

SOUTHWOLD AND REYDON SOCIETY MAGAZINE ARTICLE JANUARY 2017

What is happening to protect the future of Southwold Harbour?

In Spring 2015, a joint meeting of Southwold Town Council and Waveney District Council took a major decision to secure the future of Southwold Harbour and its associated lands (which include the Caravan Site). They agreed to set up a Harbour Trust and transfer the management of the Harbour and the Harbour Lands to this Trust which would be free to keep the income generated to maintain and improve the facilities. This work was to be overseen, from May 2015, by a Joint Committee of the two councils. All the key stakeholders supported this decision. However, the Joint Committee has met formally only once. It agreed to appoint a Project Manager, who took up post in July 2016 and, we understand, reports monthly to informal meetings of the Joint Committee which are not publicly minuted. It appears he has not yet started work on establishing the Trust.

So the question arises: what **is** happening? As residents, we remain in the dark and can see nothing being done to address the many challenges faced by the Harbour. These include significant work at the Caravan site to meet Health and Safety requirements, major work on the Training Arm (the south pier) of the Harbour and the need to include the harbour in plans to maintain and raise the walls of the Blyth Estuary from 2019 when the Environment Agency will cease to fund or undertake these works. Without this last action, the whole harbour is at risk since unrepaired breaches in the estuary walls will increase the quantity of water in the estuary and further increase the pace of the tidal flows in and out of the harbour. Potentially, all could be dragged into the sea in a tidal surge leaving Southwold as an island. This may sound alarmist but it is a prospect clearly evidenced by the work of the Blyth Estuary Group.

We can think of nothing more fundamental to the amenity of Southwold and Reydon than the harbour and estuary. Yet those charged with planning for the future of these assets seem reluctant to tell us how they are going to deliver what, in 2015, seemed the first steps in a universally agreed plan.

We call on the Joint Committee to start meeting regularly in public and to work transparently with key stakeholders so we can see – and, crucially, support - plans to meet the challenges ahead. Doing so will require the goodwill, effort and ingenuity of the whole community.

Save Our Southwold (SOS)

Better news has reached us from the campaign to secure the former Southwold Hospital building as a community asset. SOS have raised sufficient funds to pay for a detailed feasibility study on the potential and economic viability of acquiring the property for mixed uses, such a bigger local library and facilities for small enterprises. SOS have identified a community-minded developer as a potential partner. They will establish a Community Benefit Society to issue shares to fund the purchase of the site which will come onto the market in February or March. The feasibility will be completed soon and a public event will be held in early February to keep us all informed. If you want further updates from SOS, send your contact details to laurencevulliamy@gmail.com

Housing

More good news comes with confirmation that work on two new affordable housing developments will start during 2017: at Duncan's Yard in Southwold and Green Lane in Reydon. Orbit Housing who will develop the Reydon scheme will be holding a public information and consultation event at Reydon Village Hall from 3-7pm on Wednesday 15th February.

Philip O'Hear, Secretary.