



Annual Report 2024

Introduction

This has been the first year of operation of the Emsworth Residents Forum (ERF) formed from the merger of the Emsworth Residents Association (ERA) and the Emsworth Forum (EF) in Spring 2023. It has been a busy period, establishing the leadership group; setting out our stall and distilling an agenda for the future. Many matters remain work-in-progress but it has been an encouraging start with a positive response from our members, the wider community and the councillors and officers of Havant Borough Council (HBC) our key partner.

Committee

The inaugural committee members elected from 1st April 2023 for a term of 1 year comprised:

Dwynwen Stepien (Chair)

Mike Ridley (Secretary)

Roma Allsop (Treasurer)

Theo Schofield

Mike Bateman

Ellie Turnbull

Jill Millar

Chris Fuller

Chris Hallam

From January 2024 they were joined by co-opted members:

Dan Grove

Roger Tyrrell

Andrew Caple

Looking forward to the coming year, Theo Schofield, Chris Fuller, Chris Hallam and Roma Allsop have opted not to seek re-election to the committee. In all cases this follows long and distinguished periods of service to the ERA and in Theo's case as chair and participant in the EF as well. We are all indebted for the contribution they have made and hope they will continue to remain actively involved from the backbenches.

The other committee members have expressed a willingness for election or re-election and they will be on the ballot list for the AGM with terms up to the maximum 3 years stipulated by the constitution, staggered to retain continuity, as follows:

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3yrs	Dwynwen Mike B Roger Andrew
2yrs	Dan Jill Ellie
1 yr	Mike R

We aim to build the committee capacity with the addition of new members to widen the skills pool and breadth of representation across the Emsworth community. Anyone interested in being involved should contact the secretary at secretary.erf@gmail.com.

David Harris, editor of the EMS, attends committee meetings as an observer.

The committee has met on a quarterly basis for business meetings and (from January 2024) an informal discussion session between meetings. All members are invited to join meetings as observers by prior arrangement with the secretary.

Three standing sub-committees have been formed to deal with core areas of activity on a delegated basis:

Neighbourhood Planning – the formal role of the forum in acting as statutory consultee for planning applications, curating the Neighbourhood Plan, and representing the ERF on the Emsworth Infrastructure Panel (EIP) set up by HBC.

Communications – Ensuring that the community is well informed about what is going on through publishing and distributing the EMS, monthly newsletters to members, maintaining the website and a range of social media feeds.

Emsworth Together – growing the membership and working with other Emsworth organisations, stakeholders and individuals to build capacity and get things done.

Finally, individual committee members take a lead on specific priority ‘themes’ reporting back to the main committee.

Membership

A membermojo membership management system has been implemented linked to Stripe billing software. This is bedding-in well with teething issues gradually being overcome. At the end of the April 2024, despite the transition and little active recruitment effort, paid-up membership stood at 546. In the coming year we aim to expand registered members for various reasons including the ability to demonstrate that we are the voice of Emsworth in dealings with other bodies. The target is to grow membership to 1000.

Emsworth Residents Forum

Finances

The ERF operated within its approved budgets for year 1. A financial report is appended to this report together with a Year 2 budget for members approval. With the standing down of Roma Allsop, Jill Millar will be taking over the role of Treasurer.

Public and General meetings

Public meetings have been held during the year:

April 17 th	Local Elections – hustings
July 24 th	Health and Social care – presentation of services available to the Emsworth community by different agencies
Aug 28 th	Community Tent at the Emsworth Show
October 23 rd	A public consultation on priorities for the ERF workplan. 130+ people attended an open discussion session
January 16 th	Initial consultation about the Community Gardens Initiative
January 17 th	Public consultation about The Greening Campaign
February 12 th	Community Gardens workshop

Standing committees

Communications

The ERF website was designed launched and is steadily being populated with useful information under the direction of our webmaster Dan Grove.

Credit belongs to David Harris for another great year for the EMS -truly the best community-based newspaper on the south coast. During the year David also piloted monthly bulletins of topical information. These proved a welcome addition and have now been confirmed as a permanent part of the ERF dialogue with members.

Steps have been taken to broaden our social media profile but there is much more to be done. A volunteer to take this on would be enthusiastically welcomed.

Neighbourhood Planning

The neighbourhood planning group has been involved in three areas of activity:

1. Commenting on significant planning applications

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2. Participating in the EIP with HBC and influencing expenditure of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding
3. Working with other groups on the long term infrastructure requirements of Emsworth

As a statutory consultee, the ERF is invited to make comments on all planning applications submitted for developments in Emsworth. Many of these are relatively minor and don't require our intervention although in some cases we have felt it necessary to make a comment or recommendation. In more substantial proposals, we have responded with our observations. In many cases the decision has made reference to policies within the Neighbourhood Plan.

We have maintained pressure on both HBC and HCC via our councillors to solve the drainage problems of the Washington Road underpass, the principal pedestrian and cycle route under the railway and the A27 and to repair both the walls and the lighting of the tunnel.

We have continued to press for additional CIL funding for Emsworth in line with government regulations. HBC have persisted however with their protocol which allocates only 10% of CIL raised in Emsworth to the needs of Emsworth community, instead of 25% which is the norm when there is a Neighbourhood Plan in place. We have used the EIP to try to raise the total amount of CIL allocated to Emsworth by seeking funds from the main borough-wide neighbourhood allocation to add to the 10% ring-fenced for Emsworth.

The long-term issues for Emsworth focus on new developments, both in the immediate vicinity at Southleigh to the west and the rash of new developments to the east which bring with them traffic generation and waste water disposal issues. We are currently campaigning with others to ensure that a new spine road to and from the A27 is included in the Southleigh development plan.

Emsworth Together

A prime purpose of the ERF is to help channel the capacity and skills of the community, its institutions, groups, clubs and individuals, to help Emsworth to flourish. Much of this is about supporting other organisations or hosting groups or individuals with shared interests to discuss challenges and solutions. We particularly celebrate progress made over the past year in diverse areas:

The creation of a Young People's services working group

The delivery of a new children's play area at Spencer's Field.

The success of the Clean Harbours Partnership in achieving nationwide publicity for their research and water quality campaigns

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The Hampshire Farm Meadows arboretum project

The launch of InOurArea – a Community Interest Company focusing on arts, heritage and cultural development

The Southleigh Spine Road campaign – a venture with councillors and community organisations representing those parts of the borough most affected by this strategic development site.

The Community Gardens Initiative – returning neglected public assets into use for social and recreational purposes.

We have been delighted by the support given by our elected councillors and officers of HBC are responding very positively to the coordinating role which the ERF can provide.

Themes

Young people

We had identified that there were not enough activities for young people in Emsworth. The first initiative was to develop a working group of people who were either involved with young people or had an interest in the welfare of young people. The group meet regularly and have put on a young people day in the Community Centre with a wide range of activities. Forty young people came to the first one and had a great day and provided us with information about what they would like to see on future days and what they wanted from Emsworth. A follow up pizza lunch was held in December.

As these days seemed to be working well another one was held in February with 50 young people turning up. This time ‘street art’ was included so that they could get a taster in advance of participating in the ‘live’ project now executed and greatly admired in the Washington Road underpass.

We are currently exploring with the Emsworth Community Centre a plan to develop a Saturday club. We have visited Wave on Hayling island who hold sessions four times a week for young people. They gave us valuable advice on safeguarding issues and the protocols that are needed.

The Emsworth Garden project in Victoria Rd has an area for Young People and we have had discussions with Emsworth Primary School to look at ways that their pupils could be involved and benefit. Ideas will be pursued with them in the coming weeks. We also hope to involve Glenwood School

Environment

Following the October 2023 public consultation various work strands have been pursued:

Greening Emsworth: There was an opportunity to join a Lottery-funded project to become the 21st member of this Hampshire-wide initiative. A meeting of stakeholders decided not to participate but a “spin-off” is the proposal for an Emsworth Green Network to strengthen links between existing environmental groups and identify gaps in current ‘greening’ activity. A steering group has been formed to explore this idea further.

Gardens Without Borders (later renamed Community Gardens): comprising a number of dedicated groups formed to regenerate small garden areas and redundant allotments within the Emsworth envelope. The programme was officially launched at an enthusiastic workshop on the 12th February.

Hampshire Farm Meadows: The ERF will continue publicising the location of the overall meadows, the Community Orchard and the Arboretum. Assistance and some funding will be available for the Arboretum in the form of location signs and interpretation boards. Plans for the proposed wheelchair friendly pathway are on hold.

Clean Harbours Partnership: Original start-up funding was provided by the ERA in 2021, further investigations and testing may require “as-and-when” funding.

Nutrient Neutrality: Keeping an eye on the actions of the various protest groups.

Havant Thicket Reservoir: Monitoring the progress of Southern Water’s proposals for pumping treated effluent from Budd’s Farm Treatment Plant #2 up to the reservoir and keeping members up to date.

Traffic

The public consultation meeting on 23rd October confirmed traffic issues to be among, if not at the head of, the main issues of concern for Emsworth residents, echoing the conclusions of the neighbourhood plan. Addressing such problems can be expensive and bureaucratic so the temptation is to put them into the ‘too difficult’ category but we believe there are some affordable measures that can be implemented which will make a difference, provided we are strategic and persistent. Since October we have prepared a workplan and are presently engaged in commissioning feasibility work to scope and campaign for some discrete projects that will enhance the quality of our streets and public spaces.

Health and Wellbeing

We have continued to provide support for the Emsworth Health Alliance.

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Working with Cllr Richard Kennett the ERF has also convened meetings of users of Emsworth Park sports and recreation facilities with relevant officers of HBC to discuss land use and future investment strategy. In common with other aspects of local administration in Emsworth, HBC have neither the funds nor the resources to take a lead in these matters and welcomes proactive community engagement.

Housing and Community Facilities

The Emsworth Community Land Trust takes the lead on housing in the town but there are overlapping memberships with the ERF which also takes a keen interest. Via the statutory consultee role we are continuing to assert the policies for housing design, mix and affordability set out in the Neighbourhood Plan.

The opportunity to partner with YMCA to develop an early years nursery and community centre on the land at Redlands Grange had been lost before the ERF was formed but alternative options have been and are being explored. These are now more likely comprise a free-standing multi-purpose community building within a garden or linked to an NHS outpatient clinic of some form. The business case is challenging but it is an opportunity we do not want to lose.

Town Centre

The development of the Town Centre is a central theme of the Neighbourhood Plan and there are numerous important ambitions set out for commercial activity, visitor experience, community facilities and public spaces. A priority for the coming year is to work with other organisations and community members to grapple with these ambitions. We are proposing a fee provision in the Year 2 budget for some master planning and public consultation work to pick up from where the NP stops and act as catalyst for future action.

The addition of Roger Tyrrell to the committee has established a link to Portsmouth School of Architecture and a symbiotic relationship where Emsworth provides case study challenges and receives in return fresh thinking and creative design ideas on the evolution of the public realm. The first area to benefit is the Town Square which was the setting for a design study by 40 student architects on 23rd March. The plan is to develop this work and use it to complement some public engagement activity over the course of the summer.

Projects, Campaigns, Grants and other things...

Projects

An important task has been to distil and prioritise a list of projects to focus on. The primary source of the list has been the Neighbourhood Plan, supplemented by more recent consultation. It forms the core of the agenda for the Emsworth Infrastructure

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Panel, the 6-monthly meeting between the HBC Communities and Housing portfolio holder, council officers, Emsworth Councillors and representatives of the ERF to discuss upcoming projects and the allocation of the Neighbourhood Portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The project list is a 'living' document and under regular review.

Campaigns

The ERF has taken the lead in assembling a campaign to ensure that a 'spine road' linked directly to the A27 is provided as a necessary and prior condition to the proposed strategic Southleigh housing development of 2,100 houses going ahead. The membership of the group currently includes all Emsworth and St Faith's councillors plus the Havant Civic Society. Without this road it is likely that the already overloaded road network in Emsworth and Denvilles will deteriorate further.

Grants and funding

The principle of making small grants from income surpluses has been carried over from the ERA. Applications are invited for start-up funds for projects which are of benefit to the community and (ideally but not necessarily) align with the priorities of the ERF.

Town Council status

Research has progressed on the advantages and disadvantages of Emsworth becoming a 'parish' with the greater autonomy and agency over local affairs that such status provides. Recommendations on next steps (if any) will be made to members in the coming year.

Incorporation

When the ERF was created it was the stated intention to incorporate the organisation as soon as convenient. Incorporation offers various practical benefits in fundraising, applying for grants to certain funding bodies and entering into contracts. The more likely options for incorporation are a registered charity or a community interest company (CIC). A recommendation will be made to members to authorise this step during the coming year.