

Alley Association Steering Group
Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 2nd August at Rock House.

1. Attendees:

John Bownas, Love Hastings
Sarah Smart, Hastings Library (SS)
Sam Kinch, Heart of Hastings CLT (SK)
Margaret Sheehy, MSL (MS)
John Brunton, White Rock Neighbourhood Ventures
Lisa Finch, Project Art Works (LF)
John Hibberd, Hastings Urban Design Group
Ken Davis, Hastings Urban Design Group (KD)
Kristy Burn, Hastings Library (KB)
John Harper, Freeholder, Caves
Penny Pepper, Tenant & Hastings Access to Venues & Events (PP)
Bob Thust, Practical Governance (BT) (Chair)
Kimberley Ryder, Practical Governance (Admin)

2. Apologies:

Jess Steele, White Rock Neighbourhood Ventures

3. Minutes of the last meeting, including actions arising:

These were approved.

It was noted that in the last meeting it was agreed to set up a bank account and consider becoming a legal entity – two people still need to agree to be signatories for the bank account which had yet to be done.

BT will follow up on this.

The group agreed that the bank account & legal entity would strengthen the associations case when applying for funding.

BT to follow up with potential to become a legal entity, most probably a CIC – to then be discussed in light of creating greater diversity of representation within the steering group as per item 4 below.

LF gave an update on 12 Claremont. They together with Heart of Hastings CLT are the current approved bidder with a meeting arranged for 15th August to finalise legalities. A heritage lottery entry has now been submitted. The group congratulated LF on the progress so far. SK raised the issue of a press release and when to publicise ownership of 12 Claremont; it was agreed with the group to share news with the alley group prior to any public notifications being released.

BT to include in cover note to minutes when distributed to the network.

4. Wider representation on the Steering Group:

The group discussed how it might consider widening the representation on the Steering Group in line with the constitution to ensure broader engagement and direct involvement on decision making with the entire community including for e.g. America Ground businesses. This is to ensure the Alley Association works for the whole community and does not create factions in the local area. If the Alley Association is to become a legal entity with membership, for example this would need to be factored in carefully from the start.

MS has previously leafleted businesses and neighbourhood re the alley. The clean-up in September caused a great deal of goodwill. Suggests continuing a positive dialogue with all neighbours to demonstrate how the group has a positive impact on the alley.

SK will continue conversations with businesses and tenants and feed back.

BT suggested all group members re-read the constitution and feedback any comments on possible changes to aid further inclusion.

KD noted that the top side neighbours (Prospect Place) may be impacted by tree growth, removal and drainage but it was acknowledged that they have been kept informed of discussions and progress.

BT agreed to directly approach the America Group, with support from John Bownas as a first step to discuss where we are and how to ensure engagement / collaboration.

All to feedback any thoughts on rereading the constitution for discussion at the next meeting as to how it might reform.

SK to continue conversations with the tenants and business, and consider options for wider consultation / leaflet dropping as plans develop, including those living in Prospect Place.

5. Addressing challenges to the spirit of the constitution:

The group discussed how to encourage behaviour in line with the spirit of the constitution and ensure any jointly agreed protocols e.g. maintenance, rights of access, sharing event info are adhered to over the long-term.

KD suggested once demonstrable progress starts happening in the alley in terms of clean-up, any improvements and usage this will encourage greater responsibility across all tenants and business collectively.

Points to consider-

1. Do we raise any issues formally as an association?
2. Is it for the association to write to individuals or approach in person?

The group discussed parked vehicles blocking access to and through the alley. SK agreed to meet individuals in person to seek a resolution to this and then feedback to steering group for discussion at the next meeting.

Reading events MS noted the level of trust towards event organisers to “do the right thing” and questioned what powers the group has to ensure they respect the alleyway from careless intent. Suggests letting businesses and neighbours know in advance of any events and if the group supports any events to hold back a portion of that support until post event.

John Bownas suggested poster boards in the street. Anything endorsed by the Alley Association could have the logo on to help differentiate between supported and non-supported events.

SK suggested using the public notice board at the America ground.

John Brunton to manage upcoming events and ensure any support provided is partially held back until after the event to encourage e.g. clean up.

BT to ensure upcoming events (see item 7 below) are on the website and included in the cover note when the minutes are circulated. BT also to liaise with John Brunton and John Bownas re: potential to arrange posters to promote upcoming events

6. Capital works:

John Hibberd and Ken Davis provided an update on options for capital works and likely costs for consideration and recommendations. It was agreed that any recommendations or proposals would be drafted in some detail and agreed by the group before being taken out to the Alley Association email list and to wider face to face consultation across business and tenants to ensure everyone was on board with those proposals.

BT to work with John Brunton to develop these more detailed recommendations and begin the consultation process as soon as they are sufficiently progressed for meaningful discussion.

The following areas were discussed in detail-

- A. **The Gate:** upon advice from several firms KD noted that it would be uneconomical to convert the gate to electric gates and a new gate would be the most sensible option. If the group wanted to consider moving the gate, now would be the time to do so. BT suggested the conversation of moving the gate would need to be revisited. The group clarified that the purpose of the gate would be to stop all access if needed. A self-closing, fob gate with push button to leave would be required. However, this would only be closed when other businesses or events are not running e.g. at night after all businesses have shut operations. John Bownas raised the issue of a maintenance budget for the gate. John Harper explained that the existing gates are 6/7 years old and were financed by the local council and police. Planning permission would be needed to replace them. John Bownas noted that it might be possible to apply to the council and police to contribute to the change/upgrade of gates, since the gates are used for the safety of the area.

BT agreed to speak to John Whittington on this issue to see if any council funds can be secured and to progress further quotes and designs.

BT agreed to bring a discussion to the next meeting regarding the Alley Associations thoughts on:

- a. Who would need gate jobs*
- b. A maintenance budget for the gate*

- B. **Pest Control:** the group noted the comprehensive report commissioned last year. Proposal covered all areas but John Hibberd suggested putting this out to tender to get one final confirmed cost. It was noted that the presence of a falcon may help in addition to the proposals in the original report. John Brunton noted that the boarding up of windows in the Observer building has been completed.

John Bownas offered to follow up with the falconer

BT agreed to ask the original pest control team to complete a fuller quote and proposal for carrying out the initial work they had suggested.

- C. **Tree/ cliff maintenance:** BT has spoken to the council and got the contacts of companies that could help. The current idea would be to cut the trees down to the base and remove vegetation, protecting the integrity of the cliff but removing hiding places for pests and removing the risk of collapse from the weight of trees and vegetation.

BT agreed to get a company to come in to quote on this work. This would be an annual cost.

- D. **Surfacing:** John Hibberd ran through ideas for surfacing. It was agreed that we would be considering tarmac surfacing across most areas of the alley, with some areas being sufficient to repair what currently exists and potentially resin bonded material for the main event space towards the back of the alley. This was agreed subject to final confirmation of quote and drainage costs.

BT to seek out more formal quotes for surfacing and drainage options before wider consultation.

- E. **Drain survey:** KD remarked that there are plenty of drains but they need unblocking. This could be done quickly. Will be able to sketch a plan for gullies and channel drains once we have heavy rainfall (currently unable to track the flow of water due to dry weather).

JH to provide an update on drainage at the next meeting.

- F. **Canopies:** At the last meeting it was agreed that canopies at the opening of the alley will not be looked at further at this stage. The group discussed canopies to the rear of the alley which John Hibberd remarked had not yet been costed due to no design proposal

KD shared an image illustrating covered area and noted that attaching to a building would be a cheaper option vs freestanding structures. KD to get some budget figures for the next meeting

KD shared a sketch of how the alley could look, including a staging area, tables and chairs. This visualisation was met with enthusiasm by the group.

John Bownas suggested “planning for real” i.e. putting chairs and tables outside and encouraging people to use the alleyway for lunch for example.

BT to put this on the agenda for the next meeting once more detailed quotes and proposals for other key areas had been secured.

The group agreed a consensus on priorities for capital works being pigeons / pests control, surfacing and the gate.

MS noted that rubbish comes out of shops, conversations with them are required rather than landowners. A refuse area is needed if the pest control is going to work along with other recommendations. John Hibberd suggested using a cave as a bin/refuse area could be a solution.

BT offered to speak to SK about moving bins and consider options for a bin storage areas

MS shared information regarding the Land Fill Communities Fund –a last step lender, who may give up to £75,000 towards projects. The alley have not previously qualified due to no shared ownership agreement and not having a bank account. Group agreed to re-visit this.

BT to look at the current funding timetables for the LF Communities Fund and see if that may be applicable to our current plans in time for the next meeting.

7. Events

MS gave an overview of the September events proposals. These were events proposed via an online form. The events proposed needed be low impact events, relevant to the area, leaving no negative impact on the space or neighbours, held on a Saturday in September, during daylight to mitigate risk. 3 proposals fell through due to lack of funding-the group discussed the 4 remaining proposals and MS to circulate the details after the meeting. A low level of funding was requested by some of the events (money has been set aside for this purpose).

Kristy noted problems from previous alley events, particularly moving of the library's rubbish and dumping into a neighbouring property-the group had sympathy for this situation and understood the need for coordination between various alley groups prior to holding events.

The Steering Group agreed they are all happy to fund these events, as long as some funding is kept back until after the event to encourage clean-up for example.

It was noted that from here management of the existing events and website / promotion will be carried out by John Brunton and any future call out or management of events will need to be discussed and determined by the Steering Group at future meetings.

It was noted that on un-adopted land an individual could apply to be premises licence holder giving them a right to control use of the land.

John Bownas agreed to talk to Bob Brown (licencing manager) regarding a permanent premises license holder for the Alley. It was noted that there would need to be a consensus between all landlords/ freeholders across the Alley for this to work.

8. AOB

Margaret Sheehy, John Hibberd and Ken Davis were all thanked for their contributions and work so far.

John Bownas shared information regarding the Great British High Street awards.

Penny Pepper shared details of her organisation HAVE (Hastings Access to Venues and Events) which collaborates with venues in Hastings to improve accessibility and encourage an open dialogue in more “awkward” buildings where accessibility challenges are harder to solve. The group thanked her for her contribution and will include HAVE in any future discussions, particularly re: access to the alley and surfacing arrangements.

9. Date of the Next Meeting

BT agreed to arrange another meeting for approximately 8 weeks' time