

# Members update

## **DAVID GAGER - CHAIRMAN - NAZE PROTECTION SOCIETY 1997 -2018**

It is with great sadness that the Society has to report on the passing of David Gager, who died on Monday October 13th. David was elected as Chairman of the Society in November 1997, taking over from Terry Norman, who initiated the forming of the Naze Trust that then became a registered charity in August of that year. By that time there had been over 15 years of work by various members of the local community raising awareness regarding the Naze.

A major slip in front of the Naze Tower in 1996 spurred action, but matters came to a head when the council backtracked on funding work on the Naze. David lived in Haven House on the Naze and created not only a strong committee but a team of volunteers that ran the “Save the Naze” shop next to the Tesco store in Walton High Street.

David’s first annual report showed the positive drive he gave the Society, engaging with Tendring District Council, the Environment Agency, and Essex Wildlife Trust – building relationships that have lasted through to today. By the end of that first year, society funds approached £20,000. These early years left few stones unturned, pushing the MP for government support; regular meetings with TDC and searching for sources of funding to develop a project to protect the Tower. By 2000 the Society was enlisting MEP support to put pressure on agencies and councils. By 2002 the Society funds topped £55,000. The Naze News, had become the Society’s newsletter; it showed how erosion was relentless with photographs depicting how one of the concrete gun emplacement bases had gone from the top of the cliff in July 2001 and was on the beach by June 2002. This edition showed growing frustration as local coastal strategies showed no plans for action on the Naze for the next 5 years.

This frustrating time was matched by enthusiastic efforts to raise awareness with the “Nazeman” caravan on the Naze, lobbying of councillors, MEPs, MPs, local and district councils. By February 2003 there was the first sign of a change in heart from Tendring District Council. The end of the groin, at the south end of the cliffs had become undermined and needed work. The TDC engineer had a statement that what was needed was a 200m defence to protect both the Tower and the Naze cafe. This developed through to October, when the idea was given support by full TDC and Frinton and Walton Town Councils.

Throughout this time David remained pushing the process, and the Save the Naze shop carried on raising funds that showed the level of support for the Naze from the local community and visitors alike. By 2005 the TDC plans had been presented to English Nature – the government conservancy agency (now Natural England). The Society fund raising was also breaking records. Terry Lawrence – the Treasurer, who was with David throughout his tenure of the Society, reported at the AGM an income of £27,278, with expenses of 9% of this total – most of which related to running the shop. David’s Chairman’s reports came out monthly with

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every committee meeting. As the first tentative plans were proposed for the defence of the Naze Tower, David commented on the issue that English Nature would not allow the defence in front of the Tower to be extended. There were comments as to whether the structure would need to be maintained every 3 or 5 years. There were questions about the guarantees of protecting the Naze for future generations. He summed it up with a quote from Voltaire - "Men argue, nature acts". He also predicted that climate changes would bring more violent storms and higher sea levels. His predictions are coming to reality now. Men do however act and the efforts of Society under David's leadership raised £234,000 towards the cost of delivering Crag Walk – An amazing achievement

So started the planning and delivery of Crag Walk, with a project partners' meeting on September 23rd 2005 with TDC, Naze Protection Society, English Nature, Essex Wildlife Trust, and the project engineers. These meetings met monthly up until the delivery of Crag Walk in 2011.

With Crag Walk delivered, David then had a new task. The proposal to build a visitor centre had been discussed as part of the project alongside Crag Walk. It needed funding, planning and delivering. On September 20th 2011, the CEO of the Essex Wildlife Trust chaired the first meeting of the Naze Heritage Project steering group. Again this required commitment with meetings every month supporting the other partners, to finally deliver the Naze Discovery Centre. Like Crag Walk, this was a substantial project involving multiple partners and was finally opened in May 2015. Alongside this, another outcome created through the partnership that managed Crag Walk and the Naze Centre came the Naze Management Board. Its first meeting in February 2016, it brought together all the partners who had worked on these projects to meet four times a year to promote and support management projects on the Naze. Chaired by the CEO of Tendring District Council, this gave a legacy from the two main projects to continue to manage and improve the Naze.

David moved from Old Hall Lane in 2018 to Norfolk, having steered the Naze Protection Society through thick and thin, representing the local community's wishes to see the Naze managed for future generations. Thank you David – and thanks to all those volunteers that he guided and supported over 20 years.

**David Eagle**

***Chairman***