

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING**  
**OF THE NORTH AREA FORUM**  
**HELD ON WEDNESDAY 1 AUGUST, 2007**

Present:           **Representing District of Easington**  
Councillor C Walker (Chair)  
Councillors Mrs M Baird, B Burn,  
R Davison, Mrs S Forster, J Haggan,  
Mrs J Maitland, A Napier, Mrs A Naylor,  
F Shaw and R J Todd

**Representing Town/Parish Councils**  
Mrs J McCreath – South Hetton Parish Council  
Mrs M Davison – South Hetton Parish Council

**Also Present**  
M Hepplewhite – Dalton-le-Dale Community Association  
W Kennedy – Dalton-le-Dale Community Association  
V Garrett – Murton Partnership  
D B Glover

Apologies:       Councillors C Patching, Mrs S Mason,  
R Jordan, E Bell and Mrs Bell

1.           **CHAIRS COMMENTS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the District Council's North Area Forum and introduced himself and the Officers present. A representative from the Customer Services Section was also present to take any individual queries at the end of the meeting.

2.           **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 25 April 2007, were **AGREED** subject to the following.

Minute No 5 (i) – Junction of North Railway Street/Vine Place

Mr D Glover stated that at the last meeting he offered £100 to have a professional sign writer look at the sign and provide a quotation for the work that was needed.

3.           **MATTERS ARISING**

(i)           **Junction of North Railway Street/Vine Place - Minute No. 5(i) refers**

Mr D Glover referred to a property at the junction of North Railway Street and Vine Place which had an old sign erected on its gable end which had deteriorated. Mr Glover explained that for over two years he had expressed concern at the deterioration of the sign and the worry that very shortly a piece of Seaham's history would be lost forever. Mr

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Glover explained that the sign had now been painted over by the owner of the property.

The Chair advised that this matter was referred to Seaham Town Council who had discussed the property with the Story of Seaham Group. The Story of Seaham Group subsequently investigated the possibility of repairing the sign, however, the cost of repairs were so high it was decided not to proceed.

Prior to being advised that the sign had been painted over G. Reed, Head of Planning and Building Control Services, had advised that whilst the Planning Unit did not have the finance necessary to carry out the work, they had produced a Conservation Area Appraisal and would be developing a Management Plan later in the year. This would identify management proposals for local features of interest. However, as the sign had now been painted over there was nothing further that could be done.

The Chair sympathised with Mr Glover but unfortunately the cost of repairing the sign was too high and there was nothing the authority could have done to prevent it being painted over by the owner.

A Member queried who owned the property and who had painted over the sign.

Councillor A Napier explained that the property in question was in private ownership and was not a listed building, protected or a building of any note or historical value. As a result the Council were unable to take any action. G. Reed confirmed that as the property was not listed the authority had no control over what the owner did or did not do to the property. The authority was not in a position to force the owner to repair the sign or prevent him painting over it.

**AGREED** that the information given, be noted.

(ii) **Mine Water (Minute No. 5(ii) refers)**

At the last meeting Mr Glover expressed concern that since the pit closures in County Durham mine water was rising at both Horden and Dawdon.

Mr Glover explained that if the mine water was allowed to continue to rise it would result in contamination of the Durham aquifer. Following the meeting both the Coal Authority and Northumbrian Water were requested to provide an update on the situation at Dawdon.

Members were advised that the Environment Agency had advised that they were currently processing a Discharge Consent for the discharge of treated mine water into the North Sea off the coast at Dawdon. A response was still awaited from the Coal Authority who were progressing the treatment site at Dawdon.

Mr Glover advised that a number of years ago he had raised concerns regarding the drinking water being poisoned by the rising mine water. He went on to explain that each year Northumbrian Water dumped 2 million tonnes of sewerage, the Port of Tyne dumped 65,000 tonnes of

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toxic waste and this was in addition to the coal authority dumping 2 million tonnes of mine water. Mr Glover was aware that Northumbrian Water carried out some testing on what they dumped, however the Port of Tyne and the Coal Authority did not carry out any testing. Mr Glover was concerned that the combination of all three types of waste being dumped would create a poisonous mix, which would destroy the coastline. In addition the land along the coastline was mainly arable and Mr Glover was concerned that the pesticides being used on the land were being washed into the sea and were causing further contamination.

The Chair advised that a meeting was recently held with DEFRA and the Coal Authority in relation to what was being discharged into the North Sea. At the meeting residents were assured that checks were carried out on everything that was dumped. The Coal Authority had advised that the discharge pipe would be approximately 1.4 km in length, however the pipe that was subsequently installed was only 70 metres long. Pressure was being applied to have the pipe lengthened to the original length that was promised. The Coal Authority had consent from Durham County Council to dump from this location but not from a 70 metre pipe. Mr Glover would like an independent assessment of all waste that was being dumped. It was explained that this was the Environment Agency's responsibility and the District Council had very little control over the situation.

**AGREED** that the information given, be noted.

### 4. **YOUR QUESTION TIME – YOUR SAY IN SERVICE DELIVERY – YOUR CALL**

#### (i) **Excess water – Former Seaham Colliery Site/Mill Inn Bank**

Mr Glover reported the problem of excess water running off the former Seaham Colliery site during heavy rainfall and flooding the surrounding areas of Station Road and the Mill Inn. The site, which was owned by One North East, had had all the field drains removed. However, following problems further drainage was installed along part of the site to address the issue of potential surface water run off.

It was explained that during heavy rainfall flooding occurred at the Mill Inn and this was due to the fact that the road gully was in the wrong location. Mr Glover felt it was only a matter of time before an accident occurred at the Mill Inn as it was a busy junction and there was also a bus stop in the vicinity.

P. Penman, Environmental Services Operations Manager, advised that the District Council's Highways Engineers had previously reported this to Durham County Council who was the responsible authority.

**AGREED** that the information given, be noted and P. Penman, Environmental Services Operations Manager, refer the matter to Durham County Council.

#### (ii) **Speeding Traffic – Dalton-le-Dale**

Mrs W Kennedy, representing Dalton-le-Dale Community Association and the Parish Council outlined the problems that were being

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experienced by residents in Dalton Le Dale due to the increasing problem of speeding traffic travelling on the Times Inn Bank through the village.

The Police had recently carried out a traffic survey to monitor the speeding traffic. However, as there was no history of accidents at the location very little that could be done.

The Parish Council had previously requested that traffic calming measures be introduced to slow the traffic. Durham County Council's Highways Department had also advised that very little could be done as there was no history of problems at this location.

In addition, residents were concerned that vehicle satellite navigation systems were directing heavy traffic through Dalton-le-Dale as the shortest route to Seaham Town Centre.

The Chair advised that the matter would be referred to Durham County Council and suggested that the Parish Council also contact the County Council, as well as the Police, and request a site meeting.

Mrs Kennedy advised that site meetings had been held and Durham County Council's Highways department had advised that it was not possible to install traffic calming measures at this location. The Police were sympathetic, however, evidence was needed to demonstrate that there was a history of accidents at this location. It had been suggested that a speed camera be erected however if a camera was erected the Parish Council would be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep which they were unable to do. Investigations had also been made into the erection of portable speed indicators and the Parish Council had been advised that this type of equipment was unsuitable for this location as it was on a steep bank.

**AGREED** that the matter be referred to Durham County Council's Highways Department.

JW/CS/COM/NORTHAF/070801  
2 August 2007