

TENBY CIVIC SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

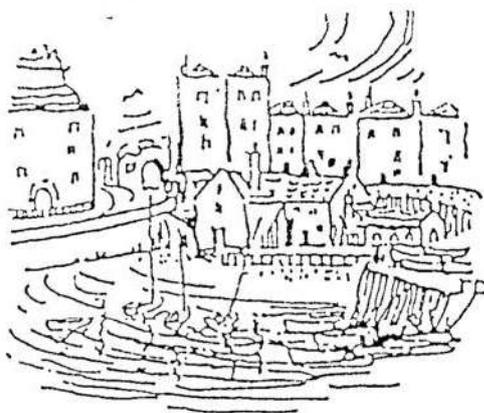
SPRING 2023

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Members are welcome to sit in on committee meetings – for details see tenbycivicsociety.co.uk – and to consider joining the committee

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

Cut and cut again

Neil Westerman on the challenges facing public services in Tenby

The executive committee of Tenby Civic Society is concerned about the withdrawal of public facilities and services in Tenby, in particular the following:

Public toilets

There are proposals to close public toilets located at Upper Frog Street and North Beach. We note that the toilets listed are the only free public toilets in Tenby. The permanent closure of toilets on the North Beach may result in the permanent loss of Blue Flag status for that beach.

Library services

Further reductions in library opening hours are proposed. The library is already closed on Wednesdays and Saturday afternoon. The proposal is to reduce services by another day.

Litter bins

Several litter bins around the town have been removed – for example, the junction of the Glebe and Narberth Road and the bin at the bottom of Warren Street near the Railway station.

Flower beds

Tenby has an excellent record in the Wales in Bloom contest. We are unlikely to win in the future if the changes introduced to the Rotary Gardens alongside St Catherine's Terrace are an example of future plans. What is the purpose of the crowd-control type scaffolding introduced into the garden?

Separately these cuts may not appear to be such a big deal but when taken together they add up to significant cuts in the services provided by the council. The cuts affect both locals and visitors.

Our concern is that these cuts are just the beginning. With inflation running at over 10% per year these cuts will almost inevitably be followed by more cuts next year and the year after.

In five to ten years' time facilities and services in the town may be very limited. Tenby Civic Society believes now is the time to make a stand and object to these cuts.



Benches/seating

The number of benches around the town has been reduced. For example The Croft (junction with the Norton) had two benches and now has only one.

Bus services

Reduction in bus services (withdrawal of service 352 Tenby to Kilgetty). Reducing bus services risks social isolation and does nothing to help the climate change emergency the country is facing.

The society has written to Tenby Town Council objecting to the cuts and asking what are the councillors doing to maintain the current level of services.

We suggested that the council should work with Pembrokeshire County Council to maintain services and it should consider working with other town and community councils in Pembrokeshire to oppose any further cuts.

Getting around

Local transport issues – the good news, the bad news

Bus services

In Pembrokeshire cuts seem to be the order of the day.

Service 352 Tenby to Kilgetty (Ryelands Lane) ceased to operate at the end of April 2023.

Service 351 Tenby to Amroth and Pendine now calls additionally at Ryelands Lane.

In Carmarthenshire by contrast significant investment is being made in bus services. For example, a new fleet of electric buses is now operating on service T1 between Carmarthen and Aberystwyth. The local 'Pembrokeshire Coastal Bus Services' timetable is not being produced this year. However, all Pembrokeshire bus timetables can be viewed on the Pembrokeshire County Council website. Finally, the open-top double-decker bus service between Tenby and Saundersfoot is back for the summer. This service provides the only service on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Transport For Wales train services

The summer timetable starts on 21 May. This summer sees the return of through trains to and from London Paddington direct to Tenby and Pembroke Dock (summer Saturdays only). The new timetable also sees the introduction of through services from Carmarthen to London Paddington operated by GWR (approximately every two hours).

Our vice-chairman, Neil Westerman, also chairs the monthly meetings of SPRAG (South Pembrokeshire Rail Action Group) held at Pembroke. The group was set up a year ago to campaign for improved public transport in south Pembrokeshire. During the last year active lobbying of politicians has garnered support for an hourly service on the Tenby and Pembroke Dock line. Sadly, the service provided by Transport for

Wales during the past year has been well below that expected. Transport Focus, the UK's independent watchdog for passengers and road users has recently written to Jan Chaudhry-van der Velde, chief operations officer, Transport for Wales Rail Ltd, seeking an action plan with timescales to restore service performance and reliability for passengers. Transport Focus states: 'Rail users responding to our recent survey put Transport for Wales in joint bottom place for overall satisfaction, alongside TransPennine Express; and in the bottom few for all other categories, including punctuality, reliability, crowding and information during the journey.' (*David Sidebottom, Transport Focus 20 April 2023*)

SPRAG will continue to campaign for improvements in rail services in south Pembrokeshire.



ACCORDING TO PLAN

Harry Gardiner reports on planning matters

I have reviewed planning applications as they come in and summarised them in emails to members of our executive committee adding suggested comments to the planners. I send comments in, modified to fit executive members' views sent to me. We agreed to concentrate on major applications and those in the newly Extended Conservation Area.

Issues that arise are generally questions of

- Impact on the amenity of adjoining residents
- Whether changes to listed buildings suit or improve them
- Whether changes to buildings in the Extended Conservation Area fit or improve its character
- Whether residential proposals include non-holiday provision
- Whether changes to hotels will maintain or reduce the variety of accommodation provision.

Most applications are already in line with Pembrokeshire Coast National Park (PCNP) policies, so often our comments point out detailed problems.

The large Bryn Hir housing proposal approved in outline is going through further design / consideration by Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) and its consultants. Finance estimates and some technical road access and drainage details seem still to be resolved. We are anxious for

the majority of houses to be for social rent to local residents to make up the deficiency caused by the switch of too many properties to holiday-lets, in Tenby. The scheme could be in trouble as PCC needs to submit a huge range of detailed matters before 29 September 2023 (see condition 1 on the permission: '1. Any application for approval of the reserved matters shall be made to the local planning authority not later than three years from the date of this permission' (29 September 2020).

Recent revised plans show several differences but lack the detail required by these permission conditions. These plans have not been submitted to the Planners.

Similarly PCNP is engaged in negotiations with the developers of the Post Office site over some of the flats being for social rent, and to resolve the issue of the Welsh Assembly having made a new planning law so that new residential holiday lets have to be given specific permission. We would have thought the planners could impose a condition saying holiday lets are not given permission. Neither the PCNP planners nor Cadw, the Welsh government's historic environment service, saw a conflict of a five-storey building opposite the corner of the Town Walls. The lack of recognised

public access up on to the Town Walls at the rear of the De Valence Pavilion was a negative. **Does Tenby really know what it's got?**

Reports are that some flats may be holiday lets and only a handful will be affordable rented, but a permission has not been granted yet in May.

A retrospective application for Sergeant's Lane was approved with conditions as to hours of use.

We wanted the stables by the lane to be given special protection and featuring, and as much as possible of the old roof beams to be retained. We also pointed out that residents had complained about noise from the unpermitted use and the lack of proposals for waste bin storage locations. The planners passed matters as to disabled access past the tables and chairs in the lane to the County Council. Conditions protected the listed features and required any new roof be replaced in the same design and materials, the roofing to be slate instead of the present mixture of materials. The existing stable features are to be preserved as they are listed.

We were concerned **about digital interactive signs for the De Valence Pavilion** breaking the 'no illuminated signs' rule for the town centre, so suggested a check on the light emitted – a condition requiring data on light

was set on the permission. We pointed out that **air conditioning units proposed by Greggs bakery for the former Shoezone could be an amenity nuisance to nearby residents of flats** so permission has a condition requiring satisfactory data on sound levels. We questioned whether Greggs' ground floor would mainly be retail, but the Use Class Order seems very flexible – designed to help business, not preserve retail?

For a proposal for CCTV cameras we suggested some **limited tree planting in the Rectory Car Park**, but like the lack of any replacement trees for those lost along the Town Walls nothing has been done. No landscaping has yet been agreed for the Five Arches car park.

We **welcomed a sympathetic updating of the very well preserved 9 Crackwell Street** but suggested a careful think about new ways sash windows can be double glazed.

Award for 'Old style' refit of the frontage of 10 High Street – Now Millets.

Numbers 9 and 10 High Street had their shop fronts refitted in the 1960s/70s in rough faced granite slice tiles and marble-style fascia (sign) panels (see 2015 photo below). They were very durable materials, popular then, but creating a 'heavy' ground floor shopfront style not matching the quite well preserved Victorian elevations above.

These premises went through a succession of occupants each with bold fascia signs which we felt did not match the character

Warehouse Outlet's dominant signage lasted until it shut



Millet's old-style refit is in line for an award



of the Conservation Area. (Subways' sign was refused permission but was never removed until the shop shut!) The Warehouse Outlet's over-dominant signage only lasted until it shut (see top picture). New Look next door changed its signage twice before it too shut. In 2021 an application was submitted to return the shop frontage of 10 High Street to a Victorian style and to alter the interior including adding flat accommodation into the roof area including some dormer windows across the full width of the roof.

Our comments to the Planners welcomed the Victorian style shop frontage detail, but were concerned that full-width

dormers would break up the pitched roof character of the street. We suggested that the small dormers at the back and full width at the front be swapped. To the credit of the planners, the agent, and the applicant, this was accepted and the approved revisions were approved and constructed, as in the picture above.

At its first meeting for some time, in May 2023, the Executive Committee agreed to make an award for the Victorian style restoration at No 10 (the building in green above).

The award may be extended to include No 9 as well (on the right in the picture), by the same architect and owner, which preceded No 10's application. 🌀

A mixed year for Allen's View

Harry Gardiner on the trials and triumphs at the clifftop site

Twenty twenty-two was a very mixed year for Allen's View. While a lot of work was completed in the site, ten incidents of fire and or damage had to be reported to the police, with no progress in preventing them between January and the end of August. We badly miss our Police Station and Sergeant of old who knew who was up to what!

Work done

Summer overgrowth was reduced around the blackthorn whips planted in the hedge to the Coast Path.

These are slow growing so easily swamped by summer's rapid growing ivy, ferns, brambles, pink campion and weeds. (By 2023 the blackthorn have mostly added more growth and will be high enough to do well from 2024.)

Richard Reed from Trewayne Farm (who is one of the trustees for the site registered with the Land Commission) reported the capability to clear ground scrub and remove the old blackthorn collapsing in the site, so the Executive Committee discussed and decided to have collapsed blackthorn moved and stacked to encourage invertebrates, and difficult scrub areas cleared ready for planting of evergreen bushes suitable for conditions on the site. It was agreed to spend £150 donated on the evergreen bushes. Following clearance by Richard Reed and his colleague, committee volunteers did the planting and watered the bushes during the dry weather that followed and all plants took well.

A group of volunteers arranged by liaison with a coordinator from Pembrokeshire Coast National

Park carried out the sanding and re-painting of the 1977 Brownies teak bench (reinforced and repaired in previous years) and also righted a water collection tub damaged by vandals. They also put three secure new slate steps into the southern entrance from the Coast Path.

The problems listed below needed regular bouts of returning benches to their best locations. Three of the four owl carvings on the site were pulled up but put right by Richard Reed, providing manpower and materials to discreetly concrete them back in place. One owl has never been found so we only have three on the site now. One hundred bluebell bulbs and 30 Tenby daffodils were planted in the late winter, their cost sponsored by a Society member.

Volunteers at work (from left):

Trefoil Guild ladies plant an oak, repairing water collector, installing new entrance steps



Benches remain vulnerable to damage and were often moved to wrong places

were held in several locations on the site. Usually benches were moved to locations around the fire. Wood materials from the site (there is understandably a good supply!) were burnt, including from two wood stacks covered with tarpaulins so that the logs would dry out, also wood from the demolished shed, a plank from a picnic table and some fencing to protect planting. Some fires were started by opening the bottom litter bins and taking site record papers, or even bringing cardboard up to the site from outside the Gas Lane Pharmacy. One fire was so large, a whole wood stack of logs was burnt and a tree quite badly scorched (it has recovered).



Tarpaulins have been removed and later were

Some tasks remain to be done.....

Removing the shed remains, making a more robust water collector for the two water storage barrels, possibly making a clearing in to the north-east corner slope for some native apple trees to be planted; planting or transplanting into three other areas cleared of scrub (extra volunteer time is especially needed for that).

Fire and damage

Fires have happened occasionally over the years, usually by wild campers who don't do other damage and leave the site tidy, **but the post-Covid year of 2022 has seen a dozen incidents of fires, often with damage, on a regular pattern indicating local culprits**, during evenings usually around weekends. Ten reports were sent in to the police of separate incidents but no action has established the culprits. Fires

used to make a den by nailing them to trees and then later stolen. A water butt was uprooted, and then the water butts were filled with breeze blocks (stored where the shed had been) and with logs from a wood stack. One of the wooden owls had its head cracked, so it had to be screwed back together and cracks filled. Fortunately the nightmare ceased in September. Some problems have recommenced in 2023 and were reported to police.

Some of the problems.....

A seat plank was broken off and burnt, benches were moved to wrong places, a den was made from wood and tarpaulins torn from firewood stacks

A Police and fire team from Haverfordwest came and discussed this at the site, but could only act if damage to property occurred. Without identifying the culprits, neither they nor the Tenby officers appeared to be able to take any action to prevent



Tarpaulins were removed, used to make a den, then later stolen

further problems. Any patrols have not done so. We have been advised several times not to approach a group with a fire (if we could happen to be there on the evening it occurs!). If we managed to instal CCTV (not at all easy) we would have to instal CCTV monitoring

notices for any CCTV evidence to be legal.

Maintaining and monitoring a CCTV device would be quite time consuming, when we have fewer volunteers each year. Several of the Executive Committee members have been ill in 2022 and 2023, limiting what we can achieve.

The Executive Committee discussed these fire and damage issues and decided in the summer that those benches that were not securely fixed to the ground were moved again and/or damaged, they would be removed from the site and stored safely. To return them would require doing work to fix them very permanently (and quite expensively) to the ground. The teak benches cost about £1,000 each to replace. Other cheaper wooden benches simply do not last as long (five to ten years, not the 50+ years for teak – the Brownies bench is 45 years old) and our insurance only provides for replacement if the benches are burnt!

The latest fire was in the main litter bin and destroyed all the site maintenance items kept in the bottom half of the bin. The bin itself of galvanised steel survived well – just as well, as a replacement in galvanised steel would cost over £700. The item destroyed would cost £60 new.



Annual subscriptions

Dear Members writes *Treasurer Albie Smosarski*, it's that time of year again when subs are due. At the last AGM it was agreed to raise membership costs, due to the escalating prices in paper, postage, etc. Therefore, the subs due are as follows

Individual and Family Membership with an email address £12.50

Individual and Family Membership without an email address £15

Cooperative Membership £30

Life Membership £100

Cheques payable to Tenby Civic Society and posted to Cofion, Bridge Street, Tenby, Pembrokeshire SA70 7BU

Paying through your bank account :

Tenby Civic Society

NatWest Bank

Sort Code 55-61-35

Account number 04903595

The committee values your support and hopes that you will continue to support the work that is continually being carried out by the society.