

# *Bedlington Forum*



*A Community in Partnership*

Minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2011 at the Salvation Army, Hartford Road, Bedlington.

## **Present:**

Brian Oliver – Chair

Margaret Oliver – Secretary

Colin Heathcote – SNRG Radio Group

Pauline Hicks – WBT Council

Stewart P Headley – WBT Council

David Graham – F.O.G.P

Malcolm Robinson – Vice Chair

Richard Schofield – NCC

Keith Dalton – F.O.G.P

Stephen Shephard – WBT Council

Valerie Tyler – Resident & F.O.G.P

10 members of the public

## **1. Welcome and Introductions**

## **2. Apologies**

George & Irene Webster; Alex & Allison Wallace; Tracey Ainsley; Mary Allan; George Todd; Arthur Pegg; Neal Younger.

Before the meeting started the chair informed the meeting that the Forum had been successful in the grant funding bid from Northumberland County Council's Community Chest the grant will allow us to continue to operate as a voice for the community.

## **3. Matters Arising**

There was a short discussion with regards to the television programme which had investigated the missing Hartford Hall Gates, nothing new was learnt from the documentary as our Vice Chair had already given us the same info at our last meeting, see item 10 of September's Minutes.

## **4. Police Update**

Due to operational commitments there was no police presence.

## **5. Chair's Update**

The Chair gave an update on how he had gone out with the police and CSOs to see a speed-gun in operation. The gun had been on loan from another division with the view of sourcing funding to purchase one for our own area. A number of people were stopped and were warned of their excessive speeding. The outing proved to be a valuable insight into just how police officers operate.

BKO informed the meeting that we (Bedlington Forum) along with other stakeholders for the Bedlington area had been invited to a meeting with Northumberland County Council to discuss the lack of leisure provision within the Bedlington Area. The meeting was chaired by Neil Bradbury portfolio holder for Customer Services & Leisure. The meeting proved to be a positive step in the right direction, so whilst the financial situation is currently dire there appeared to be a genuine wish to see that our leisure provision improves.

## **6. Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) update**

Richard Schofield informed the meeting that there are 21 shops to be improved 2 of which are now completed and hopefully if all goes well, more will be completed before Xmas. At present there is 26% of the money left which is already 'ring fenced' into the budget' so this means that it does not look likely that there will be any spare monies available for other businesses who are currently on the reserve list.

Richard announced that there will be a new tenant in the former Barclays Bank building but due to commercial sensitivity he was unable to name the company.

The Heritage Open Day event which took place turned out to be a great success.

A Heritage Maintenance Day, which included a talk on historical buildings as well as how to maintain them, had taken place but due to very inclement weather on the day there was not a great number of people in attendance, but it is hoped that another one will be run next year during the summer months.

Meadowdale Middle School shall be receiving a visit from Richard's team so that the views of the school children can be collated, with regard to heritage work that is on-going in Bedlington. It is hoped that they will give a different prospective on what is being done.

The meeting was informed that the Regen Team are in contact with Tesco's on a weekly, if not daily basis with the hope of finding out when they are to start their planned new store, to date there is no further developments..

The Chair updated the meeting on the 42 bed home which is to be built on the old Elliott's Garage site all were encouraged to view the plans and to make comment to the planning department if they so wished. Planning number 11/01969/FUL. 21days from 16<sup>th</sup> November was closing date for any objections to be lodged.

## **7. South Northumberland Radio Group (SNRG)**

Colin Heathcote updated our group on progress at 90a Front Street East which is being converted into a community radio studio. Building and plumbing works were nearly complete and decorating was soon to start. Some specialist work was close to completion thanks largely to the efforts and skills of Brian Oliver and Malcolm Robinson for which SNRG were very grateful. The next step was to get their work certified and for British Gas to feed the cabling to a power supply meter. Once this work had been completed the group would be in a position to apply for a four-week licence to broadcast, hopefully early in the New Year.

The group is still fund-raising to reach its target of £20,000-plus. So far around £18,000 has been raised. Funding applications have been made to West Bedlington Town Council (£500 from the Community Chest fund) and the Coalfields Regeneration Trust. The group had recently received three grants: £2,000 from the Community Foundation; £1,828 from the Co-op Community Fund and £200 from East Bedlington Parish Council. The group had been offered free suitable furniture from a source in Alnwick following a lead from Wansbeck CVS and thanks to the generous offer of transportation from Russell Hogg, this would be collected on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> November.

Colin attended the recent Wansbeck CVS AGM and, along with Brian and Malcolm, he outlined some of the inadequacies of the 'Big Society' to the main speaker who had been promoting the

initiative. He'd also attended the opening of the Bedlington Station indoor market at which the Synergy/Station Entertainments banner had been used with the PA system. Attending the Wansbeck CVS funding fayre at Newbiggin Maritime Centre on November 15<sup>th</sup> and then the Northumbria Police Road Safety event in Bedlington on Saturday November 26<sup>th</sup>.

Along with 101-year-old Mary Latty of Sleekburn House SNRG helped with the switching on of the Christmas lights at Bedlington Station on December 1<sup>st</sup>.

Answering questions from the floor Colin explained that following the first four-week broadcasting licence period it was planned to apply, for a second, four-week licence six months after the first broadcast. The costs of the four-week licences were about £5,000 for each period. If these short term broadcasts were regarded as being a success the group would apply for a full-time licence.

#### **8. Bedlingtonshire Development Trust (BDT).**

Malcolm Robinson updated the meeting: The building plans for our proposed property have now been drawn up and has been submitted for planning approval. Once we receive planning approval we will then progress the capital funding bids we have already initiated. This is the funding which would actually pay for the building renovation; unfortunately there is quite a lot of work (still) to be done on the bids.

We have been delivering computer courses here (Salvation Army) every Monday evening for the last couple of months and have successfully put around 40 people through the course and hope to have many more in the next couple of months. We would like to thank WBTC and Bedlingtonshire CoT for their funding support. We are also indebted to the Salvation Army for their help and support, without which these courses would not have been possible. As part of this initiative there is a further possibility of a small amount of funding to enable our Digital Champions to do further training courses such as ITQ and ECDL which are recognised qualifications, if anyone would like to do them.....let me know. I have discussed the costs and timetables with the Adult Learning Centre at Bed. Station so we know how many can be funded.

For the past several months we have been working with NCC and in association with FoGP, to see what can be done about the lack of sports and leisure provision within the Town. As part of that initiative the Trust was asked to undertake a community consultation to which we now have approx. 3,700 replies (to date). As part of that consultation, people were asked what they would like to see by way of leisure provision in Bedlington of which 46 individual suggestions were made and have been logged. There was obviously a lot more suggestions than just forty six, but I have grouped similar ones together for the sake of the report and the graph which has to be submitted. There is now a much bigger group focussing on this subject with most partner/stakeholder groups involved. As the initial focal point was the KKP report commissioned by the Bedlington Forum, the Forum is represented there too.

Finally, I'm not sure how many people have seen the You Tube video we produced entitled, "Everyone is talking about Bedlington", which was compiled to promote the Town as well as promoting the Trust and the heritage aspect of our town. When we displayed the guide at the last meeting, you may remember, I commented that it was the first time we have had anything positive to promote our town with and the Development Trust was going to make use of them.

Our video was then entered, by NESEP, into a national competition run by Triodos Bank, one of the biggest ethical banks in Europe and resulted in us being short listed for an award! (The video was then shown to the Forum meeting) .....

I had spoken to various media groups who wanted to publish/run an article on it, we had also planned to pick 12 of the best pictures and make them into a calendar and had a price already fixed up with a printer.

I must report that very sadly the guy who took the Egyptian pictures (in the video) died after being shot in Tahrir Square, Cairo during demonstrations for greater democracy in his country!

Due to these events and out of respect for him and his family I made the decision to withdraw from promoting the video so aggressively.

**9. Any other business**

1. Question from member asking what about Community Centre?

Meeting was informed that it is to be run at present by a board of trustees and hopefully open at the beginning of January 2012. It is expected to be self-financing. Cost of room hire has not yet been decided. Discussion took place around the make-up of the Board of Trustees.

2. (From the floor) It was asked that thanks be given and reiterated to The Salvation Army, especially Richard Wearmouth, for the support and help that has been given to many groups who have and currently make use of this building.

3. Bus traffic at the 'contentious' entrance into St Benet Biscop school, a near miss with a bus and a young girl was reported to the meeting. BKO to follow up.

4. Sustran Cycle Route: a) Missing bollard at the head of Northumberland Ave foot path/cycle route is allowing vehicular traffic to directly access Northumberland Avenue from Ridge Terrace. b) No painted markings on tarmac footpaths (in particular on Black Path and on Schalksmuhle Road) to remind pedestrians that this is a SHARED path. There has been some conflict as many pedestrian users are unaware of this shared usage. BKO to follow up.

5. It was reported that there may be a pelican crossing introduced opposite Morrison's Store on Schalksmuhle Road. (This was reported at the WBTC meeting, it's a Toucan crossing)

**NEXT MEETING MONDAY 30<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2012 6.30pm.**

**Salvation Army, Hartford Road Bedlington**