

## **Ramsgate Society Chairman's Report AGM 25<sup>th</sup> July 2024**

I am pleased to report that the Society has been very active since our last AGM and I set out below a brief summary of some of our recent activities.

### **Planning Heritage and Regeneration,**

**TDC Local Plan.** The Local Plan Review, which will extend the plan up to 2040, is now under review by TDC following the recent decision on the Manston DCO and we will continue to engage with the Local Plan Consultation Process once this resumes. Following the General Election on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2024 the new Labour Government has pledged to increase house building to 300,000 per annum across the country. It remains to be seen how this will roll out in Thanet over the next few years. The current anticipated timescale is as follows:

(Phase 1); Biodiversity Strategy; review of evidence base; commissioning of evidence base studies July 2024 – March 2025

Design Code (Phase 2); review of housing requirements March 2025 – December 2025

Scoping & early participation Sept – Nov 2025

Local Plan "Notice" March 2026

Gateway 1. May 2026 Mandatory public consultation (Issues & Options) (8 weeks) Sept/Oct 2026

Gateway 2. March 2027 Mandatory public consultation (6 weeks) May/June 2027

Gateway 3. July 2027 Submission Sept 2027

Examination In Public (EIP) (9 months) Sept 2027- June 2028

### **Adoption July 2028**

### **Manston Airport.**

In our May 2024 Newsletter, we reported on the Court of Appeal hearing, held on 24th April, into the appeal by Jenny Dawes to quash the DCO (Development Consent Order) granted by the Secretary of State for Transport. The appeal centred on points of law relating to the failure of RSP to share and consult on reports on which they relied, in breach of the legal requirements of fairness.

The Judgement rejecting the appeal was issued on 21st May, thus bringing the series of legal challenges to the DCO to a close. RSP can therefore no longer attribute the legal process as the cause of delays to implementing their proposals.

In accordance with the granting of the DCO in 2022 the authorised development must commence within 5 years, that is, no later than 9th September 2027. The DCO, however, stipulates that no part of that development can commence until a development masterplan has been prepared, submitted and approved by TDC, Kent County Council and Historic England.

That masterplan must include:

- Assessment, conservation and mitigation measures for heritage assets and archaeological remains
- Environmental management plans for construction and operation phases
- Ecological and noise mitigation
- Landscaping
- Protected species plan
- Surface and foul water drainage plan
- Traffic management plan
- High Resolution Direction Finder (MoD) re-siting and replacement
- Community consultative committee in place,

Following the Court of Appeal judgement, RSP announced that it is to update their existing plan over the next 18 months. Any material changes will require public consultation.

The Society based its position on the reopening of Manston on evidence from its own detailed research and analysis. Briefly: that there is no commercial need for a new cargo hub in the UK, Manston is in a highly disadvantageous location, and that there would be serious environmental and health risks. That remains the situation and the Examining Authority findings and recommendation confirmed our view. The Secretary of State chose to ignore that and subsequent expert opinion in approving the DCO in 2022.

**Ramsgate Neighbourhood Plan.** Ramsgate Town Council is engaged in the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for Ramsgate. The work of drafting the plan was led by a professional planning consultant and supported by a group of volunteers, including the Ramsgate Society, reporting to a steering group led by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Ramsgate Town Council Planning Committee. RTC are currently undertaking an online consultation for local residents to express their views on the policy proposals. This consultation closes on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2024. You can access the Consultation Document by visiting the RTC website homepage and scrolling down to Neighbourhood Plan. The Draft Neighbourhood Plan is currently with TDC to ensure it is compliant with the current Local Plan. However, the timescale for this remains uncertain in view of the delays with the Local Plan Review

When complete the Plan will set out a number of planning policies specific to Ramsgate. These policies will have to be taken into account by TDC officers and councillors when determining all future planning applications.

**The Clock House and Pier Yard.** Progress over the last 12 months has been slow but just prior to the AGM we will have a presentation from Rob Warren (Ramsgate Society) with a review of what has been achieved since the last AGM and how we see the project being delivered.

**Ramsgate Port and Harbour.** Together with the Ramsgate Regeneration Alliance we continue to express our concerns about the ongoing losses now amounting to some £30million and the TDC proposals to invest further public funds in improvements to the existing unused RoRo facilities and further intensify the industrialisation of the Port without a credible business plan.

**Heritage Harbour.** We are delighted to report that Ramsgate Royal Harbour has now been Listed by Historic England as a National Heritage Harbour. This new designation will be formally launched as part of Heritage Open Days 2024 (6<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> September) and on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> September Henry Cleary OBE, Chair of the Maritime Heritage Trust, will be giving a talk to Ramsgate Society Members about this new designation as part of a series of talks during Heritage Open Days Week. The Society has been asked to form a Heritage Harbour Working Group. The HHWG is now established and is planning a number of events to launch this new designation and to promote the Harbour as a visitor attraction over the next few years and beyond.

### **Events and Community Engagement.**

**Sea front Shelters.** Though our lease on the Sea Front Shelters expired in May 2023, we continued to work on the repair and redecoration of the 14 Listed Grade 2 Victorian promenade shelters. Our continued efforts to get TDC to regularise this anomaly have come to no avail. We are grateful for the continued support of Ramsgate Town Council and a number of volunteer groups as we continue with our work to keep the shelters in good condition. This year we are focusing our efforts on the 4 large green shelters in Royal Esplanade. We continue to be plagued by outbreaks of mindless vandalism but are determined not to be deterred by the very small number of individuals concerned. I would like to particularly thank our Vice President, Davena Green, Ramsgate Councillor Becky Wing, the RTC Technicians lead by Maxine Morgan and our group of shelter volunteers for their outstanding contribution to this important project. A special thanks must go to Ramsgate Glass who, without charge, continue to carry out repairs to broken windows due for the most part to senseless vandalism. Their support is unstinting and is a brilliant example of how a local business cares for the town in which it is based and is willing and happy to “give something back.” Thank you, Ramsgate Glass!

**Ramsgate Society Talks Series.** Our series of regular talks organised by committee member Terry Prue continues to be very popular with most events fully booked in advance. Details of our monthly talks are posted in our monthly newsletters and on our website <[www.ramsgatesociety.org.uk](http://www.ramsgatesociety.org.uk)> Early registration via Eventbrite is recommended.

**Climate Change.** During the year we have adopted the issue of Climate Change as one of our key work streams.

Rising temperatures due to global heating are causing a long-term increase in mosquito-borne virus infections, as recorded recently in Australia and, following milder winters, tick numbers are on the rise in the UK, causing an increase in Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses. Network Rail is spending £2.8 billion over the next five years to protect the railway network from the effects of climate change and extreme weather.

Climate change is real, its damaging effects are happening now even in the UK, and without quick and effective action, it will rapidly get worse. We will all be affected. During the coming year we will be working to keep members informed about the potential risks associated with climate change and what we here in Ramsgate can do about it.

**Tall Ships Event 2026** Over the last twelve months we have been working closely with the Ramsgate Regeneration Alliance to bring a Tall Ships Event to Ramsgate. The benefits of these events to the local economy are well known from previous events both in England and around the world. Hartlepool held a Tall Ships Event in May 2024 which brought £12.5million into the local economy over a period of 4 days.

With support from local sponsors and Ramsgate Town Council the Society commissioned a Stage 1 Feasibility Study from Tall Ships Global which was presented at a public meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> June. The Report addressed twelve issues including event planning, budget overview and critical measures of success.

It was clear from the public response that there is great interest in bringing a Tall Ships Event to Ramsgate in 2026. With this in mind we met with the Leader of TDC and senior officers on 9<sup>th</sup> July to discuss whether TDC as owners of the Royal Harbour would be willing to take part in the event and on what basis. We hope to have a response from TDC at the end of July/early August.

**Heritage Open Days (HODS)** For several years now the Society has coordinated the Thanet Heritage Open Days in collaboration with TDC Tourism and Information. Thanks to the efforts of committee member Susanne Ford the planning and coordination for HODS 2024 is now well advanced. (6<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> Sept)

**Community Champion Awards 2024** The Ramsgate Society Community Champions Award is a special award given to local people who, in the opinion of the Society's Executive Committee, have made an exceptional contribution to the quality of life in the town. This year we are working in partnership with Ramsgate Town Council to celebrate the work of those people who, often unsung, contribute so much to the quality of life in our local community.

There are a great many people in Ramsgate who donate their time, effort and enthusiasm as volunteers to make Ramsgate a better place to live and work. Whether it's by volunteering for food banks, picking up litter, caring for our parks, gardens and open spaces, organising community events, organising Heritage Open Days, the Ramsgate Arts Festival or The Film Festival these people contribute enormously to our quality of life in the town. They often do this without any sort of praise or recognition for what they do and most of them wouldn't want it any other way. They do their work because they want to give something back to the community in which they live.

We will be putting out a call for Nominations shortly with a view to an Awards Event in the Autumn. For more information and to make a nomination go to the Ramsgate Society website <[www.ramsgate-society.org.uk](http://www.ramsgate-society.org.uk)> The Society makes this special award to the people who in the view of the committee have made a special contribution to the local community.

**Ramsgate Matters.** I would like to thank Brian Daubney for his superb work as Editor of Ramsgate Matters over many years. We have decided to relaunch Ramsgate Matters as an Annual Report and Review of our activities over the year and Brian has now handed the editorship over to our committee member Ron Warren. 2024 is the 60<sup>th</sup> year since the formation of the Ramsgate Society in 1964 and we will be publishing a special **Ramsgate Matters Diamond Jubilee Edition** to celebrate this event later in the Autumn.

**Membership and Communications** Our monthly electronic newsletter continues to be the most effective way of communicating with our members and keeps members updated on our activities on a regular basis. Over the last year our membership and communications working group have worked hard to update our membership records and as a result we have seen our membership and subscription base starting to grow.

**Finance.** Our finances continue to be in good shape and our most recent accounts will be presented for approval by members at this AGM. I would like to offer our special thanks to David Lister our Treasurer for the excellent work he does in keeping our accounts and finances under close and efficient control.

**Finally.** I would like to thank the members of the Ramsgate Society Executive Committee for all their hard work during the last twelve months. They are a very dedicated team who are all passionate about Ramsgate and it's a pleasure for me to act as their chairman. I would particularly like to "mention in dispatches" Graham Woolnough who stepped down earlier this year after several years as our Honorary Secretary. Graham did a superb job and is greatly missed.

John Walker

Chairman