



# NEWSLETTER

## 2/96

April.1996

This is an **IMPORTANT NEWSLETTER**, please read it. It is a report back to members who did not attend the AGM and a reminder to those who did.

The visiting speaker, Colin Doorne, gave an excellent talk on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. It was wide ranging, informative and very well prepared. As this is a subject which will continue to affect us all - even after the new High Speed Link has been built - it is a pity that more people did not turn up. In fact we had the smallest attendance ever, only 27 members.

### The AGM Proper

Most of the business of the AGM was completed smoothly. The minutes of the last AGM and the various reports were all accepted. It was agreed that subscriptions be held at £5 per household, with the usual caveat for Senior Citizens. The present Chairman, Treasurer and Auditor were all willing to stand again and were re-elected. However, although members were alerted to the situation in the last 2 Newsletters, the AGM failed to elect a Secretary. Without a Secretary the Society cannot function. The reason is simple. The Society is an Unincorporated Association and in law such associations are charities, whether registered as such or not. One of the consequences of that is that we must keep records of the attendance at meetings, the decisions made and the result of any vote that is taken. All common-sense measures that any prudent society or association would take.

The consequence of the failure to elect a Secretary was that:

The AGM resolved to call a Special General Meeting on Thursday 2nd May at 8.0 p.m. in the Bromley Court Hotel to;

- a) Make one further attempt to elect a Secretary or failing that.
- b) Debate the future of the Society and decide whether it should be wound up.

For those who may be wondering how all of this came about. It is worth repeating the events leading up to the present situation.

In May last year Bill Jamieson, our Planning Officer for Bromley died. Despite repeated requests at Members Meetings and in Newsletters no one came forward to do the job. During that time Leslie Tucker our Secretary was doing what had to be done on planning issues, as well as being Secretary and Road Rep for Bromley Ave., Grasmere, Highland, Karen Ct, Park End and the Brackenhills.

There are three things wrong with that arrangement.

Firstly, the activities/responsibilities for a Society like ours should be spread over as many people as possible not concentrated on to a few.

Secondly, Leslie is willing to do Planning Officer and Road Rep or Secretary and Road Rep, but not all three jobs.

And finally our constitution requires Leslie to step down as Secretary at the next AGM.

The common-sense solution is for Leslie to step down a year early and continue as Planning Officer and Road Rep. This is particularly appropriate because at the next AGM the Chairman is also required to step down. However, so far, no one is prepared to take on the job of Secretary and apart from Leslie no one is prepared to take on the job of Planning Officer for Bromley.

At the recent AGM one lady (Kay Lincoln) volunteered to help out by taking the minutes, but emphasised that she was not very mobile. What she did not say, was that this was because she had recently had a triple heart by-pass operation. She is also the Road Rep for Ravensmead Rd. Another lady volunteered to do typing but she also had limited mobility. That lady was Rose Williams, who at over 90 years of age is probably our oldest member!

Before considering the options facing the Society it may be helpful to recapitulate on a) What the Secretary's job involves. and b) What is at risk if we do not find a replacement Secretary.

#### **The Secretary's job consists of:**

- Dispatching agendas for the meetings, 6 times a year.
- Keeping notes of those meetings (essentials are; attendance sheet, and recording subject, decision and action.)
- Dispatching the notes to those present, to those who sent apologies and to office holders who were unable to attend.
- Acting as a post-box for mail from Bromley and to a lesser extent from Lewisham.
- Passing the mail on to the person who will deal with it or in some cases responding on an agreed line after consultation with others.
- Representing the Society, usually with the Chairman at a few meetings at the Civic Centre.

What would be lost if the Society ceased to function ?

## **The Society**

- has been active for nearly 10 years.
- has been built up from nothing.
- has a healthy membership list.
- has a healthy bank balance.
- has a high reputation in both Bromley & Lewisham for being balanced and persistent.
- has progressively expanded its knowledge and capability over a range of fields.
- has a good record of success in the causes it espouses.

What commitments would be dropped if the Society ceased to function ?

## **The Society**

- would not be able to play a role in the future of Beckenham Place Park.
- would not be able to make co-ordinated representations on planning applications, either locally or at Inquiries.
- would not be able to take up road or transport issues.
- would not be able to get involved in debates about Bromley Health Authority, Bromley National Health Hospital Trust or the Ravensbourne National Health Trust.

Finally if a serious planning issue arose members would be on their own without any support or advice from the Society or the Federation of Bromley Residents' Associations.

If we cannot find a Secretary there are several options facing the Society (others may think of more).

- Continue for a further year with Leslie as Secretary and not engage in any planning activity.

(This means that we become inactive on one of the main Objectives of the Society's Constitution. It could also be dangerous with the housing market showing signs of life. The problem of succession will become more difficult as both the Secretary and the Chairman will have to step down next March. If no one is then prepared to do those jobs the Society cannot function and will have to disband and disperse its skills and assets.

- Amend the Constitution to remove the 5 year clause for Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer.

(This will not solve the present impasse and would almost certainly be counter productive, as the present officers all took office on the clear understanding that it was for a maximum of 5 years and not life. If there were no time limit, the chances of anyone ever volunteering would, on current performance, be zero).

- Employ a paid Secretary.

(Last year our surplus was £740 and although our reserves stand at some £4000 it would be improvident to use them for wages. Apart from the potential implications of employee legislation, would we get the sort of person we require for £740 pa ?)

- Accept Kay Lincoln's offer to take minutes and Leslie's to do the Planning Officer job.

(This overcomes the legal requirement to have a record of attendance and decisions and allows us to be active on planning matters. However it will mean someone (who?) will have to assist Kay because of her lack of mobility. Nor will it ensure the continuance of the Society if no one is prepared to be Chairman next March).

- Someone volunteering to be Asst Secretary this year and take over as Secretary next year. Plus someone else volunteering to be Vice Chairman this year and taking over as Chairman next year. (This eases the workload on the Secretary and ensures a planned succession).
- Seek amalgamation with a nearby Society/Association, with similar aims and objectives to ourselves.

(There is no certainty that another Society/Association will want to take on our membership or that our members will want to be part of another Association. The future of our assets will have to be resolved and the negotiations could be "delicate". This course will also involve the Chairman and the Treasurer in additional work which will probably leave as many people dissatisfied as satisfied.

- Somehow devise a way of putting the Society on ice without actually disbanding it. So that if a serious problem occurs in the future it could be resurrected to take common action. (This would mean stopping subscriptions and once members stop paying there is every danger they will just melt' away.)
- Formally wind up the Society, withdraw from Beckenham Place Park, renege on our undertaking to host the Federation meeting in September, write off our goodwill and disperse our residual assets.

(The final solution if no one is prepared to do anything.)

**P.W. Pain (Chairman)**