

BADLESMERE LEES AND HALL COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, 27 May 2025

Committee members present: Chris Moore (Chair), Sue Earl (Secretary), Rick Blackman (Treasurer), Steve Burt, Dave Austin, Ian Earl, Gareth Fulton, Tom Sisley.

This meeting immediately followed on from the AGM.

1 Apologies received from: Fred Gregory, Charlie Kirby, Ben Pullen.

2 Approval of minutes

2.1 The minutes of the March meeting were approved.

3 Matters arising (numbers in parentheses refer to entries in the March minutes)

- 3.1 (3.1) Footpaths cabinet: On receipt of a request, IE dismantled the existing display to inform The Ramblers of the condition and dimensions of the components within. This information will be forwarded by The Ramblers to KCC.
- 3.2 (3.2) Northern layby: Strong objections to having a tyre in the layby were received from a nearby resident. It has been removed (to under an oak tree so not to be in the way of mowing), and Mr Ross Roff (En View, Ashford Road) has offered to restore and maintain the northern layby. GF will take the tyre away.
- 3.3 (3.3) Speed calming signage on the north track: project cancelled.
- 3.4 (3.5) The very successful Spring Clean-Up took place on 29 March with many volunteers helping. The resulting bonfire will be left until Autumn before being lit.
- 3.5 (5.4) The hippo-bag of 20mm shingle was instead towed to the northern layby to help fill in pot holes. The hippo-bag of 10mm shingle outside the village hall was also deemed unsightly and has been moved to within the copse (where type 1 is stored).
- 3.6 (5.5) The water hydrant manhole next to the A251 and the 'triangle' has been uncovered.
- 3.7 (7.1) A well-attended celebration of VE Day 80 took place on 8 May, during which Lady Melville, Deputy Lieutenant of Kent, read the Tribute and lit the Beacon. Within the Village Hall, which had been suitably decorated, CM displayed a range of items, photos and pieces of information that described the long history of Badlesmere Lees. The raffle raised £141. The prize, a hamper donated by CM, was won by Chris Kemsley. CM stated that the photos taken by Kim Watkins on the night were now available online via a link that he could provide.

4 Election of Officers

The committee having resigned and been re-elected en masse, the members now elected the officers.

- 4.1 Chair: Chris Moore, proposed by SE, seconded by GF.
- 4.2 Secretary: Sue Earl, proposed by CM, seconded by DA.
- 4.3 Treasurer (RB has chosen to step down): Ian Earl, until CIO status is achieved. IE will also continue as Bookings Manager. CM to replace RB as a signatory on the accounts.

5 Accounts

- 5.1 The current balances in the four accounts as on 26 May 2025, were:
BPH: current = £1 550.14, reserve = £17 507.76;
BLPC: current = £2 390.55, reserve = £1 953.28.
Some transfers have already taken place from the BPH reserve account to the current account in line with expenditure on the refurbishment works.
No 100 Club draws have taken place yet, so the BLPC current account still contains all of this year's prize money.
- 5.2 The 100 Club membership stands at 62. The first draw(s) will take place soon.

6 The Lees

- 6.1 Discussions, continuing from those in the AGM, centred around the desirability of wilding the Lees and to what extent. CM/GF to find out if the lees is eligible for FiPL (Farming in Protected Landscapes) funding and seek support from the Estate as it is their land. This will include finding out whether the Lees has been assigned a SBI (single business identifier) number. The project must provide value for money and result in at least one climate, nature, people or place outcome (see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-farmers-in-protected-landscapes> for details). It was envisaged that wilding would include making a wild flower meadow, managing the copse and associated scrub, and introducing such features as a dew pond, bat boxes, etc. Mown paths would be maintained corresponding to the old footpaths and the common routes used by dog walkers and horse riders. One great advantage of this change would be a major reduction in the costs in maintaining the lees through not having to mow the whole area four or more times a year as at present. GF to put a plan together.
- 6.2 The discussion continued to include the desirability and feasibility of taking over the Lees from the Estate. It is realised that the committee would need to be a registered charity before this could happen. (See item 8). The idea of registering the Lees as a Village Green was brought up. CM reminded the committee of how the Lees became owned by the Sondes Estate (acquired in the 1970s as it was identified as 'manorial wasteland'), and of the reply he got from KCC when he attempted to register it as a Village Green (there is no need as the Lees is already registered common land and is Open Access).

7 Hall Refurbishment Works and the Car Park Extension

- 7.1 Refurbishment Works: IE has successfully moved the stage to the left as a complete unit creating the necessary passageway to the proposed new doorway to the toilets. The tongue-and-groove panelling on the hall wall that had to be removed is being retained so it can be returned at the end of the project. IE also undertook the demolition of the previous (Gents') toilet to save money. The disabled toilet has been connected to the waste pipe from the kitchen to the cesspit. The stud walls of the disabled toilet are now in place, left partially plaster-boarded to allow electrical and plumbing work to occur. The new doorway has been created. SB has made all the main purchases (toilets, wash basins, doors and door frames, signs, etc) thorough his company, Dorabridge. CM/IE will be meeting up with a plumber, an electrician, and a flooring expert, in the near future. The committee viewed the state of the works.

- 7.2 Car Park Extension. The committee adjourned to the car park to inspect the position of the stakes put in to identify the size of the extension agreed with Ms Roberts. Members were worried that when empty the long length (to accommodate ten cars) would effectively turn the North track into a two lane road and encourage speeding. It was agreed to alter the dimensions so that ten cars could still park but double-parked in a width of five spaces. It was also felt that despite being the same area this would have less impact on the Lees, and the inconvenience of the double-parking would be minimal. Work will not commence until funds are known to be available, but could be incorporated into the next track repairs in terms of the equipment needed.

8 Community Events

- 8.1 The committee was reminded that Dr James Wright's talk on Historic Building Myth-busting would be taking place on 12 June, and were encouraged to attend and spread the word.
- 8.2 CM is looking into having an open-air cinema in front of the village hall.

9 Governance

- 9.1 The application for CIO status (as The Badlesmere Lees Preservation Trust) has been submitted to the Charity Commission. Three signatures were required (CM, IE, SB signed) but the actual committee will be determined once CIO status has been achieved.

10 Safety & Crime

- 10.1 DA raised the issue of emergency lighting in the hall. While we do have emergency exits with lights that come on in the event of a power failure, the level of light in the hall, kitchen and toilets may not meet regulatory requirements. IE to ask the electrician who will be doing the toilets area for his advice, and possibly a quote.
- 10.2 The emergency exit on the stage will be sealed off, and its lighting and signage removed, since two exits – the main entrance and through the toilets – should suffice.
- 10.3 It has been reported that some Swale residents have been getting phone calls from criminals impersonating Police Officers or claiming to be from their bank. Committee members were encouraged to warn others, especially vulnerable residents, and publicise the ABC of Scam Awareness: "Never **A**ssume or **B**elieve a call is genuine and always **C**onfirm".

11 Date of next meeting

- 11.1 Tuesday 9 September was agreed. 6.30 pm as usual.

12 AOB

- 12.1 DA reported that the replacement of the defibrillator battery and pads, now due, will be funded by the parish council.
- 12.2 SE wished to thank TS for his cutting of the grass around the village hall, and for reducing the heights of the sycamore and leylandii bordering the hall (to the SE). Thanks are also offered to CK and Colin H for cutting the grass in front of Leavemere.
- 12.3 CM brought to the committee's attention that following IE's and SE's nomination in Helen Whatley MP's Unsung Heroes Award, they were amongst the winners. IE has

donated the small monetary prize that came with the Award to the village hall while SE donated hers to the Ashford and Tenterden Samaritans.

12.4 CM has donated a restored railway bench, painted in Southern Railway's malachite green. It is now next to the fence in front of the village hall.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 9 September, at 6.30 pm, in the village hall.