



THE CHEPSTOW SOCIETY

NOTES OF THE MEETING ON CIVIC AND AMENITY ISSUES, HELD VIA ZOOM ON 2nd JUNE 2021

Present: Chepstow Society: Geoff Sumner (Society Chair; for item 1),
Simon Maddison (Civic & Amenity Officer}, Keith James (Vice-Chair),
Guy Hamilton (Secretary), and about 20 other members of the Society
Elected local authority members including Cllrs. Alan Braund, Caroline Duchet,
Alan Horne, Paul Pavia (CTC); Chris McFarling (Glos CC / Forest of Dean DC);
Chris Wall (Tidenham PC)
Local authority officers: Mark Hand, Paul Keeble (MCC)

Apologies were received from Cllr. Jez Becker (MCC/CTC), Lucy Allen (CTC Town Clerk),
Tim Melville (Transition Chepstow)

1. Geoff Sumner welcomed everyone, and apologised that he would need to leave the meeting early. Simon Maddison, as the Society's civic and amenity officer, would take the chair for this and subsequent meetings.
2. The High Street and town centre
 - Mark Hand, the lead MCC officer on the current changes to the High Street, supported by Paul Keeble, stated that the scheme was intended as a temporary trial scheme to make the area better suited to pedestrians in the pandemic, and had been supported by Wales Government funding. All necessary safety audits had been and would continue to be carried out. Discussions would take place from mid-June with the town council and chamber of commerce, and there would be public consultation before any decisions on making the scheme permanent, or changing it, were made. There was currently no specific timeframe for this, and the temporary road closure arrangements could be extended into 2022 if necessary.
 - Points raised in discussion included:
 - Poor and confusing signage, both at the start of the scheme, and continuing. In particular, it was felt that signs directing people to the town centre via Station Road were now inappropriate and needed to be changed; and that drivers turning off the A48 had no adequate warning that they were entering a pedestrian-priority zone.
 - The removal of the pelican crossing was considered to be dangerous – pedestrians now felt they had to wait for all traffic to pass.
 - The alignment and standard of the planters was felt to be below expectations, and there were concerns over the excessive speed of cyclists coming downhill into the High Street.
 - There had been no consideration given to the partial pedestrianisation of the High Street, for example for part of the day, or making it one way.
 - There had been insufficient consideration of the knock-on effects of the changes, particularly on Moor Street and the A48 junction, and the need to avoid complete gridlock of the town when there were problems on the A48.
 - Mark Hand felt that some of these had been addressed, and others would be considered further.

3. Transport and planning studies

- Mark Hand stated that the Chepstow Transport Study (WELTAG), looking at changes needed to the road and transport systems at a more strategic level, including the scope for a bypass, links to the M48, and improvements to High Beech roundabout, was expected to report shortly.
- The SE Wales Transport Commission (Burns Commission) would be reporting soon on ways to avoid congestion on the M4 following cancellation of the relief road
- Consultations would also be taking place over the summer (possibly from early July to mid August) on the next stage of the Monmouthshire Replacement local plan (RLDP).
- In discussion, concerns were expressed over the fact that consultations on different sets of proposals would be taking place at similar times over the summer. There seemed to be a lack of integration, which would lead to confusion, and undertaking consultation over the summer would result in low levels of public engagement. Mark Hand explained that many of the deadlines were to meet Wales Government targets.
- Cllr McFarling emphasised that members on the Forest of Dean side were keen to engage with those on the Monmouthshire side, and were acutely aware of the issues of congestion in and around Chepstow. Mark Hand welcomed this.

4. Future Chepstow place plan

- Cllr Duchet indicated that arrangements for the place plan were on track, and several of those present said that they had been involved in the focus groups held in recent weeks.
- Several issues were raised in discussion, including:
 - The need for some regeneration work in the Bulwark shopping area, and uncertainties over the future use of the Severn Bridge Club site.
 - Concerns over the Wales Coast Path – the need to require it to continue as part of the “Brunel Quarter” (Fairfield Mabey shipyard site) development; the poor state of the path around the Beaufort quarry; and options between Thornwell and Mathern via the sea wall.

5. Future of St Mary’s Church

Simon Maddison noted that a meeting to discuss St Mary’s Church’s concerns over future funding, and uncertainties over the church’s future, would take place on 10th June.

6. Next meeting

It was agreed that these Zoom sessions were useful and should continue. The next meeting would be on Wednesday 1st September, at 7 pm.