

Alley Association Steering Group

Minutes of meeting 18 June 2018

1. Attendees:

Kevin Reynolds, Pixie Curls
Kristy Byrne, Hastings Library
Sam Kinch, Heart of Hastings CLT
John Harper, Freeholder, Caves
Jess Steele (JS), White Rock Neighbourhood Ventures
John Brunton (JB), White Rock Neighbourhood Ventures
Margaret Sheehy, MSL
Bob Thust, Practical Governance (chair and admin)
John Hibberd, Hastings Urban Design Group (guest)
John Whittington, East Sussex County Council (guest)

2. Apologies:

Lisa Finch, Project Artworks

3. Vision for the alley

A short discussion was had regarding the group's long-term vision for the Alley. It was agreed that at its heart is was about the Alley becoming an increasingly well-used and well-loved community asset for the people of Hastings. This might include activities such as:

- Community events, e.g. arts and culture, performance, etc.
- Commercial enterprise, e.g. markets, drink, food
- Private events, e.g. weddings
- Casual use, e.g. to have lunch, meet friends, enjoy a coffee

It was also agreed that in order for this vision to be realised over the long-term there were some important conditions that needed to be met on an ongoing basis, for example:

- To keep the Alley clean, safe, free of pests and supplied with suitable amenities (water, power, covering, etc.) without losing its current character i.e. without 'sanitising' the feel of the space
- To manage the use of the space to ensure activities and events respected the rights, lives and businesses of those attending and living locally e.g. limit type and number of events, noise and smells, impact on existing businesses and buildings, try to ensure no further residential development, etc.
- To keep the Alley safe e.g. through security gate but without restricting the rights of access, putting people off or creating a fire escape risk

- To create footfall through the Alley e.g. a 'circuit' through one of the Claremont buildings, create some further shop frontage, etc.

Fulfilling all these conditions will require ongoing stakeholder communication as well as some form of ongoing income streams. As per the agreed constitution, those income streams would not be in the form of any compulsory charges to local residents, freeholders and business owners. Potential income streams might include:

- Supply of waste / rubbish collection or rubbish storage spaces
- Ticket sales for limited private events
- Contributions from those putting on events / setting up market stalls, etc.
- Grant funds to support community activity

It was agreed that the Alley Association would continue to revise this vision and objectives on consultation with the wider stakeholders who take an interest in the Alley.

4. Funding and budget

BT provided an update on the Coastal Communities Fund and how it might be able to support the work of the Alley Association. It was noted that the Alley Association would have £50,000 made available for any agreed capital works, alongside a £10,000 revenue budget starting from the date of this meeting.

It was acknowledged that whilst this would help get many activities off the ground it was unlikely to be sufficient for some of the plans the group had discussed to date, so additional fundraising in the short and long-term is likely to be required.

Action: BT to maintain a budget to be shared at every meeting so the Steering Group can make decisions on how to allocate funding.

Action: BT to raise future funding sources as an item for the agenda of the next meeting.

5. Updates on potential capital spend options

JH from Hastings Urban Design Group (HUDG) presented progress made to date in scoping out potential options for capital spending in the Alley. Updates as follows:

Surveys: A full topographical survey of the Alley had been undertaken. The results will be shared with the Steering Group in advance of the next meeting. From the results of this survey it was also agreed to commission a Drainage Survey, ideally also to be presented to the Steering Group at the next meeting.

Resurfacing and canopy: HUDG are still looking to get estimates for simple tarmac based resurfacing and drainage and/or some kind of canopy covering across the first part of the Alley and at the back where it opens out into a large space. HUDG aren't able to do this until the surveys have been completed.

Security Gate: HUDG are still researching possible costings for retaining the gate at the same location as currently, together with adding fob access in, open access out and automatic closing functionality.

Pest control: JH said he had contacted the company that did a recent bat survey for the Observer building and it confirmed there are likely to be bats in the Alley. As such electronic forms of pest control do not seem viable. Instead JH is looking into falconry alongside the wider waste control needs to help control this problem. JH will continue to explore options. The general challenge of managing waste was discussed and it was agreed that ideas for how the group might work with tenants and residents of the Alley to improve this would be raised as part of future stakeholder consultation (see item 8 below). JW noted that there may be some small grants available to support such work in the future.

Electricity and water supply: HUDG will provide some rough budgets for supplying basic water and electricity along the length of the Alley via a separately metered supply from Rock House for the next Steering Group meeting.

Fixing points for events: BT had spoken to a local events company who advised that we consider potential fixing points, etc. in response to the specific needs of any users in the future, rather than attempt at this early stage to cover a multitude of possible uses. It was agreed to revisit this at a later date once we had a clearer idea of potential needs.

It was agreed that BT would liaise with JH to make as much progress on these actions as possible in advance of the next Steering Group meeting so ideally the Steering Group would be a position to make some initial recommendations for wider consultation / agreement with business owners, tenants and freeholders.

Action: BT to send JH previous pest control survey commissioned by Rock House

Action: JH with support from BT to progress quotes across all the above areas for consideration at the next Steering Group meeting.

Action: BT to check back in with JW re: small grants after the next Steering Group meeting.

6. Communications and events

MS presented an update on branding and website content for the Alley Association. These were all enthusiastically approved with some minor amendments noted by MS.

MS also shared the draft events protocol and process for supporting events in the Alley including the draft application form. It was noted that the process was designed to support the vision and also protect the rights of local businesses and tenants, as well as protect the members of the Alley Association from any liability. Whilst a relatively straightforward process it included for example a risk assessment, request for relevant insurance (the group would require event holders to have their own insurance), event licences, health & safety considerations, noise levels, etc.

It was noted that whilst the Alley Association would be keen to support activity and get all events logged and promoted through the website to ensure high standards and ensure no clashes, etc. the group does not have any legal right to stop others using the space as it is unadopted land. Individual freeholders and business could object but only on certain grounds e.g. access. To protect from any liability of members of the Alley Association the group could, however withdraw its support for an event. The events protocol and process were all approved.

MS shared a draft postcard she had used for a previous event and it was agreed something similar to promote the work of the Alley Association in general would be useful and that MS should draft something for consideration by the Steering Group.

Promoting the work of the Alley Association, including what the group's role is (i.e. an informal group of legal owners, tenants, neighbours and other interested individuals that exists to enhance The Alley and ensure it remains for the benefit of everyone who lives in Hastings) and highlighting the Alley as a possible events space with support from the Alley Association was something all were keen to get on with.

It was agreed that the group would do this as soon as the website was ready through informal networks, personal and organisation emails and social media, direct discussion with local stakeholders and through the stakeholder distribution list. The target was to have a small programme of events throughout the summer and into late September in the first instance.

MS noted that some proposals had already come through informally and she would share them with the group offline for comments and approval to support.

Action: MS to finalise website

Action: MS to draft leaflet for approval

Action: MS to share any early event proposals for approval to support

Action: All to promote the Alley Association website and process for events across their networks via email and social media, etc. once the website is ready

7. Legal Entity and bank account

The pros and cons of creating a separate legal entity for the Alley Association and/or having a separate bank account were presented by BT. It was agreed that in the long-term some form of separate, community-led and not for profit legal entity would make sense in order to limit the liability of individual members, signal broad community leadership formally and create the opportunity to raise additional funding in future. However, exactly what form and at what time was something people needed more time to consider having digested the paper presented.

It was agreed that setting up a bank account as an unincorporated association would be a good next step, however and this may allow the group to fundraise for certain activity e.g., through Awards for All.

Action: BT to progress setting up a bank account

Action: BT to share pros and cons paper with Steering Group members

Action: All to feedback any thoughts on becoming a legal entity and whether they would be willing to be a signatory to the bank account

8. Minutes of the last meeting

These were approved. It was noted that all significant matters arising had been dealt with except for stakeholder engagement. SK confirmed he would be leading engagement with local residents and business owners over the next 4- 6 weeks, covering a range of matters of relevance to Hearts of Hastings CLT. From the perspective of the Alley Association it was agreed that these conversations ought to seek input and feedback on:

- Vision for the alley
- Potential summer events programme
- Potential capital spend options
- Pest control
- Waste and rubbish collection

They ought also to help people better understand the role of the Alley Association and understand how involved they might like to be e.g. added to distribution list, contribute to the Steering Group, etc.

Action: SF with support from other members of the Alley Association to undertake stakeholder engagement activity between now and the next meeting and feed that back to the Steering Group

Action: All to feed into BT the names and contact details of any new stakeholders who take an interest in the Alley so we can keep the central stakeholder contact list up to date.

9. Any other business

- SF updated the group on their proposal with Hearts of Hastings to purchase 12 Claremont – this is still in process with a decisions expected imminently
- KB noted that she had heard nothing further from UK Power Networks about recent proposal to reposition cables but agreed to follow-up again after the sale of 2 Claremont was confirmed

10. Date of the next meeting

TBC