are welcome to sit in on committee meetings – the next one will be on Saturday 18 December at 12 noon, at Augustus Place Community Hall (up the steps opposite the multi-storey car park).

We would very much like to hear from members and welcome contributions and comments for the newsletter at tenbycivicsociety.co.uk/get-in-touch/

ACTION PLAN

Tenby Civic Society executive committee member **Chris Osborne** looks at the vexed issue of second homes in Tenby



Over the last 18 months, parts of Wales, including Gwynedd & Pembrokeshire, have been subject to a dramatic increase in second-home ownership by people not locally resident.

This has further increased the pre-existing pressure on locals trying to find homes which they can afford. And over the last 12 months Wales has seen an overall increase of 13% in residential values, 2% more than anywhere else in the UK.

Whether the homes are held for personal occupation only, so vacant for most of the year, or holiday lets or Airbnb, so substantially unlet through the winter, the impact upon Tenby's economic and social sustainability is potentially nearing a tipping point.

Pembrokeshire County Council increased Council Tax on second homes by a 50% premium some four years ago; subject to full council approval, the council has agreed to increase the premium to 100%.

A series of recommendations to the Welsh Government has been made in a wide-reaching study by Dr Simon Brooks, *Second homes: Developing new policies in Wales* (<https://tinyurl.com/2v5kvx4a>). From the 12 recommendations, the Welsh Government has proposed to tackle the problem solely through fiscal means. We shall be drawing to its attention our disappointment that they have ignored other tools available, including:

1 Recommendation – develop regional and local variation in public policy

Second homes are primarily a regional and local phenomenon, and the Welsh Government should encourage the development of regional and local policy solutions facilitated by permitting policy variation within a national framework. Public policy solutions should be flexible enough to be applied in different ways in different counties and communities according to regional and local need.

2 Recommendation – the definition of second homes

In order to facilitate policy decisions based on objective information, a better definition of second homes is needed. The Welsh Government could consider several ways of doing this but, with this in mind, a Mandatory Licensing Scheme for Holiday Homes should be introduced.

3 Recommendation – the creation of a new use class for

short-term holiday accommodation

The Welsh Government should amend the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (Wales) Order 2016 by introducing a new use class for short-term holiday accommodation.

4 Recommendation – trialling a new use class for second homes

The Welsh Government should

conduct a trial in a community or cluster of communities severely impacted by second homes, and where there is community support for doing so, should evaluate the feasibility and impact of introducing a new use class for second homes.

This would make the conversion of a dwelling house into a second home subject to planning permission when the percentage of second homes in the housing stock of a specified community crosses a particular threshold.

Special Planning Guidance – loss of hotels

For some time the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority has included Special Planning Guidance (SPG) notes to complement its Local Development Plans to protect serviced accommodation in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. To contemplate a change to a different use, three criteria require proof:

- 1 Continuation of the property within its existing use is unviable
- 2 Demand for the existing use will continue to be met within the town/village/area
- 3 There will be no adverse effect on the appearance and intrinsic character of the surrounding resort/area/frontage

The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) has recently put out to consultation this SPG, with some minor amendments, and we have responded by supporting its adoption. We have also commented that, in the wake of the visitor economy of the last two main seasons and from economic forecasts of summers immediately ahead, the demand for hotels and guest houses in Pembrokeshire, and Tenby in particular, is such that it would prove very difficult to justify any future loss of hotel accommodation.

We are confident Visit Wales statistics will support our conclusions when its research findings for this year are released.

It would be difficult to justify any future loss of hotel accommodation in Tenby



Simon Brooks' report makes 12 recommendations on second homes



On the drawing board

The society's planning expert **Harry Gardiner** runs through some recent planning applications and gives an update on Allen's View

Several schemes have been modified to fit with our comments. We appreciate the applicants' and the planners' recognition of our views to improve the schemes and are grateful for the time and trouble this involves.

The golf club has modified the roofs proposed for a first-floor addition to the club. It will make the various rear extensions of the building fit together visually viewed from north from up on Queens Parade and Battery Gardens. **The club will also be planting trees along the northern side of the buildings to screen in the longer term,** rather as trees around Kiln Park screen all its caravans from the same viewpoint. Our involvement in the preparations to extend the Conservation Area meant that we noted this view being recorded as a major panorama from Tenby.

The ice cream shop on the junction with the Three Mariners Inn is in a simple period house with a symmetrical layout of windows and a central door and a lot of unpermitted 'temporary' (?) signs. An application included cutting a long opening for ground-floor folding doors across the two windows to the shop as well as tidying up the signage with a period-style fascia and sign. The applicant must have been aware that folding doors had been refused by the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park (PCNP) when

Fecci's wanted to change its ice cream parlour to a restaurant. The consultant's planning report failed to mention that and referred to an appeal on another shop involving folding doors. Being involved for years in Tenby's planning, we were aware that the planning case using that was faulty because that shop had already had full-width shop windows.

The application was for a house-style building without full-width retail windows that would strongly change its period character. The planners were opposed to the folding doors, but also agreed with us that a full width retail window would spoil the character of the building. As a compromise, two doors were agreed in the ground-floor windows' place, so the pattern of openings on the elevation stayed the same.

The application to change Clarice's toy shop to a restaurant and two flats opened the rear yard a bit, so one of our comments was to improve this relationship with the yard and



Recent buildings too close and high for the town walls

the inside of the town walls behind, with a door into The Parade. Modifications were made and the walls would feature strongly with outdoor dining facing on to them. A vent from the kitchen was modified to meet our comments on the noise and vibration the extractor fans create.

A new application has come in where the rear modifications are more ambitious, with modern design elements, which will be concealed by the town walls and create an even bigger and more memorable space focused on the town walls and the new rear elevation.

The rear extension is higher but set much further back than others nearby *see photo* (for example either side of Nelsons Walk and on the Coburg garage site) so will be much more discrete.

The current application for 34 flats on the old Post Office site is controversial as a large scheme. The executive committee saw the site right in the town as ideal for socially

rented housing, and as having questions about the height and bulk

('massing') proposed dominating the corner and tower of the town walls.

The design of the elevations was seen as a good replica of the many Victorian rendered buildings characteristic of Tenby.

The design also did a lot to break up the visual width of a building that would be almost as big as the rebuilt Gatehouse (but fortunately not so high).

The applicants dismissed our views in the pre-application consultation required for large applications so we re-stated the need for socially rented housing on the site (in agreement with the Town Council) and have presented more detailed comments to the planners on the height and massing as the town walls are within 50 metres.

The planners have had pre-discussions with the developers before this planning application and may have committed themselves to the size and height of the scheme – wait and see!

Details

The volume of documents and plans produced in the application to meet Assembly, Heritage and Local Plan policies is formidable and executive committee members have been happy to leave the detail of that to me and agree the main issues and some details.

The 34 dwellings proposed for a national investment company currently contrast with the two houses proposed by a local business on a car repair site on Park Road.

According to the forms the two houses go on a site half the size of the 34 – a contrast in local and national investment priorities!

Allen's View

The site has survived the quiet of Covid. In fact there was a lot of growth – some such as brambles are invasive and not

welcome. Other plantings have progressed well: some even swamp the brambles!

Due to Covid it has been more difficult to organise volunteers.

The numbers of walkers using the Coast Path and Allen's View have been higher this summer, many of them being new to Tenby or new to finding Allen's View.

Basic maintenance has been done, two ash trees with die back were cut down in the winter but were throwing lots of shoots from the stems by the summer.

The logs were stacked and part covered to see if they become suitable for firewood. However, restrictions on fires using wood seem likely to tighten a lot as they are a source of particulate pollution causing respiratory illness; diesels are not the only problem.

Three trees have been planted to replace the leylandi and pines lost in the past; two Scots pine and a western red cedar to serve as landmark trees in the future.

A few small trees have been planted as part of Anne Draper's scheme for Tenby.

Some old blackthorn need clearing and replacements planting – mountain ash are in prospect.



Repair shop A teak bench gets the treatment

Other work is needed over the quiet growth period of the winter and before birds start nesting so volunteers would be welcome, especially anyone with a 4x4 or Land Rover that can tackle the lane to carry materials up.

The picture shows an example of pre-Covid teak bench repair – three new supports to the seat slats being secured with stainless steel screws to protect the seat slats from those who love to jump on benches.

This bench also suffered kicking and airgun shots. Fortunately, those responsible have gone on to other things elsewhere.

Every few years new potential problem activities surface at Allen's View.

The bench was donated by Tenby Brownies nearly 40 years ago. Teak is a wonderful wood for outdoor furniture but, as here, sometimes needs special repairs, hopefully to serve another 40 years.

Ironically the battery on the modern technology drill has failed after two years of light use!



Missing trains

Tenby Civic Society trustee **Neil Westerman** reports back from a meeting with members of the Senedd to discuss transport issues

On 4 August I met Samuel Kurtz MS and Natasha Asghar MS, the Shadow Minister for Transport, to discuss the reduced train timetable currently operating on the Whitland to Pembroke Dock line.

Several other transport issues affecting Tenby, including local bus services, were also discussed with the Shadow Minister. Ms Asghar agreed to raise the issues discussed with the Welsh Government Transport Minister.

Following the meeting, several written questions were put to the Transport Minister. The only positive development has been the decision to reinstate the last weekday train service to Tenby from the December timetable change. The last service to Tenby from mid December will therefore be

the 8.13pm departure from Swansea arriving Tenby at 9.53pm after a change of train at Carmarthen.

Although we welcome the reinstatement of this service, the service provided is still very poor. There is, for example, a four-hour gap in services between the 3.43pm service from Swansea and the reinstated 8.13pm service. In addition, all services in both directions are currently operating only as far as Carmarthen where a change of train (and platform) is required. This significantly increases journey times.

Climate emergency

The Welsh Government has declared a climate emergency but seems unable to understand the need for significant improvements in both train service frequency

and reductions in journey times before people will leave their cars at home and travel by train.

Users group

Another development locally has been the suggestion to set up a South Pembrokeshire Transport Users Group to fight for improvements to bus and train services.

Kate Telford, a Tenby taxi driver, is leading this development and has already contacted several of the local community councils in the area to seek their support.

If you would be interested in helping please let Neil Westerman know.

Tenby Civic Society will continue to fight for improvements to public transport in the Tenby area.