

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING

OF THE COASTAL AREA FORUM

HELD ON WEDNESDAY 20 JUNE 2007

AT POPLAR HOUSE, WELFARE CLOSE, EASINGTON COLLIERY

Present: **Representing the District Council**

Councillor P Stradling (Chair)
Councillors A Burnip, R Burnip,
A J Holmes, D Maddison, D Raine
and Mrs V M Williams

Representing Parish Councils

Councillors Mrs T Phillips, Mrs M Robinson
and W Hill - Horden Parish Council

Councillors Mrs E Hopper, Mr J Hopper
and Mr W S Day – Easington Village Parish Council

Councillors W B Underwood and Mrs S Peacock
- Monk Hesleden Parish Council

Mr Barnett and Mrs Chicken
- Seventh Street Residents Association

Councillor Mrs M MacPherson
- Easington Colliery Parish Council

and

Mr Mearman, Mr Moore, Mrs Moore,
Mr Hoey, Mr Stoker, Mr Golden,
Mr Musgrove, Mr Archbold, Mr Lee

1 OPENING INTRODUCTION

Councillor P Stradling welcomed everybody to the Coastal Area Forum.

2 FOLLOW UP FROM THE LAST MEETING AND CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES

(i) Confirmation of the Minutes

The Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 14 March 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were **AGREED**.

(ii) Limekiln Gill, Horden

A response from Durham County Council on the current situation at Limekiln Gill had been circulated.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

(iii) **Thorpe Road, Easington Village**

A response from Durham County Council was circulated. The Clerk to Easington Village Parish Council explained that a meeting had still not been held with residents.

The Chair explained that Durham County Council had only suggested to the school that they met with local residents and it was hoped that it would have been accepted as a recommendation. The Chair suggested that Easington Village Parish Council contact Easington Community School and arrange a meeting with residents.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

(iv) **Stayplton Drive, Horden**

The Head of Regeneration and Development explained that a representative from planning was unable to attend that evening but he had been appraised of the current situation.

Planning permission was originally approved in 2003 for the erection of 40 houses on the site of the former Dene View Special School, Horden subject to various conditions. Works were largely completed on site in late 2006. Complaints had been received by the planning department regarding the non-compliance with conditions relating to road levels, landscaping, play area provision, MUGA provision and parking provision. The planning department had investigated the complaints and entered into correspondence and dialogue with McInerney Homes Limited with a view to agreeing timescales for the required work to be completed. Over the last couple of months various verbal promises had been given to the Council from the developer, however, no written agreements had been received or made and no work had taken place on site. The Council was now formally pursuing enforcement action against the developer for non-compliance with conditions.

Councillor Mrs. T Phillips explained that at the last meeting it was advised that the contractors would be on site in April. The contractors had been on site and completed the surface playing area and the lay-by. They had now been off site for approximately 4 weeks but the fencing and floodlights were still to be erected. Landscaping and works to the footpaths and roadways still required completion.

The Chair suggested that the Head of Planning and Building Control Services contact the developers regarding the works that were still to be completed. The Parish Council were concerned that the incomplete works would delay them adopting the play areas.

AGREED that the Head of Planning and Building Control Services be requested to contact the developers to request when the outstanding works would be completed.

3 ONGOING HIGHWAY RELATED CONCERNS

Easington Colliery Parish Council had requested that consideration be given to ongoing highway related concerns. Councillor Burnip explained that it was out of pure frustration that the Parish Council had requested that this item be placed on

the agenda. There had been various highway issues that needed attention and Durham County Council had not responded to any correspondence. Since the request was made for the agenda item, all the works had now been dealt with.

Councillor Raine referred to Nos. 71 – 117 Oak Road and explained that the footpaths were dangerous and no response had been forthcoming from Durham County Council.

AGREED that Durham County Council be contacted regarding the footpaths from No 71 – 117 Oak Road.

4 **HERITAGE COAST**

D Gomes explained that he was the Coastal Ranger employed by the District of Easington. The Heritage Coast had a partnership of interested conservation partners including the National Trust, District of Easington, Durham County Council and English Nature (Natural England).

D Gomes explained that the grasslands along the coast were precious as the magnesium limestone made the ground not very fertile. The district had a unique range of flowers and flora. The National Trust had a stewardship agreement with organisations who looked after the countryside and they received funding from Natural England to manage the land in a conservation friendly way. The grasslands were not touched during the summer months.

In September/October the Coastal Ranger and other conservation teams cut the grass, raked it off and disposed of it on the site. The cutting back of gorse bushes was in the agreement. Gorse bushes offered no protection at all for birds and was not allowed to spread to too big an area. All works that were carried out along the Heritage Coast were within the guidelines of Natural England.

The District of Easington also did some works on the coast and did not do anything to harm the wildlife. At the time the original complaint was made, he made an investigation and did not find anything untoward. The Heritage Coast had a record number of skylarks and ground nesting birds and people travelled the world to look at the flora along the East Durham coast. One concern was that some areas were not given enough attention.

Mr Golden explained that he had a copy of the Management Plans for the Heritage Coast and works had not been carried out as detailed in the plans. Cattle were not allowed to graze but they still were. He had plans relating to an area A, B and C but the fence had been removed so there were no sections indicating the areas. He referred to a brochure he had received from Durham County Council and the main feature was the gorse on Beacon Hill but it was being cut away. He felt that plans from outside organisations should be made available to Parish Councils so local people could view their contents.

D Gomes explained that gorse was a very aggressive shrub and if it was not cut back the district would be taken over in 20 – 30 years. He added that all of the stewardships were available on the internet. He explained that he would take the concerns raised back to the Heritage Coast Officer at Durham County Council. The National Trust had previously been reported for breach of agreement.

The Chair suggested that the Coastal Area Forum write to the Heritage Coast to suggest that the management plans be made available to all Parish Councils. It was vital that the public protect and enhance the area.

Mr Golden referred to the coastal edge at Hawthorn and explained that it was owned by the National Trust. D Gomes explained that some of the land was leased from the District of Easington and the National Trust did own some patches of land. The District Council had some control over the lease and use of the land.

Councillor Burnip explained that there was a Heritage Coast meeting on 5 July with Niall Benson from Durham County Council and these issues could be raised at that meeting.

D Gomes explained that he would provide feedback to Niall Benson the following day who would be willing to come along to a future meeting to answer any questions.

Mr Archbold explained that he had attended a meeting with the Heritage Coast where a number of different Parish Council members and representatives from other organisations had attended. The Management Plans had been available for participants to collect.

Mr Mearman queried if anyone was monitoring the coastal erosion. D Gomes explained that Natural England and the Heritage Coast monitored coastal erosion constantly. The coastal erosion on the Easington district coast was far less than other parts of the east coast. North of Seaham to Ryhope was more of a problem. The coast of the district was protected by a shelf of waste from the coal mines.

Mr Musgrave explained that at Hawthorn bay there was another 7' before it reached the bottom. D Gomes explained that it was not viable to have sea defences along the east coast of Durham except for where habitats were at risk.

Mr Lee referred to access onto the beach and explained that there were no handrails and access for the disabled. D Gomes explained that the height of the cliffs made it difficult to get access to the beach and it would be very costly to provide disabled access and a lift would be required. The Management Plans listed measures for improved access along the coast. There were a lot of wheelchair friendly footpaths being installed along the coast but it was difficult to do anything for access onto the beach.

Councillor MacPherson explained that rails on the steps down to the beach had been raised on numerous occasions and she had been informed that there was a lack of funding.

Councillor Mrs Peacock explained that it was sad that things had not gone well at Beacon Hill but the work carried out at Crimdon had been really good and a great job had been carried out.

AGREED that the Coastal Area Forum write to Niall Benson, Heritage Coast, Durham County Council to request that management plans be circulated to the relevant Parish Councils in Easington district.

5

YOUR QUESTION TIME, YOUR SAY IN SERVICE DELIVERY, YOUR CALL

(i) **A1086 Horden to Blackhall**

A Member explained that the undergrowth and the trees needed trimming back on the northbound side of Blackhall bank. The crossroads area near the cemetery had a similar problem with overhanging trees.

It was explained that when the trees had been cut the previous year they had been butchered and the road had to be closed at one point to clear the debris of trees.

The Chair explained that Durham County Council cut the trees in the most cost effective way possible otherwise it would take a lot longer and the road would have to be closed at some point.

A Member explained that the fence on the A1086 between Horden and Blackhall was damaged and had not been repaired. He had spoken to Councillor Cox who had explained that there was no funding for its repair.

AGREED that:-

- (i) a letter be sent to Durham County Council regarding the overhanging trees;
- (ii) a letter be sent to Councillor Cox explaining that the bollards and fence on the A1086 needed to be reinstated.

(ii) **Indiscriminate Parking**

Mr Barnett queried if the police had been informed regarding the indiscriminate parking following the last meeting. The Democratic Services Officer explained that Inspector Harrison had instructed the PCSOs to patrol the areas of concern and it would be discussed at the Street Safe Board.

Councillor Phillips explained that Sergeant Hawkes had reported to the Parish Council at the beginning of the month regarding the indiscriminate parking. The police and PCSOs had been advising residents not to park on the pavements and if it became a problem parking tickets and fines would be issued. She added that she lived near the nursery and improvements could be seen.

Mr Archbold referred to Middle Street in Blackhall and explained that a number of shops were putting material on the pathways causing hazards and low powered motorised scooters were having difficulty using the footpaths.

The Chair explained that if there was an obstruction it was a police matter but responses from the police in the past had been that it was a low priority.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

(iii) **Trade and Skill Centre, Horden**

Mr Barnett referred to the condition of the land known as the Trade and Skill Centre in Horden. He believed that it was managed by a local Councillor and required guidance on how to address the situation. Councillor Mrs Phillips explained that Mr Terry Jones leased the building and she believed that the land was leased with it.

Mr Barnett explained that he had been in contact with the owner who lived in Devon who had made arrangements with Mr Jones to erect a fence to prevent any children accessing the site but no fence had been erected and no attempt had been made to clean the area.

The Chair suggested that a letter be sent to Mr Jones to enquire what plans he had for the land.

AGREED that a letter be sent to Mr Jones regarding the land adjacent to the Trade and Skill Centre.

(iv) **CCTV, Easington Colliery**

The Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives explained that there had been a lot of negative publicity recently regarding the installation of the CCTV cameras in Easington Colliery. There had been some delays in installing the system. The system was not hard wired and worked on an internet based system. The cost had been £100,000 for 14 cameras that recorded 24/7. There were monitoring suites at Durham Constabulary and Peterlee Police Station but they were not monitored 24 hours per day. The system could be monitored on a needs basis and was also used to review evidence. There had been some problems with the testing phase but these had now been resolved.

The Chair queried when the scheme would be extended to the rest of the district. The Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives explained that there were 14 cameras, 4 in Easington Colliery, 4 in Blackhall, 2 in the park area of Horden and the remainder were to be installed in the west of the district and Seaham. If they were successful they would be built upon in a cost effective way.

Councillor Burnip explained that arising from public concern about the cameras he had visited Peterlee Police Station to see how the cameras functioned and was very pleased with the quality of the recordings. Police Officers and PCSOs had also been equipped with head cams that had proved efficient in dealing with problems that had arisen.

Mr Barnett queried if the cameras could be linked to the Communication Centre at Durham Constabulary. The Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives explained that there were no immediate plans for the cameras to be linked to the Communication Centre but they were linked to Peterlee Police Station. The Street Wardens were co-located and the District Council required the cameras to be monitored from an operational basis.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

(v) **Anti-Social Behaviour in Blackhall**

Mr Moore explained that at the last meeting it was stated that anti-social behaviour in the Blackhall Rocks area had now quietened down but this was not the case.

The Chair explained that reports had been received that the situation had improved in the Blackhall area. If a problem still existed then the Police needed to be made aware of this. He suggested that a letter be sent to

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the police asking for their attendance at the next meeting to give an update on anti-social behaviour activity in the Blackhall Rocks area.

Councillor Mrs Peacock explained that she would be attending the Street Safe Board for Horden and Blackhall the following week and would take the concerns to them as Mr Moore's Parish Councillor.

AGREED that an update be given on anti-social behaviour in Blackhall Rocks at the next meeting.

JC/MA/com coastal/070603
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