



# The Lymington Voice

*The Newsletter of the Lymington Society Spring 2008*

Published by the Lymington Society. Hon. Sec. Dr I Johnston, The Chantry, Hollywood Lane, SO41 9ND

## Huge Turnout for New Ferries Public Meeting



The Panel: Peter Griffin, Andrew Willson, Don Mackenzie, Geoff Holmes and Marc Malanaphy in front of a large and very concerned group of Lymington residents

Once again the Lymington Society brought a major issue to the public in a meeting last November 1st.

Although it initially did not attract much controversy, the proposal by Wightlink to introduce new ferries on the Lymington Yarmouth route came to dominate local news in autumn last year, as evidenced by continuing editorial coverage and by the sheer numbers of letters written to the local papers.

In its role as a watchdog on local affairs in the town, the society decided to organise a Public Meeting which was held on the first of November 2007 in the new Fuller MacLennan Hall at the Lymington Community Centre.

In the event the meeting attracted wide media attention with interviews on local television and radio and with a camera crew from BBC South today attending and filming the meeting.

On the evening of the meeting, almost 30 people were queuing outside almost an hour before the meeting started to ensure a good seat and they were very wise as he was standing room only for many people. The strength of feeling amongst local people was shown by the audience of an estimated 300 to 350 people who packed the room and stood outside listening through the open doors.

Following an introduction by Chairman Clive Sutton, the

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main Society presentation of the evening was given by Dr Don Mackenzie, who gave a well-received PowerPoint presentation on the main issues and the efforts that the Society had made to alert local authorities to the danger that these ferries might pose to the environment and other river users. It is no exaggeration to say that there were gasps of amazement from many in the audience when the sheer size of the new ferries was shown in side by side pictures of both vessels. Dr Mackenzie

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## Chairman's Note



**Society Chairman**  
**Clive Sutton**

Dear Members,

You are probably aware from the press that your committee have been pretty active since the last newsletter. When that newsletter went to press I had hardly heard of the Lymington ferries issue. Since then I have sometimes felt that the Lymington River and its ferries run through our committee meetings. When I first heard of the ferry issue I felt it was possibly an issue too far for the Society.

However as the letters of frustration and complaints of lack of information in the letters page of the Lymington Times reached a crescendo, and as the first publicised meeting about the ferries between the yacht club and the ferry company was reported as being in private with no press report being available, I felt the time had come for the Society to ensure that its members and the public were able to discuss the issues in an open

way.

That decision led to the third of our successful public meetings in which we well and truly christened the new community centre hall with what I presume was its first large public meeting. I was pleased to see so many members there as well as interested parties from all sides of the spectrum. The feedback from nearly all parties was that the meeting

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## Planning Report

Since our last report in the Summer 2007 Newsletter, the Committee has continued its policy of making critical appraisals of Planning Applications in the Borough and, where considered appropriate, writing letters of objection to NFDC Development Control.

While our efforts have had some success, the major developers appear to be fighting a war of attrition. For example, if a project is refused at first, the developer either resubmits amended proposals or takes the case to Appeal. We are particularly concerned at the targeting by developers of older detached properties in Southampton Road, Avenue Road, Waterford Lane, Belmore Lane and other similar areas.

Examples of our recent activity are as follows:

### **WATERFORD CLOSE**

Following refusal by NFDC for the development of 10 houses and again for nine houses, the developer resubmitted

three separate plans for different parts of the site. The current status is that permission has been granted for two houses but refused for four and five respectively.

### **46,46a,48 SOUTHAMPTON ROAD & 1 AVENUE ROAD**

The original application for 53 assisted living flats was rejected and refused on appeal. The developer has now resubmitted a revised plan for 42 assisted living flats. We have again written to oppose the scheme.

### **LAND, 117-123 SOUTHAMPTON ROAD**

The same developer has submitted an application for a three storey block of 29 sheltered flats. We are supporting the Council's objection to the proposal.

### **33 BELMORE LANE AND 17 FAIRFIELD CLOSE**

Applications for four houses and one infill were opposed and subsequently refused permission by NFDC Development Control. The Committee was greatly assisted in these two cases by Jonathan Hutchinson, who has

subsequently been co-opted onto the Committee.

### **1 BINGHAM DRIVE**

Terrace of three houses and one detached cottage. This was opposed and subsequently refused by Development Control.

### **LAND AT NAVARINO COURT, HIGH STREET**

A proposal to build a block of two flats in a restricted plot behind Caffè Nero was opposed and subsequently refused.

### **LAND REAR OF CANNON COURT, HIGH STREET**

A two storey block of offices was similarly opposed and refused.

### **CALLAURA AND GREENLANDS, NORTH GREENLANDS**

Demolition of existing detached properties and construction of two terraces of three houses. We supported the Council's objection and the development has been refused.



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## Planning Report contd

### PINETOPS, 67-69 RAMLEY ROAD

An application was made for the demolition of the existing horticultural glasshouses & associated buildings and the building of 80 dwellings on designated green belt land.

The committee has been actively consulted on this proposal. The original plans were withdrawn and consultation is continuing.

### WEBB'S SITE, BRIDGE ROAD

The appeal by Paxton Holdings to replace the proposed Hotel with a Care Home was successful. NFDC had to pay costs of £30000. Largely as a result of this failure, NFDC have appointed a new lawyer specialising in Planning Appeals. The site has subsequently been bought by Redrow Homes, a national developer. Contact has already been made with the new owners of the site and a constructive dialogue is continuing.

### NFDC CORE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The NFDC published a 97 page consultation document in October 2007 entitled "Preferred Options" for development strategy over the next twenty years.

With significant assistance from the Pennington Residents Association, the Committee responded to this consultation.

The South East Plan requirement for housing 2006-2026 for the whole of New Forest District including the National Park amounts to 4138 dwellings of which 980 relate to Lymington.. This does not appear to be a demanding total and could easily be achieved by land already with permission or allocated for development. Unfortunately however, this figure is a minimum and without determined effort to curb the insatiable appetite of developers is likely to be exceeded.

### Is Someone Listening at Last?

Recently, an application by a developer to replace a single house on the east side of Belmore Lane by four densely-packed houses met strong resistance from local

residents. Rejection of the application was supported by the Town Council after a well-supported verbal presentation of nearby residents' concerns, and the application was subsequently refused by the NFDC's planners. An application to build in the garden of another house in nearby Fairfield Close was opposed on similar grounds and was also refused. Since then, an application to renew permission to build in a garden on the west side of Belmore Lane has also been refused. In all these cases, the Council's officers cited unacceptable density as a reason for refusal. It does seem that Government planning policy has moved a little away from the need to pack as many houses as possible into what were once pleasant gardens and open spaces, and towards ensuring that development is in keeping with the surrounding area. The fact that local residents spoke up undoubtedly helped, too. If we want to preserve the essential nature of our town, we do need to be ready and willing to say so whenever we feel that it is being threatened.

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## **The Old Cannon Street School - Losing a Building in a Conservation Area**

The press likes to dub the Lymington Society the Town's planning watchdog. This is to give our members, and any other interested parties, a report of the Society's capacity as a watchdog into why a Victorian school in a prominent position in a Conservation Area, with the protections that go with a Conservation Area designation, has now been demolished and is in the process of being replaced by 16 units of affordable housing.

Many of you are aware that the Lymington Society objected to the planning decision and the proposed demolition by way of an application for a judicial review of the decision.

When the application was made the Society's Committee members were not aware of the full facts and in the course of the dialogue with the Council, through a meeting with legal representatives, the Council produced notes of the relevant Council meeting minutes.

In short the outcome appears to be that the application to demolish the old school building was originally turned down at the time of the first development proposal but passed at the second development proposal a year later on the basis that at the first application of the demolition had been accepted in principle.

Having got this far and established this much, the Society was not financially able to progress the judicial review to a full hearing with the risk of potential costs. The judicial review application was withdrawn on terms that the Society contributed £1500 towards the Council's costs. Having established the position through the exchanges in the judicial review application and the Old School having been demolished, no significant benefit could have been achieved by continuing with the court application.

The Council Officers felt it was appropriate to claim part of their costs from the Society. The Society having regretted the Council's costs demand, has complied with it and is now able to report on the background to the demolition to its members.

There was originally a wish by Hampshire County Council, the last owners of the Old School, to find another community use for it. A report some years ago described the value of the building, and the Conservation Area Plan described the value of the views from Cannon Street across to the river to Walhampton. The building had been

intended by the Hampshire County Council to be used as a Register Office.

The planning history goes back to October 2005 when responses were being made to an application by Swaythling Housing Society Ltd, to which the Hampshire Council was selling the site, for the erection of one block of 18 flats and a pair of semi-detached houses with associated parking and landscaping and demolition of the existing building. Demolition of a building in a Conservation Area requires a specific requirement for permission and specific consideration of its demolition.

The relevant policies as to demolition in a Conservation Area state:

**"Policy DW -- E 24. Demolition in Conservation Areas. Conservation Area consent will not be given for the demolition of unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. Where consent is given, this will be subject to prior or concurrent permission for the redevelopment and/or restoration of the site and buildings, and an agreed programme for the work."**

Policy DW E 23 gives policies for new development in Conservation Areas. The applicants had to put in a separate application for the demolition of the school. The main application for building 18 units was objected to by the Lymington and Pennington Town Council citing the loss of the views and citing policy DW -- E 24 of the local plan which states

**"the school building although unlisted makes a valuable contribution to the character of this part of the town and its historic past should enable it to be protected from demolition and be available for community use"**

There were 25 letters of objection from local residents and an objection from the Lymington Society. The Hampshire County Council Estates Officer in support said the approval would provide much-needed affordable housing in the local area.

The NFDC Planning Officers recommended the grant of permission on the basis that the benefits of providing much-needed affordable housing would outweigh the harm arising from the loss of the existing community/office use and the loss of the potential to put this site to

an alternative commercial use. A planning officer's report to Planning Councillors, went on to say

**"as such, the proposal would result in considerable benefits by making significant provision towards the areas affordable housing needs. On balance it is felt that the social and community benefits of providing much-needed affordable housing would in this instance outweigh the adverse impact of losing an existing community and office use"**

At the subsequent Planning Committee meeting on the 14th of December 2005 the Councillors of the Planning Committee considered that the scale and massing of the proposed buildings were unacceptable and would have a detrimental impact on the neighbouring area. Accordingly the application was refused. The demolition of the building was not considered in that application but was considered in a supplemental application to which the Lymington and Pennington Town Council again objected and in respect of which there were nine letters of objection from local residents.

On this occasion the NFDC Planning Officer recommended refusal of application for demolition on the following grounds


**"The building it is proposed to demolish is a typical Victorian school building which lies in a prominent location at the corner of Cannon Street. The building is relatively attractive and traditional and it makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Lymington Conservation Area"**

It went on to say that because of the previous refusal there was no approved alternative scheme and the reasons for refusal were stated as:

**"The building it is proposed to demolish contributes positively towards the character and appearance of the Lymington Conservation Area. In the absence of an appropriate development scheme the proposal would result in the unjustified loss of the existing building, to the detriment of the character and appearance of the Lymington Conservation Area. As such the proposal would be contrary to Policy DW -- E 24 of the New Forest District Local Plan First Alteration"**

There matters lay until the submission of

**Continued on page 9, Col. 1**



**This 4 page centre section may be detached and brought to the AGM**

# **Annual General Meeting**

**Notice is hereby given that  
the AGM of the Lymington Society  
will be held on**

***Wednesday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 7.30 p.m. at***

***The Community Centre***

***New Street, Lymington.***

***Refreshments will be served from 7.00 pm***

***Members and their Guests are invited to attend***

## **Agenda**

### **Annual General Meeting**

**2<sup>nd</sup> April 2008**


- ♦ Welcome to the Mayor, Councillor Pauline Ellsworth, and representatives of the Pennington Residents Association.
- ♦ Apologies.
- ♦ Minutes of the AGM 21.03.07
- ♦ Treasurer's Report.
- ♦ Social Secretary's Report
- ♦ Chairman's Report.
- ♦ Motion: The Annual Subscription of the Society be increased to £10.
- ♦ Nominations for election of Chairman, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer and Officers of the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee of 2007 consisted of:

Peter Chitty (President), Clive Sutton (Chairman), Derek Sheffer (Treasurer), Ivor Johnston (Secretary), Nick King (Planning Secretary), Donald Mackenzie (Press Spokesman), Nigel Seth-Smith (Social Secretary), Rose Tainsh & Jonathan Hutchinson (co-opted).

- ♦ Any Other Business including Matters of Interest raised by the Members or the Committee
  - ⇒ Ongoing major issues in the town with a short discussion of up to half an hour
- ♦ Address by Joanna Close-Brooks, Archaeologist.

**Buckland Rings** Lymington's Iron Age Fort.





# Society Finances

## Balance Sheet

As at 31 December 2007 (unaudited)

ASSETS	2007	2006
Nationwide Building Society	3033.05	6410.29
Lloyds TSB Current Account	366.68	(180.89)
	<b>3399</b>	<b>6229</b>
<b>CAPITAL AND RESERVES</b>		
General Funds as at 1 Jan 2006		<b>7482</b>
General Funds as at 1 Jan 2007	<b>6229</b>	
Less Transfer from Reserve	<b>(3500)</b>	-
Less Deficit for the Year 2006	-	<b>(1253)</b>
Add Surplus for the Year 2007	<b>670</b>	
	<b>3399</b>	<b>6229</b>

Derek A Sheffer Honorary Treasurer 5<sup>th</sup> February 2008

## Income and Expenditure Account

For the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007 (unaudited)

INCOME	2007	2006
Subscriptions	2140	1777
Donations	150	70
Interest: Nationwide	123	105
Surplus on Social Events	414	-
Transfer from Reserve	3500	-
	<b>6327</b>	<b>1952</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Advertising	801	1174
Meeting Expenses/Room Hire	270	170
Hon. Secretary's Expenses	84	125
Legal Fees and Expenses	3406	-
Printing/ Newsletters	581	1119
Subscription/Affiliation Fees	65	25
Deficit on Social Events	-	118
Donations	100	474
Purchase of Bell Tower	350	-
	<b>5657</b>	<b>3205</b>

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## Recent Social Programme Events

### Summer Garden Party



THANK YOU ROBIN AND  
GEORGINA

Last year's party at East Grove, the home of Sir Robin and Lady Georgina Craufurd, was a resounding success, enjoyed by more than 70 members. The sun smiled on us, and the food and drink, organised by Yvonne Mackenzie, was a delightful ingredient of the evening. Lady Georgina explained the history of the garden, and conducted tours for interested members

### New Forest Art



*Beaulieu Road, 1900*  
*Frederick Golden Short*

A major exhibition of art inspired by the New Forest over the last 200 years. The exhibition looked at how artists have attempted to capture the Forest's many moods across the changing seasons

The Exhibition at the St Barbe Museum was shown to members by Steve Marshall, the museum's curator.

As ever, Steve's introductory talk and guide to the exhibition was informative and entertaining.

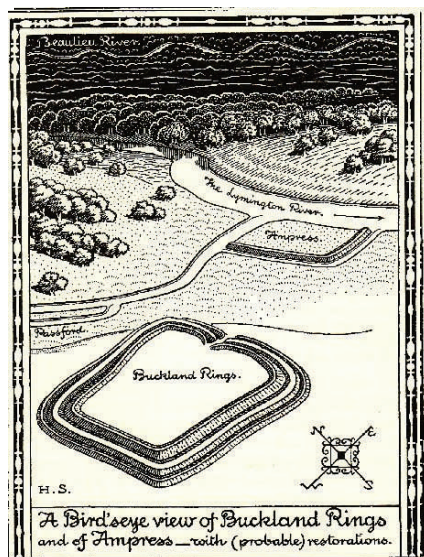
### Green Marine



Green Marine's Geoff Stock gave a fascinating talk to over 50 members at the Stanwell House on Nov 8th. No amount of intricate detail into the making of high tech boats was enough for his audience, who peppered his talk with questions. Now we know what it takes to make boats that are lightweight and immensely strong, and why they cost so much! Geoff included pictures of several construction techniques, and the reasons for choosing a particular technique for a particular boat. Now we know exactly how to specify our next £15M yacht!

## Upcoming Events for your Diary

**Annual General Meeting**  
**Lymington Community Centre**  
**April 2 2008 at 7.30pm**



Following the main business of the meeting, the Speaker will be Joanna Close-Brooks, talking about Buckland Rings, our own local Iron Age hill fort, followed by:

**Buckland Rings Picnic**  
**Sunday May 11 2008**

Bring your own picnic and join fellow Members for a Spring-Time trip to this much overlooked ancient monument, situated right on our doorstep; and perhaps feel at one with our ancient ancestors.

Meet at 12:30 at Buckland Manor and we will walk to Buckland Rings

**For Details on how to obtain  
Tickets for these Events**

**Contact:**

**The Social Secretary**  
**Nigel Seth-Smith**  
**on 01590 678210**

**nigel@gennum.co.uk or**

**21 Waterford Lane, Lymington.**  
**S041 3PT**

**Or Purchase direct from Solent  
House Dental Surgery, Cannon  
Street, Lymington. 01590 672986**

**Summer Garden Party**  
**Buckland Manor - Sway Road**  
**June the 5th 2008 at 6.00pm**



Following two very successful Summer Garden Parties at East Grove, next year's Party is an "at home" with Lymington Society Chairman Clive Sutton and his wife Jenny at Buckland Manor; one of the oldest and most historic houses in Lymington.

**For Latest Dates and Times**  
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**We sometimes have to change dates or  
venues for our events. Please check  
the website before coming.**



## The Old Cannon Street School (contd from page 4)

two further applications by the Swaythling Housing Society a year later in the autumn of 2006, firstly for development comprising 16 flats in three blocks and secondly for demolition of the school building. In respect of the development, council consultees, including the Policy Design and Information Department and the Housing Development Manager supported the application, as did the applicant, the Swaythling Housing Society citing the need for much-needed requirements for affordable mixed tenure homes in Lymington for younger people unable to access open market housing.

The Lymington Society objected on the basis of there being no proper attempt to reuse the existing building which contributes positively to the Conservation Area. There were 26 letters of objection from local residents. Significantly it was stated in the assessment to the Councillors by the Planning Officers that

"permission was only refused to the earlier scheme because of the harm caused by the replacement scheme and not because the principle of redevelopment was considered unacceptable. As such the principle of demolishing the existing building *has already been accepted (my italics)* and it would be inappropriate to raise this as an objection now. Whilst the existing building has some merit, it is not of such importance to the Conservation Area that this demolition could not be accepted".

Readers might feel this is somewhat inconsistent with the reasons for refusal of demolition given above. In addition the minutes of the relevant planning committee meeting indicate that Planning Councillors were clearly of a mind to refuse the original application in spite of the Planning Officers recommendation they did not need to address the question of demolition of the old school.

The recommendation in respect of the application for demolition recited the Town Councils second recommendation to refuse demolition on the basis of

"unacceptable demolition of a valuable and historic school building which is important to the character and appearance of the conservation area and the demolition was not justified by the proposed replacement scheme that the demolition was country's local plan policies and that the building should be marketed for alternative uses.

By this stage there were 45 letters of objection from local residents as opposed to one letter of support, with the Lymington Society stating in its objection that the demolition was contrary to policy and that no attempt had been made to reuse the building despite its positive contribution to the conservation area, and that there had been no active marketing of the existing building. The active marketing of the building for an alternative use was one of the guidelines as to the interpretation of the policy relating to demolition of a building in a conservation area.

In their assessment the Planning Officers stated

"the building it is proposed to demolish is a typical Victorian school building which lies in a prominent location on the corner of Cannon Street. The building is relatively attractive and traditional and it makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Lymington conservation area

Whilst the building does contribute positively to the conservation area it is not considered to be so important to the character and appearance of the conservation area that is demolition would be harmful, provided an appropriate replacement scheme has first been secured.

Concerns have been raised about the adequacy of efforts to retain the existing building in use including a realistic marketing exercise. It is accepted that there has been no evidence produced to show that the existing building has been marketed for alternative uses. It is also accepted that this is a material consideration in determining this application. However, it is only one consideration, and in this case, it is not considered to be an overriding consideration given the particular merits of the proposed building, the quality of the replacement scheme and the benefits to the community which would arise."

It has been subsequently accepted in the Society's dialogue with the NFDC that the provision of social housing does not in itself act as a reason for the demolition of the building in a Conservation Area.

At the subsequent Development Control Committee meeting on the 13th of December 2006 Dr Donald Mackenzie spoke on behalf of the Lymington Society. The Committee proposed to deal firstly with the application for development and then with the

application for demolition on the basis that the application for demolition would only have relevance if a suitable scheme was proposed.

We have subsequently been provided with a full note of the discussion at the meeting and one of the statements made by the Chief Planning Officer was

"last time round [the committee] did not conclude retention of the building was essential and grounds to refuse".

The implication of that reflected the statement in the recommendation that the previous decision to refuse development was not on the basis of an objection to demolition but on the basis of an objection to the development proposed.

The statements made by the Councillors in the notes of the meeting indicate clear concern by many of them as to the recommendation to grant permission to demolish the building, which they were being asked to follow. The Society takes the view that a statement that the principle of demolition had previously been approved and effectively closing down any further discussion of the merits of the school building was unfortunate. The recommendation for the development was passed by 11 votes to 7

The application for demolition followed immediately with little further discussion apart from an objection by Dr Mackenzie on the basis of the fact that the building did make a positive contribution to the conservation area and that the Hampshire County Council had earlier said in its report that it was a "delightful and much loved building". There had been talk of listing it. The recommendation to demolish was passed by 12 votes to 6.

There were various features of this decision which the Society Committee was unhappy about but it was not until the builders took over the site that the Society decided to put in an application for of Judicial Review to challenge the decision. There was no prospect of obtaining a stop on the decision because that would have involved the Society's officers in potential damages for potential commercial losses and so the demolition went ahead with the court being asked to defer his consideration of the case, to allow discussions to take place between the Society and the NFDC.

A meeting took place between the legal representatives of the NFDC and the

Continued on page 12, Col. 3

## Chairman's Note (contd from page 1)

had been fairly conducted to give a fair hearing to everyone. I felt that the questions from the floor, which we always like to encourage, were the most revealing of people's feelings. If anyone is interested a transcript is available and has been posted on our website covering the majority of the meeting. We hope this transcript might be useful in any future deliberations by the relevant organisations.

Don Mackenzie is providing a specific up-to-date report on the detailed position. There is no doubt that the preparatory work he put in, coupled with the meeting, has prompted the statutory bodies to ensure that they carry out their proper functions and make the necessary assessments. When those assessments are available and decisions made on them, the Society will decide whether it takes any further action but in the meantime it is monitoring what is being done by the various statutory bodies to ensure that all the issues raised are being fully considered. I believe the New Forest District Council, having initially not been entirely sure as to what its legal position was, is now taking a lead role in this. I think it is probably true to say that our meeting was the direct instigation of our MP Desmond Swayne being able to raise the whole issue of the ferries and the loss of the marshes in an adjournment debate in the House of Commons.

Needless to say the ferries have not been our only preoccupation. Another major issue has been the conclusion of negotiations with the Council over the Cannon Street School judicial review and you will see the report on that issue by me in another section of the newsletter. It has been an expensive operation but we have had available reserves for some time. It has indicated that the Society is prepared to make its point when necessary and in future if we see that situation arising we will decide whether to make a specific appeal for funds. There will be a resolution at the AGM to raise the annual subscription as was suggested from the floor at last year's AGM.

There is no doubt that the Society's view is taken seriously given the amount of representations, and where necessary support, given to the council in relation to its planning decisions. Similarly the Society, having been originally rebuffed

in wishing to become involved at the early stage of major planning issues such as the Webb Site, the Planners now accept that we can have a useful role to play in bringing together developers and applicants to achieve the right planning application and permission where development is necessary and appropriate. We are hopeful that we may be able to help in resolving the long ongoing issue of the redevelopment of the Pinetops Nursery whilst not losing sight of the fact that the site is green belt.

I am very pleased to say that for the past few months individual members of the Committee of the Pennington Residents Association have attended our monthly committee meetings so that we have been able to keep them in the picture with our views and they us with theirs, and in this respect both organisations have co-operated in a recent important consultation put out by the NFDC. At present I suspect both organisations would like to retain their independence but Pennington committee members' regular attendance at our committee meetings is very helpful. I hope they will be able to attend our AGM.

The talk will be by Joanna Close-Brooks on Buckland Rings. I have been involved with Buckland Rings through the late Buckland Trust and subsequently a Hampshire County Council Management Committee since about 1987 when they were saved from development in a major planning appeal. I'm not sure if it would be possible to have the model of the Buckland Rings gateway of the old earthworks commissioned by the Buckland Trust and donated to the Lymington Museum, at the meeting but if anyone wants to do their homework please go and look at this on display at Lymington Museum. I suspect by the end of the meeting many of you will be surprised by the extent of history on our doorstep.

As always my thanks are due to the hard-working members of the committee and particularly to Nigel Seth-Smith who is putting this newsletter together. We're glad to welcome an additional member in Jonathan Hutchinson who clearly has an in-depth knowledge of the planning issues in the Belmore Lane area!

I hope as many members as possible will attend the AGM.

## Ferries Public Meeting (continued from page 1)

explained that the new ferry would be almost 80% heavier, and have over 80% greater side profile leading to a far greater windage, together with engines almost 3 times as powerful as the current boats'. Finally he described the increase in cargo carrying capacity which has risen from 130 tonnes to almost 390 tonnes which could lead to many more lorries being carried as well as the full capacity of cars.

Dr Mackenzie's presentation was then followed by Andrew Willson from ferry operator Wightlink, who explained that if the service was to be viable into the future, new more economic vessels had to be built. Although the ferries were in fact larger, much of this additional size was due to safety concerns imposed by government agencies and to allow a more flexible offering to be made available to customers.

Mr Willson was followed by Peter Griffin is the newly elected Chairman of the Lymington Harbour Commissioners (LHC) who set out the powers that the LHC had at their disposal. He confirmed that Wightlink had been advised by the LHC *before they had ordered the vessels*, that they had serious concerns about the ability of the new ferries to be safely accommodated in the river. He also announced that due to the very great concern expressed by local people concerning the size of the ferries and the risk to other river users, The LHC had decided to commission a detailed risk assessment on the risk posed by the new larger ferries. A company called BMT Sea Tech had been engaged and would be carrying out detailed risk assessment to enable The LHC to set appropriate operating parameters for the new ferries to safeguard other river users.

Mr Geoff Holmes, Commodore of the RLYC, then spoke, saying that the yacht club has concerns about Wightlink's ability to deliver on early assurances. The club shares the concerns about the environmental issues, but feels that these are best dealt with by others. Its primary concern is the effect on sailing in the river, particularly Wednesday junior sailing which could be affected by the increased wind shadow of the new ferries, and potential tightening of safety

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## Ferries Meeting (contd from page 10)

regulations brought about by the presence of the much larger ferries.

Representatives of users of the Lymington River then gave a series of presentations on various topics such as the size of the new boats, power of the engines, the damage to the environment, the risk to yachting generally and to the RLYC Junior Sailing Programme in particular, and many other issues.

Though if there then followed a very lively and informative question and answer session which revealed deep scepticism amongst the audience as to the suitability of the new ferries for such a narrow river.

An extensive report on the meeting together with pictures formed the front page article in the Lymington times the following week. Feedback from local residents and those involved in the issues surrounding the proposed new ferries was that the society had performed a valuable civic function by holding such a well-organised and professional meeting on important topic for the future of the town.

A transcript of the meeting is available on the Lymington Society website at [www.lymsoc.co.uk](http://www.lymsoc.co.uk).

## Ferries-The Latest Situation

by Dr Donald Mackenzie

### New Forest District Council and MFA reject Full Environmental Assessment.

In a surprise development the Society was informed by Natural England on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February that the lead regulatory authorities for the ferries (The NFDC and the Marine Fisheries Agency) that they were minded **not** to ask for a full Environmental Impact assessment. This is of major concern as it means that the full range of environmental issues that the Society should be looking at is not now going to take place.

The Society has now had discussions with the Planning Department of the NFDC on this and is writing to the Chief executive of the NFDC to press for a change of mind. A Press Release issued by the Society on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March set out the concerns the Society has on the issue. See below.

### Press Release 4<sup>th</sup> March 2008

**"Lymington Society Criticises Limited Environmental Assessment of New**



New vs Old ferries to scale

Behind Yacht Club, and in dock

### Ferries"

The Lymington Society today expressed surprise and concern that the public regulatory bodies concerned with safeguarding the Lymington River from any possible damage caused by the new Wightlink ferries, are likely to reject the need for a full Environmental Impact Assessment on the proposal and have instead instructed Wightlink to prepare a much narrower "Appropriate Assessment"

Natural England, the environmental watchdog, were originally of the opinion that they had no responsibility for the arrival of the ferries. Following intense lobbying carried out by the Lymington Society and others, Natural England and The Environment Agency eventually changed their mind and officially objected in fairly strong terms to the arrival of the ferry without proper environmental consideration. Following this they officially objected to the proposal to The Marine Fisheries Agency, the government agency charged with making the decision on allowing the ferries into the river.

Following the Public Meeting held by the Society in November last year, which attracted almost 400 concerned residents to the Lymington Community Centre, The Society also wrote to The Marine Fisheries Agency making a strong case for a full Environmental Impact Assessment to be ordered before the ferries were allowed to enter the river.

We have now learnt that as early as



December last year, the Marine Fisheries Agency together with the New Forest District Council decided that although the work required on the ferry terminal and the arrival of larger ferries is covered under relevant European Directives as a Plan or a Project, only a very narrow assessment, called an Appropriate Assessment covering a narrow range of habitats is required from Wightlink, before they may be given permission to bring the ferries into the town.

The more wide ranging examination of all environmental aspects, which the Society and many others in the town had requested, is likely to be rejected in favour of this much narrower examination purely of the habitats described in the original designations of the river as a protected area.

The Society is extremely disappointed and concerned that, despite great public concern in the area about possible damage to the river caused by the current ferries and the even greater damage that might be caused by the plan to bring much larger ferries, the regulatory authorities appear to be retreating from the full environmental examination of these proposals which we think they deserve.

The proposed new ferries, which are almost twice as large in displacement, which have engines more than twice as powerful and which have three times the cargo carrying capacity, will be making over 22,000 journeys a year in a narrow

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## Ferries Meeting (contd from page 11)

meandering river. It is indeed surprising that the authorities do not consider that this requires the sort of thorough consideration that would come from a full Environmental Impact Assessment.

Consequently the Society will be writing to Natural England, The Environment Agency, The Marine Fisheries Agency and the New Forest District Council urging a rethink.

In an age when the "precautionary principle" is supposed to be the guiding principle employed by regulatory authorities, it is unfortunate that those bodies charged with protecting the environment, appear at the moment to be putting at risk the special qualities of the Lymington River by not ordering Wightlink to carry out a full Environmental Impact Assessment.

Speaking today, Dr Donald Mackenzie, The Press Spokesman for the Society said:

*"Having a reliable and modern ferry link to Yarmouth is obviously important and the Society is certainly not against having new ferries. However Lymington was not consulted before these ferries were designed and does not have to willingly accept the imposition on the town of ferries twice the size of the current ones, when many people consider the current ferries to be too large for the river.*

*It is indeed surprising that in an age where protection of the environment and the employment of the "precautionary principle" is supposed to be of increasing importance, regulatory bodies appear to be willing to compromise by allowing a commercial venture to go ahead with only limited assessment, despite the significant risk of major damage to a fragile environment such as the Lymington River.*

*Major environmental damage is already happening, with much of the protective mud flats having already been lost, putting the river and even the harbour itself at risk. The cause for this damage is so far not fully understood, with many people implicating the current ferries as at least part of the problem.*

*The new ferries will be travelling up and down the Lymington River over 22,000 times a year. If due to their greatly increased size and much increased engine power, they are found to cause additional harm to the riverbanks or to*

*the river bed, the huge number of journeys they make in a year, means they could cause considerable harm to the environment in a very short time.*

*We will therefore be contacting Natural England and all the other regulatory bodies involved in this proposal and urging them to think again. Once the ferries have arrived, it will be very hard to get them removed. Consequently we are again calling for this proposal, not to simply be given the benefit of the doubt, but subjected to proper scrutiny through a full Environmental Impact Assessment before they are allowed to enter the river permanently."*

In parallel with this Appropriate Assessment exercise, The Harbour Commissioners have commissioned a Risk Assessment Exercise which is being carried out by respected independent marine consultancy BMT Sea Tech. They are evaluating the effects that the arrival of the new ferries might have on other river users, and ways of minimising risks to all river users. This group will be reporting shortly, and is eagerly awaited by The Society as well as the local yacht clubs and other river users.

Once the results of the Risk Assessment Exercise and the Appropriate Assessment are made public in the next month or so, the Society will be in a position to finally make a decision on the suitability of these extremely large vessels for the Lymington River.

Wightlink have consistently reassured local people that no loss of amenity will be suffered by the wide range of current river users including junior sailing, disabled sailing, rowing clubs and the many thousands of visitors to the river every year. If the various studies being undertaken show that this reassurance is not borne out by reality and that restrictions do need to be placed on current users of the river to enable the ferries to safely operate, or if the appropriate assessment suggests damage to the important habitats locally, the Society will be likely to consider opposing the introduction of these potentially unsuitable vessels into the river. We will of course keep members and the local community posted on future development.

## Cannon Street School (continued from p 9)

Society and its barrister, at which it emerged that the lack of consideration of demolition on the approval of the application in December 2006 was effectively based on the fact that there had been no objection to demolition at the first application in December 2005.

For the reasons stated above this did not seem a fair reflection of the position. The overall flavour of the papers is of councillors being under pressure to accept an application for social housing, which of course had the effect of benefiting their co-authority the Hampshire County Council, and that was another aspect of the matter which gave concern to the Society.

Development of the site now proceeds and at the same time the development which has always been in the pipeline, namely the infirmary site which will result in affordable housing units is also taking place. A similar situation applies in relation to the Webb's Site

The Society leaves its members who read this to come to their own conclusions as to the way in which the Planning Officers came to their recommendations and the Planning Councillors came to their decision in relation to this site, in the face of overwhelming objections from the Town Council, Lymington Society and numerous individuals.

It may be felt that it is not so easy for councillors representing areas outside the town to have regard to the sensibilities of its residents. As a result of another representation by the Lymington Society, the New Forest District Council is considering whether to change their planning committees into area subcommittees having the effect that the Planning Councillors involved are more in touch with the particular area in respect of which they are making their decision.

The Society Committee hope that it has been helpful to investigate this planning decision. It clearly was made in the face of almost universal opposition in Lymington. Hopefully lessons will be learned from it and another application will not be subject to such political and economic pressure.