

## **Social Activity:**

The programme of social activity for this year is now available, grateful to the events sub committee for putting it together. it comprises

- Holker Hall Garden Festival in June,
- a visit to Marton Mere nature reserve and the Solaris Centre in Blackpool in August, and
- a luncheon at Courtfield in November.

Details on the leaflet, which will be posted to members shortly, copies here tonight. Bring your friends along. They don't have to be members to come on the visits, but if they like our company they may wish to join us.

## **Lottery Bid:**

On your behalf I attended a meeting with Mr Norris, Mr Bell and Councillor Mrs Pagett representing the Council on 26 April. Mr Sumner also attended representing the St Annes Chamber of Trade.

You will remember that the Council planned to invite as a representative from each of 21 groups to hear their plans for the lottery, and to ask them to give their support to the scheme.

A vision or concept plan was provided, though this does not have enough information to enable us to arrive at properly informed decisions. I asked for further information to be provided and Mr Norris is looking into this.

Subject to receipt of that information, and at the request of Mr Norris, I said I believed SOAG would be prepared to comment on the merits and demerits of the proposals irrespective of our disagreement with the issue of how they should be funded.

It will be difficult to deal with the detailed consideration needed in full committee meetings, so to make progress, I believe we should have a technical sub-committee, able to meet quite quickly and consider the plan and the costings in some detail. (The aim here being to report views and a recommendation back to the Executive Committee for the May meeting, prior to SOAG's response to the Council). In particular, I would like that group to be able to co-opt technical expertise of non-committee members - such as Mr Barnes - for at least some of the meetings assuming he is willing to help.

I therefore ask for the approval of this meeting to form a Technical Sub-committee to investigate the Council's proposals and costings with a view to making a recommendation to the 23 May meeting if this timescale is possible.

Since volunteers make the best conscripts, can I ask if there is anyone interested in being part of that group to see me after the meeting.

## **Planning Application:**

We attended the meeting and sought a deferral of the landscaping/reserved matters planning permission based on:

- inadequate access for construction and subsequent maintenance,
- inadequate security arrangements,
- technical errors on the plan,
- encroachment over the development boundary,
- the improper closure of the public right of way, and
- the fact that our request for listing the Institute, the Plaza and Akeds has not yet been determined.

I have to say the performance of our team was brilliant. They did us proud. Kath for the ladies bowling club, and Audrey and Jon for SOAG gave a slick presentation that was focused, well researched, detailed and cogent. They were a credit to the group.

After our presentation, John Hayfield of Newfield Jones exercised his right to speak, and said that because of concerns about the right of way, they have prepared an amendment to the plan that moves the building 2 to 3 metres away from the gardens, and he was going to submit the amendment to officers at the closure of the planning meeting. This news was evidently a surprise to officers and Councillors who were clearly unprepared for it.

Councillor John Bennett moved that they defer the decision on the application until the amended plans were before them. There seemed quite some support for this until the Chief Planning Officer said they had to determine the landscaping application that was before them. The move to defer was defeated 7 votes to 4.

Then Councillor Walton tried to propose the original landscape application but with authority being delegated to the Chief Planning Officer to approve amendments for railings along the Gardens edge of the footpath to give for extra security for residents, and for the building to be moved.

The Planning Officer said they didn't want railings there anyway, and they couldn't agree to moving the building because it was only the landscaping they were considering, and the position of the building was already fixed by the outline permission that had been granted. He advised that Councillor Walton should withdraw the amendment, which he did.

The officers then went into a huddle for a few minutes to decide what to do next. Having petulantly boxed off the option to defer or amend the plan, they did the only thing left, which was to approve the plan as submitted, in the full

knowledge that it will not be implemented, because the developer is about to submit a request to change the position of the building and thus re-work the landscaping.

This amendment could work in our favour as it opens the door to considering the whole layout of the scheme, and not just the landscaping. I suspect Mr Hayfield knows it could take between 1 an 2 years to resolve the issue of the right of way - there could be a local enquiry into it - and he can't afford to wait that long to start the building work. We owe a considerable debt of gratitude to Kath Bloch for suggesting we look into the right of way issue.

There was a report in the Gazette last night, and I have a few photocopies if anyone would like one. The reporting is not entirely accurate, but it did raise the profile again.

If there are questions about the planning meeting, or if Jon or Audrey or Kath would like to comment, I would be happy to extend to take that discussion.

That concludes the Chairman's Report