

Celebration and Conservation

Report on Activities of Penarth Tree Forum

Annual Open Meeting – held in February when around 40 people heard an update on the Forum’s activities. Russell Horsey, an arboriculturalist from West Wales gave an interesting talk highlighting his experiences with urban tree projects around the UK. Discussions followed and there was strong support for increasing the tree cover in Penarth.



One of the first trees to be planted by the Vale Council in the town for many years

Tree Take-away

On a cold and wet morning also in February we held a ‘Tree Take-away’ when around 250 small whips (small trees around 2-3 ft high) donated by the Woodland Trust were enthusiastically taken away by local residents to be planted in their gardens

Protecting trees around Penarth

The Forum has continued to work with Council officers to review decisions to remove street trees around the town. This is quite a challenge as house owners often feel that the trees outside their house are causing subsidence. Often the Forum feel that this is an overly simplistic interpretation of what is happening and that appropriate mitigation could save the trees.

Relations with Council and their Tree Planting Plans

We are greatly encouraged by the strengthening of relations between the Tree Forum and Council officers who have been very willing to have discussions with the Forum and we feel that this co-operation and mutual support will lead to increased tree planting in the future. Excitingly the Council have plans to plant new trees at various sites around Penarth during the coming winter and the Forum are keen to support this and help maintain the new trees. The change in policy to renew planting trees in the town has taken over two years of lobbying and we are pleased that the Council has agreed with our argument.

Tree Warden Scheme

The Forum plans to launch a Tree Wardens Scheme early in 2021. Volunteers will be allocated different streets and parks in Penarth and after appropriate training, be encouraged to keep an eye on the trees on their patch and report any problems. If you are interested or want more information email penarthtreewardens@gmail.com.

Friends of Victoria Square update

FOVS received £9000 in funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund last year, this enabled surveys of the trees, biodiversity and the physical condition of the area. A landscape architect has drawn up recommendations to make the Square an even more pleasant space for the community to enjoy, this plan is available to view in the new noticeboards that we have had erected, pictured here.

In order to implement the new plans there will be further bids for funding amounting to around £60,000 but due to Covid 19 funding is severely restricted at the moment We have applied to one source “Local Places for Nature”, which is a joint Heritage Lottery and Welsh Assembly Government initiative. If successful we will be able to do some work with the trees requiring attention, aeration drainage to deal with frequent waterlogging and much of the horticultural proposals. A gardening group has been formed to undertake planting in the Square including a community garden, hibernacula, bog garden, stumpy and growing areas for wild and cultivated flowers.

A website has been launched to inform the community about news and events (when they restart) and membership of the group is steadily rising, you don’t have to be a resident of the Square to be a member, we aim to celebrate, conserve and enhance Victoria Square as a place of freedom, reflection and enjoyment for the whole community.



One of the new noticeboards advising of FOVS activities in the Square

James Long Obituary

We are saddened to report the death of our late Chair James Long. In 2015 James responded to a call for new committee members published in the Penarth Times to help restore the committee to working strength. James stepped up to the role of Chair in a ‘temporary’ capacity for 12 months. He played a significant role in returning the society to the active role it enjoys today.

James served the society as Chair, and subsequently Vice Chair, until 2019 during which time the Penarth Tree Forum was established with James also serving as Chair to that group. The Forum was instrumental in publishing a ‘Tree Strategy for Penarth’. He also put together the Society’s newsletters for several years, writing much of the content himself.

James was an Architect by profession working during his career in both Local Authority and private practice in South Wales until setting up his own practice in Llandough from where he went on to become architect to Penarth Town Council.

Do you care about Penarth? - Join the Civic Society

www.penarthsociety.org.uk - £10 per annum individuals - £15 per annum for couples

Celebration and Conservation

Penarth's Victorian Lampposts have been saved!

In June 2019 we apologised to members and the community for our failure to save the town's Victorian lampposts; a programme of replacement with galvanised modern posts with more energy efficient LED lights had started in April.

In July we realised that only some posts had been lost so we submitted a Freedom of Information Request to the Vale of Glamorgan Council (VOG). After some to-ing and fro-ing we were told that 68 columns had been replaced, 200 were still awaiting replacement and they could not be converted to LED lighting because they were either electrically unsafe or structurally unsound.

The "electrically unsafe" element referred to junction boxes at the top of the columns; the "structurally unsound" element referred to a test conversion which had been attempted in Beach Lane which was unsuitable for the conservation area, and there were concerns that it could fall off. We wondered if there were solutions to these issues...

We contacted several other local authorities and Canterbury Council was particularly helpful. They put us into contact with a supplier who assured us that they could come up with a solution that would enable the existing columns to be converted to LED units. We wrote to the Managing Director of VOG and emailed every VOG and Penarth Town Councillors asking for the then programme to stop.

In December 2019 we were invited to meet with senior members of VOG. We were told that they were prepared to upgrade the new posts to a "retro" style, more in keeping with a Victorian design. We answered that we had perfectly good genuine columns already and they could be upgraded to LED cost effectively. The meeting ended amicably with a commitment all round to investigate conversion.

A second meeting in January 2020 included the supplier we had contacted and it was agreed that the solution they suggested was feasible. A test lamppost was successfully completed in Rectory Lane in March 2020. Progress has been hampered by Covid 19, but in a joint press conference VOG announced that the posts in Penarth will be saved and converted to LED.

The Society would like to applaud VOG for being big enough to listen to the argument and accept that they were wrong in their original decision. We are grateful that they chose to do this and work with us.



The first converted lamppost, in Rectory Road

Daphne Kibble

Members of the Society will be sorry to hear of the death of my mother, Daphne Kibble, at the age of 91. Audrey Poole has been kind enough to write a few words about her.

Anne Evans

Vice Chair.

Daphne and her husband John were stalwart members of Penarth Civic Society. Moving to Penarth from Lichfield they immersed themselves in the work of the Society and eventually Daphne was persuaded to join the Committee. Offering to help in any way needed, this led to accepting the responsibility of various positions before becoming Chairman.

Drawing on her experience of membership of the Society at Lichfield she inaugurated the Civic Trust Award scheme where commemorative plaques are given for buildings that make a special contribution to the street scene. Work must have been carried out during the previous two years. Today these plaques can be seen on buildings throughout the town.

Daphne's influence will continue to be felt as many of her ideas are now incorporated in the Civic Society's aims today.

ALP

Activity Report

Many of our groups, such as the Beach Wardens and the Railway Path Project have been on hold. The Italian Gardens project has been dealt a double whammy as, in addition to the pandemic, a landslide at the back meant that we were not allowed on site while the Vale council carried out remedial works.

The Tree Forum is continuing its work under the chairmanship of Nick Crofts. One excellent development is that we are now working with GPG Penarth Greening on their Community Gardening project. The Vale council will be planting more trees, including some at sites we have suggested. GPG then intend to plant shrubs at some of the same sites.

We are liaising with the Vale and Town Councils about the future of the town centre, and its businesses, is of concern to all. In the shops we wear masks and socially distance. However, the pavements are mostly narrow and this is proving difficult. The one way system for pedestrians is being widely ignored. We are working with the town council, and other groups, on ideas for making the town centre safe for us all.

The committee have received more comments from members about the future of the Kymin than any other issue for many years. We are well-aware of the importance of this building and its grounds to residents and visitors alike. We understand that the town council has expressed interest in taking out a long lease on the property. We have recently been informed by the Town Clerk that the Mayor is aware of our concerns and our willingness to help.

The Vale Council have allocated section 106 monies to rebuild the pavilion at Belle Vue. (These funds are from the monies provided to the Council from the developers of Penarth Heights.) Some committee members met with the Chair of Friends of Belle Vue and the Council to discuss these plans. We have emphasised the need for the building to fit in with its Victorian surroundings and to be environmentally friendly.

You may know that the Welsh Government has applied to the Vale Council for planning permission to build 572 homes on land they own at Upper Cosmeston Farm. This is a very large development and there are significant concerns about its impact on the infrastructure of the town. The plans for this development are available on the Vale Council website; members are encouraged to comment on the plans..

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