

COMMUNITY NEWS. - PORTHAETHWY.....MENAI BRIDGE. MENAI BRIDGE & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY.

On Friday, October 15th, the Menai Bridge & District Civic Society held an Open Meeting at the Memorial Hall in Water Street to discuss the problems of developmental projects in the Conservation Area of Menai Bridge.

Lady Anglesey opened the meeting and explained how she had first come to the area on her marriage to Lord Anglesey 22 years ago, exchanging her South Wales homeland for the North. Since then she has been dedicated to her new home area and the protection and promotion of Anglesey in particular. Her passion for protecting the character and way of life of the island kept her active in the Civic Society.

Lady Anglesey then introduced the Chairman for the evening – Mr. Jack Harrison who is the Chairman of the Menai Bridge Partnership Group and the secretary of the Menai Bridge Chamber of Commerce.

Our local Cadnant Ward County Councillor, Mr. Keith Evans, was invited to give an over-view of the present concerns occupying the minds of many of the audience. He began by giving a brief history of his involvement with the town from his birth (only 50 metres from the present building) through to his service as a local and County Councillor for the past 50 years.

He drew attention to the achievements and improvements of the area, particularly over the past 5 years. These had included the half million pound investment in Uxbridge Square, the £200,000 improvements at Porth Wrach, the new Community Leisure Centre at the David Hughes school, new facilities for early learning groups and the excellent report on Ysgol y Borth by the Education Inspector. He was also delighted that RAF Valley Freedom Enactment ceremony on September 25th, had been held here, as a result of persuasion by County Councillor Selwyn Williams who represents Tysilio ward and is the present Chairman of the Anglesey County Council.

Keith also touched upon current problems in the town, one of the major concerns for years had been the lack of car parking, which contributed to many of the recent planning applications causing concern. Of the 5 Council operated car parks, only 3 were in their ownership. Of the 2 leased car parks, one was secure and one was still to be negotiated.

The advent of Waitrose, while bringing benefits to the town, also caused additional parking problems by not allowing its personnel to park on the premises. This, in turn, has caused parking problems for the Anglesey Arms hotel which has terminated the lease on the adjacent garage and sparked off a local petition.

The lack of space for vehicle parking in the old areas of the town, reflects the age of the houses. The narrowness of the streets, while adding to the character of the area, also exacerbates the problem and should mitigate against increasing the density of development. (Government guide-lines now allow building in gardens.)

The Conservation Area document states that such areas should be enhanced and sympathetically developed so as to preserve the character. This is our main objection to many new planning applications. Guidance is being ignored.!

Jack thanked Keith for his input and invited Professor Jago of the University to address the meeting concerning future developments of the University sites in Menai Bridge.

The present old building was not fit for purpose and would be demolished and replaced by a more attractive design which would have the same dimensions. The University had obtained substantial funding and intended to designate Menai Bridge as its centre with other businesses radiating from it. He conceded that there would be a period of disruption which the University were hoping to minimize by agreeing with the ACC Planning Department that they could have access to the site through the Bulkeley car park. He

anticipated that the demolition would begin next summer, the reconstruction would take 15-18 months and the project should be completed by January 2013.

In response to questions, he stated that he was unaware of any plans to sell Ynys Faelog when staff were moved out from the buildings. Neither had he any knowledge of land which belonged to the Mostyn Arms and was adjacent to their present site, being considered for purchase by the University.

Jack then invited Liz Moyle and Maureen Parry-Williams to report on a meeting that they had attended earlier in the week with the Chief Planning Officer, Gwyndaf Jones and his planning team. This had resulted from an earlier meeting between Maureen and Jane Cherrett with the local planning officer and the Conservation officer at which they had raised concerns of the Civic Society members with regard to the lack of protection that was being offered to a Conservation Area and, in particular, the planning application 39C351B.

This application was for the demolition of the old boatshed by Ynys Faelog and its replacement with a modern version to be used as a boat repair business. In order to facilitate the building works, a temporary roadway needed to be built across the shore from the shore side of Min y Mor to the boat shed. This proposal caused outrage among the local residents both for its visual impact and disruptive effect on wildlife but also for the amount of extra traffic that would be generated on the narrow St. George's Road.

Both Liz and Maureen felt that they had been given a fair hearing and that the Planning Team had been prepared to enter into a meaningful discussion. Constraints were that it was a brown field site and therefore planning permission should not be refused. However, the site was within the Conservation Area, bordered by an ANOB area and outside the Menai Bridge Development zone.

It was agreed that the design was unsympathetic to the area and the Chief Planning Officer would re-open discussions with the applicant.

The proposed roadway would entail heavy traffic movement which was linked with the local anger at extra vehicles using the narrow St. George's Road one-way system.

The exit from this system leads onto the congested High Street where manoeuvring in either direction would be difficult. The Highways Officer suggested that the lorries could either be limited in size OR a Traffic Control official could direct them, against the flow of traffic, to the nearer exit as they re-entered St. George's Road.

In response to doubts that the 'temporary' road would become permanent, there was assurance that the developer would be required to lodge a money bond with the Authority to ensure that the cost of removal would be guaranteed.

Once the Planning Officials have finalized their recommendations, the Application will go before the Planning Committee. In order to ensure that all members of the Committee understand the situation, they will be making a SITE visit prior to voting.

The audience were invited to raise questions with regard to application 39C351B and freely expressed their objections and frustrations with the area and its effect upon the quality of their lives. It was emphasised that they needed to register their opinions as individuals in writing. Quite a number had already done so and, for those who felt they needed more information, there were factual letters available for guidance.

Liz closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their support. She was particularly grateful to Lady Anglesey for giving of her time, to Jack Harrison for chairing the meeting and Keith Evans for his input.

There was a general request that another meeting should be held to continue the discussions of our problems and perhaps suggest solutions.

The meeting closed at 9.20.