

The Green and the Hangar – What Hunstanton Thinks!

A crowded public meeting in Hunstanton town hall heard West Norfolk Council Leader Nick Daubney admit that the Council had rightly or wrongly granted the amusement owners dispensations from their obligations over the last 31 years.

He said that the Council's action in granting the Deed of Variation had been a genuine effort to do the right thing. Once the sea had washed the pier away, an arcade was left remaining, and, following the fire, planning permission was given for a replacement arcade. The new owners made threatening noises about the removal of covenants. "I could get involved, and involve the Council in long legal battles. The legal advice was that the Borough Council would lose the battle and have to take responsibility for costs. I took the decision not to get involved in a legal battle with costs to the tax payers in six figures."

He said that the Borough Council had offered to help protect The Green by joint ownership and management with Hunstanton Town Council.

John Maiden said that the Borough Council could change its mind and support his application to register The Green, and to plan to relocate the Hangar, attracting inward investment. He gave a detailed analysis of the complex history of the pier and Green saga, stating quite clearly that his campaign was not limited to the re-instatement of a pier at any price. A robust session of questions to Cllr Daubney and the Chief Executive, Ray Harding revealed that there was no mood in the room for compromise. Questioners covered the issues of removing the Hangar; the giving away of covenants by the Council; the failure of the Council to take opportunities to increase the rental for the building; and the lack of trust between Hunstanton and the Council in King's Lynn.

Ray Harding said that the 1978 covenant had been breached, but because it had not been enforced for 31 years, there was not an earthly chance of enforcing it now. The Lease, he said, was for the land upon which the pier had been built, and not the building itself. One questioner asked what would be returned to the landlord at the end of the 999 years – the answer was not a pier and amusement arcade, but the land.

In conclusion, the meeting voted overwhelmingly to continue not to 'draw a line' under the saga. The views of those inhabitants and visitors to Hunstanton, for whose benefit the covenant on The Green was originally drawn up, were that Hunstanton was not getting a good deal, and that the Borough Council must do more.

Hunstanton Civic Society hosted and organised the meeting on Tuesday, 13th October. Our aim was to get the views of the public on the issue that had sparked the Society into being in 2002. Clearly, the saga has a long way to run over the next eight hundred years or so. The Civic Society is not a one issue pressure group, and we would very much welcome new ideas and new people to help take Hunstanton forward. We plan to be involved wherever possible in constructive dialogue with Councils, regeneration bodies and most importantly with all age groups in the local community, both residents and visitors, for Hunstanton's future.