

Heritage Hut meeting between EDPC members and representatives of RHT

Wednesday 06 January 2016 7pm

Present:

Cllr Tony Pullon (Chair of EDPC); Cllr Richard Helliwell; Cllr Nina Crouchman (also Chair of RCRC); Cllr Nelly Randall; Philip Marlow-Mann (RHT Cttee member); Michael Effemey (Chair of RHT); Shirley Ricketts (RHT Cttee member); Keith Phillips (RHT Trustee); Nicki Matthews (Clerk, EDPC)

With the agreement of all present, Cllr Helliwell chaired the meeting, which opened at 7pm.

A suggested agenda had been circulated by PMM, and was used to direct discussion. PMM explained that the RHT requested this meeting for the purpose of understanding the position of EDPC and the implications of that position on any decision they take regarding the future of the hut. They want to get an idea of how the council might respond to various options and ideas. It was noted that this is a discussion meeting only, and that the councillors present do not have the ability to speak on behalf of the council or make any decisions for the council. Any proposals as a result of this meeting will need to be presented to the full council for consideration.

1 Update on RHT position and a rationale behind this approach:

Following the RHT's formal decision not to go forward with the permanent centre project, the RHT Committee have discussed what should happen to the existing hut. It is felt that the hut is a valuable resource for the community, but that the RHT would no longer wish to run it as they are no longer working to fundraise for a permanent centre. Therefore, there is a need to decide what will happen to it, and the RHT's wish is to try and preserve it as an asset for the village.

2 Clarification of options:

a) Remove hut and reinstate ground

The existing planning permission for the hut expires in March. If there is no extension to this, and no new application is made for a hut on the site, the RHT's agreed licence from EDPC states that they must remove the hut and reinstate the ground. The RHT have the funding and commitment to do this, but if the village would want the hut to be retained and planning permission to keep it could be obtained, it would be a shame to remove it.

b) Retain hut as a village community asset

The existing permission states that the hut is to be used for fundraising purposes and also to provide space for small exhibitions. It is likely therefore that any planning application would need to be for a new proposed use, rather than an extension of the existing permission. Cllr Mike Lilley has spoken with Sue Jackson (CBC Planning Team) to find out whether it is likely that planning permission could be obtained for a hut or small building on the site, if the Village Plan indicated that there was support for one. Sue Jackson was receptive to this idea.

3 Overview of possible options if hut is to be retained

There are a number of organisations in the village who might want to make use of the hut if it was retained as a community asset. However, there would need to be a lead organisation, group or committee to manage it and co-ordinate usage. The RHT have suggested the EDPC may be the most appropriate body to do this.

The Heritage site was registered with the Land Registry by EDPC to be used for a Heritage Centre and if that did not come to fruition as public open space. To meet the heritage requirement, any building on the site will need to provide wall space for exhibitions at a minimum. The RHT would be prepared to enter into an agreement to provide exhibitions to meet that requirement.

The Village Plan consultation should help to identify whether there is support in the village for the hut or another small building on the site, and this will inform a long term decision on what should happen on the site. It may be that

a joint community venture could be taken forward at that time (see item 5). However, the existing planning permission expires in March and a short term solution is required, or the hut will need to be removed.

The Rowhedge Coastal Rowing Club (RCRC) have offered to take over management and operation of the hut in the short term (1-2 years) if planning permission could be obtained to keep it on site and operate it in its current format. They would operate the tearoom, and the RHT could provide heritage exhibitions for display. Any funds raised would be retained by the RCRC.

All present were very supportive of this proposal, and offered thanks to the RCRC for coming forward in this way, and to the RHT for their generous offer. It was agreed that this proposal be taken to council for consideration. It was noted that a lease or licence agreement would need to be put in place between EDPC and RCRC if this came to fruition, and it would be a short term agreement only, pending the outcome of the Village Plan.

4 Implications arising from options identified above

Although EDPC own the land on which it is sited, the RHT own the hut structure itself and would like to retain it for possible use offsite as an archive storage facility in the future when it is no longer required on site (e.g. if the land became open space or it was replaced by an alternative building). If the proposal above was accepted, the RHT could enter into an agreement with the RCRC for use of the hut, or EDPC could lease the hut from the RHT for a nominal sum and then have a single agreement with the RCRC for use of the land and hut. Those present also discussed the option for EDPC to purchase the hut from the RHT with an agreement to sell it back when it is no longer required. It was agreed that this option would need to be considered by both the RHT Committee and the Parish Council, and there may be issues relating to disposal of assets by a charity that need to be considered.

It was noted that it may be sensible for the RCRC to apply for 3 years of planning permission, even if the intention is to run the hut for 1-2 years in this way, simply to avoid time pressure issues in the future. The RHT are happy to offer support to the RCRC with the application, given their experience in this area.

If the RCRC were to take over management of the hut, the RHT would need to agree and arrange transfer of utilities, insurances etc.

It was noted that the RCRC are not a registered charity, but they have a constitution which follows British Rowing (national organisation).

5 EDPC support / involvement in establishing hut as a community asset

The Village Plan consultation should identify what the community want in terms of a building on the site, and this should inform long term decision making. The council cannot predetermine what that outcome will be, or therefore how this might be managed in the future. The covenant on the land will also impact on the nature of any community asset on the site.

It was noted that there is a significant sum of money (£50,000) which will be made available to the develop community facilities in the village in the future as part of the wharf development. At present this money is earmarked for improvements to the village hall, and has been targeted specifically to develop facilities for the pre-school. However, if funds can be raised for that project in another way, before the wharf development funding is released, then it is possible that some of the development funds could be put towards other community facilities. This could include a permanent building on the hut site if it was identified that the village are in support of this.

The RHT were asked if they would be prepared to contribute the funds that they currently hold towards a longer term facility on the site if that was what the community identified was wanted, e.g. a small one-storey building with toilets and space for heritage exhibitions. The RHT representatives present noted that this would need to be considered by the RHT Committee, and some of the funds currently held (approx £36,000) may need to be returned to their donors if they were donations made specifically for the centre which is now not going to be built. However, the RHT's charitable objectives are clear, and if a project which would meet those aims was proposed the trustees would be duty bound to consider the use of available funds to achieve that, and it would enable those who have had long term involvement with the RHT to see the fruition of their hard work.

6 Issues concerning removal of hut and re-use of land if not retained as a community asset

To be discussed at a later date if the proposal for the RCRC to take on management of the hut is not accepted by EDPC and/or planning permission cannot be obtained.

7 Next steps / actions resulting

- NM to produce notes from this meeting, which will be circulated to all present asap and made available to the public.
- The RHT Committee will meet on Monday 11 January, and will discuss the outcomes of this meeting, specifically the options regarding ownership of the hut structure including the possible sale of the hut to EDPC with the option to re-purchase at a later date. RHT to feed back the result of their discussion to NM prior to the council meeting on 14 January.
- East Donyland Parish Council meet on Thursday 14 January, and will consider the following proposals:
 - i) To support the RCRC in applying for planning permission (up to 3 years), to retain the heritage hut on site and manage it in its current format for a period of 2 years.
 - ii) The long term future of the site to be determined by the Parish Council once the outcomes of the Village Plan consultation are available for consideration, taking into account the use detailed in the Land Registry definition.
 - iii) To consider temporary or permanent transfer of ownership of the heritage hut structure to EDPC, subject to agreement from RHT.

There was general agreement that it was a productive and positive meeting, and that the proposal being taken forward represents an exciting opportunity for the village to take a fresh approach to what had become a very contentious issue. Concerns were raised regarding who sets the agenda for the way forward, and the need to ensure that pressure is not unduly applied to any party to act in a certain way because of a vocal minority. It was noted that both the RHT and EDPC had faced criticism for their handling of the project and the council has been subject to considerable scrutiny. As a result, EDPC have improved their working practices, and put in place policies and procedures to ensure that they are able to demonstrate at all times that they have followed lawful and correct procedure. It is hoped that having addressed these issues and established the parish council as body of integrity, that both existing councillors and new candidates will feel more confident and encouraged to stand at the parish council elections in May this year.

All those present agreed that the village now has a great opportunity to move forward in a really positive way, and hopefully to encourage a wide range of people to engage with the community via the hut in its proposed new incarnation.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm.