



Northallerton and Villages Community Forum

Tuesday 11th May 2010

4.00pm – 6.00pm

Meeting Room 4, Stone Cross Civic Centre, Northallerton

Minutes

Present: Sally Anderson (Chair); Peter Cole; Ken Blackwood; Audrey Pitchforth; Tom Fletcher; Robert Carter; Gloria Davies; Hazel Kirby; Jacquie Boulton; Mark Haynes; Rev. Michael Webster; John Sheehan; John Parkinson; Cllr. Jack Dobson & Cllr. Tony Hall.

Apologies: Rosemary Bullimore; Bob Beaver; Lesley Shaw & Cllr. David Blades.

1. Welcome, Introductions & Apologies

Sally welcomed Tom Fletcher, a Northallerton resident, to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting held Tuesday 9th March

Agreed as a true record thereof.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

4. Information Roundup

▪ **HSP Update: Broadband across Hambleton**

Peter reported that an LSP Task & Finish Group is to be established that will include representation from North Yorkshire County Council as part of work being undertaken to develop a 'digital inclusion' strategy for the county. Work is already underway to look at the current levels of broadband availability and speeds across the county. The aim is to be able to target any future funding to be effective in spreading broadband to as many people as possible. Three key issues were identified at a recent meeting held at the Stone Cross Civic Centre:

- the delivery of high speed and sustainable broadband in rural communities requires community 'buy-in'; a minimum of 10 people in a village could create sufficient critical mass to make a community-led scheme viable.
- significant capital investment is required to purchase, install and maintain the appropriate technology. If a cluster of villages agree to work together to purchase the necessary equipment a more robust business case could be drawn up to secure external funding.
- the delivery of high speed and sustainable broadband in rural communities requires public, private and community sectors to work in partnership.

- **Brompton Linen Worker’s Memorial Seat**
Audrey confirmed that a site survey has been undertaken and that the project is underway.
- **Mill Hill School**
Jack confirmed that the orchard has now been planted and that a new ‘speech and language’ centre is to be established at the school.
- **East Cowton Village Hall**
Peter reported that work is underway to develop plans for a new village hall in East Cowton. Members agreed that such a facility is much needed in the village.
- **Brompton Pavilion**
Robert reported the Pavilion is close to completion. Robert also explained that 3 additional members of the Brompton Village Hall Management Committee are being sought to ensure that the closure of the Village Hall is avoided. Hazel reported that at a well-attended meeting of the Bedale & Villages Community Interest Group those representing Village Hall Committees considered the future and management of Village Halls across the Bedale area and how village hall committees can work together to share resources, knowledge and expertise. Issues for discussion included public liability, insurance, fuels costs, training for members of village hall committees, maintenance and funding opportunities. Work is underway to produce a Village Hall Directory that will contain contact details of the Village Hall Committee along with details of the hall – facilities, access etc. **Action:** Nicky Smith, Kathryn Chapman and Hazel Kirby to liaise with Robert to describe the support available to Village Hall Committees.
- **Northallerton Tourist Information**
Gloria confirmed that a lease on the existing premises is secure for the next 15 months.

5. Distinctive Towns: Blaenavon & Hay on Wye

John Sheehan & John Parkinson presented a series of recommendations to develop Northallerton following a recent fact-finding visit to Blaenavon & Hay on Wye. John suggested that the revitalisation of Northallerton’s retail ‘core’ is key to the creation of a sustainable economic future. Issues for consideration include:

- The appearance of North End
- Parking for tourists (caravans, motor homes etc.)
- The implementation of LDF Design Statements (including shop front development frameworks)
- Business apathy
- Northallerton’s cultural heritage
- The role, influence and enforcement powers of NYCC and Hambleton District Council

(See Annex A for details of the recommendations and further analysis of the strategic issues identified)

It was agreed that the second part of the presentation be given at a future NVCF meeting. For further details of the Blaenavon World Heritage Site please visit: www.visitblaenavon.co.uk

6. Northallerton Yards & Hidden Corners

Mark confirmed that work is underway to establish a rationale for prioritising and developing yards and to determine the process of investment. It is understood that the Report is currently in draft form and should be available for consideration at the next NVCF meeting. It was suggested that more than one yard be developed subject to the resolution of land ownership issues.

7. Project Update:

▪ **Hambleton Renaissance Business Plan**

Mark presented an update on projects in the Business Plan, in particular:

- **Voluntary & Community Facility:** Potential facilities for the facility continue to be explored. The Rutson site and premises on Quaker Lane are being explored as potential venues.
 - **Website:** Progress is being made with the sites with volunteers being recruited and sponsors obtained.
 - **Town Square:** The next stage in the process is for NYCC Highways to undertake consultation that is required for the amendment of the High Street traffic order which will allow the work to be implemented. It is anticipated that the results of the consultation will be reported to the NYCC Hambleton Area Committee on May 24th.
 - **The Rutson Development:** Work continues on the development of plans for the site. The Delivery Team is working closely with Yorkshire Forward to see if it is possible to secure ERDF funds for project. It is anticipated that there may be some delay in the process given the uncertainty over the long term future of Yorkshire Forward.
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- **Northallerton Shopmobility**

Peter reported that the scheme, which started on Tuesday 6th April 2010, operates from the new Abbey Health premises which have recently opened in the Central Arcade. Funding has been secured to purchase 5 electric scooters. Scooters and wheelchairs will be available for hire for whole or half days. Hourly rates and weekend hire are available on request. **Action:** Mark to raise the issue of disabled parking provision to the rear of Central Arcade with Diane Parsons at NYCC and Hazel to raise through the HSP.
 - **Act Divertz**

It was asked to be minuted that NVCF had agreed at a previous meeting to hold any funds raised by the Act Divertz multi-agency partnership which seeks to reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour through the co-ordination of diversionary activities.
 - **Northallerton & Villages in Transition**

Sally reported that members of the Group are to undertake an exercise to identify possible sites for the cultivation of vegetables and herbs in the town. The next step will be to identify land ownership of the sites. The Group is also to have a presence at the Northallerton Carnival and is looking to host an 'Autumn Produce Swap' on the Applegarth Park in September 2010.
 - **Village Projects:**
 - **Danby Wiske Parish Plan**

Hambleton District Council has provided support to develop a Parish Plan in Danby Wiske. The responses to the questionnaire are being collated and it is anticipated that the Plan will be launched on Sunday 15th August 2010.
 - **Notice Boards**

NVCF has 'adopted' the notice board outside Northallerton Railway Station. It was suggested that the notice board displays a map of Northallerton which illustrates places of interest, a poster promoting the Shopmobility scheme and other community information. NVCF has also taken responsibility for a glass fronted notice board at the entrance of Central Arcade. **Action:** Peter and Ken to clean the notice board and put up posters.

8. Any Other Business

- **Hospice Provision**

Peter reported that the PCT has completed a piece of work linked to their wider end of life/palliative care strategy which has been considered by the Practice Based Commissioning Group. The outcome of this discussion will be raised at the next meeting of the Healthy Theme Group on the 15th June and will be fed back to members of NVCF.

- **Northallerton & Villages Area Profile**

Concerns were expressed over the accuracy of the Area Profile which it is understood will be available to download from the HDC website. **Action:** Sally to contact Sam Swinbank to ensure that comments made by members of the Group are acknowledged and included in the revised Profile.

- **Annual General Meeting**

It was agreed that the AGM to be held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 13th July be held at Brompton Village Hall (subject to room availability.)

9. Dates for Future Meetings

- Tuesday 13th July (AGM)
- Tuesday 14th September
- Tuesday 9th November

The meeting closed at 5.50pm

Annex A: Distinctive Towns: Blaenavon & Hay on Wye

Strategic Issues

- The nature of the enterprises we are considering do not lend themselves to conventional business development treatments and require a more individual approach.
- As the more progressive sellers are proving the industry is becoming increasingly dependent on the internet for tapping into what has developed into an extensive domestic and international market.
- There is a need to add value to the product. What is clear is that more innovative technological approaches are necessary.

The Problem

The need is to revitalise the retail core of the town with a spread of different interest shops. There are too many conglomerates at one end of the scale and too many charity shops at the other.

The image of the town has degenerated over the years. Particular attention needs to be paid to the design of shop fronts which are generally of low quality and the yards which have been over developed.

There is a need to exploit the heritage of the town by sympathetic development which draws on past values. The planners are hell bent on modernisation for its own sake.

Management Issues

There is a need for a Heritage Champion to protect what is left of the historic environment. The District Council has proved deficient over the years in maintaining the historical character of the town.

The High Street frontage of the Rutson Hospital provides an ideal opportunity for an integrated Tourist and Heritage Information Centre in the heart of the town.

The post of Town Centre Manager needs to be reactivated under the control of the local authority, namely the Town Council

Planning control should be delegated to the Town Council as representing local interests. The existing system of representation is too remote.

There need to be a retail development 5 year plan for the Town Centre.

There needs to be a Road Traffic and Car Parking 5 year plan for the town centre.

Some Possible Integrated Themes

- Second Hand and Antiquarian Books (after Hay)
- Antiques (after Barnard Castle)
- Yorkshire Foods (after Farmers Markets and various promotions)
- Yorkshire Crafts

There is a need for an inspirational leader in the chosen field eg. David Harper of Barnard Castle Antiques.

Premises may need to be set up after the style of the recent Business Centres at Stokesley and Northallerton, but retail centres set within the existing town environment.

The Mart would make an ideal market and the North End offers scope for a comprehensive development scheme with phased introduction at suitable individual locations eg Jepson site.

Need for specialisation within the theme to carve out a niche market:

- Antiquarian Books and Prints
- War books
- British Ceramics eg. Royal Worcester, Royal Doulton

Need for supportive Fairs and Festivals on a regular basis.

Existing Events

- Annual Battle of the Standard Event (22nd August 1138) – our USP
- Regular Local History Conferences
- Council for British Archaeology Yorkshire Group Annual Symposium
- NYCC Heritage Unit Annual Archaeology Day
- NYCC Record Office Local and Family History Day
- Annual Town carnival

High Street Regeneration

- Improve appearance by active control of shop fascia and signage
- Improve the ambience of the High Street with quality street furniture
- Encourage new entrants with rate concessions
- Extend the town square concept as far as Zetland Street
- Invoke the heritage of the town by sympathetic buildings design
- Revitalise what is left of the yards to heritage themes
- Develop Heritage Centre at Rutson Hospital site as a matter of priority
- Introduce an integrated retail and pedestrian scheme to upgrade North End