

# Bedlington Forum



*A Community in Partnership*

Minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2012 at the Salvation Army, Hartford Road, Bedlington.

## **Present:**

Brian Oliver – Chair	Malcolm Robinson – Vice Chair/Secretary
Joe Henderson – FoGP	Keith Dalton – FoGP
PC Neil Nevens – Northumbria Police	John Masters – Bedlingtonshire CoT
Irene Webster – FoGP	Cliff Jenkinson – Bedlingtonshire CoT
Val Tyler - County Cllr	Paul Hedley – West Bed TC
Alex Wallace – East Bed PC	Colin Parker – East Bed PC
Allison Wallace – East Bed PC	Colin Heathcote – SNRG
Major Peter Clarke – Salvation Army	13 Members of the Public

## **Welcome and Introductions**

### **Apologies**

John Masters; Robert Coulson; Susi Robertson; Peter Basnet; Allen Stewart; Trisha Fisher; Lyn Horton; George Carrick; Margaret Oliver; Stewart Allen; Tracy Ainsley; Peter Basnett; Councillor Hedley explained that there was a WBTC meeting on at the same time elsewhere.

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record. .

## **1. Matters Arising:**

- The chair explained why we had no presentation from Trading Standards as advertised and the meeting felt that given the gentleman's personal circumstances it was understandable.

## **2. Police Update:** Neil Nevens gave the police update.

- There had been an almost 3.5% reduction in all crime reported in Bedlington during the last 10 months compared with the same period a year ago. Assault with less serious injury, burglary to dwellings and vehicle crimes had all seen more than a 10% reduction. Criminal damage, burglary other than dwellings and retail crime have all seen increases of around 5%. Neil went on to explain that while some of these figures looked to be of concern, because of the very small number of actual offences, the % increase might be down to only one or two incidents.
- Further reports included a bike stolen in the Roslin Park area, a black GT bike with a ripped seat and two reports of vehicle damage, one at Cambois where a car had two tyres slashed and the other at Hartford Road East where a car had all four tyres slashed. Obviously any information please contact Bedlington Police.
- There are now 28 people barred from public houses in the Town thanks to PubWatch. Nine search warrants had been issued and carried out in this area mainly down to drug use and the Wolsington Court area seems to be a mecca for underage drinking at the moment. The police continue to confiscate alcohol off anyone they see who is under age.

- Neil was happy to take any questions and a resident asked about the recent newspaper article which had been in the local press about a drugs farm recently found in a neighbouring town. Neil replied that the report did in fact leave out a piece of vital information, the owner had been charged!
- A resident then raised the question of the access to his house and the indiscriminate parking which was causing a problem, exacerbated by the land slippage at the side of the Elliott's development. He said he had reported the problem several times but as yet had no response. Neil replied that he had himself been to the house concerned on no less than 3 occasions but found no one in. The resident obviously wanted to pursue the matter but the Chair intervened saying because this was of a more personal and specific nature maybe they could have a chat in private after the meeting.
- A resident raised the matter of broken glass littering Gallagher Park and the associated underage drinking. Neil said they were very aware of the situation and the police continue to target that area looking for underage drinking. This area seems to be an attraction for young people who live outside of Bedlington?
- Horses were also mentioned as a particular problem in that area. It was said that this had already been reported to the Town Council and would be followed up.
- A resident raised the matter of the entrance into St Benet's and reported there had been a site visit but only himself, the chair of the Forum and the Police had bothered to turn up. The meeting registered disappointment with the County Council and our elected councillors for lack of progress with this problem.
- The chair thanked Neil for his time and update.

### **3. SNRG update:** Colin Heathcoat the Chair of SNRG gave the update.

- "Firstly SNRG have applied for the 5 year OFCOM licence. The management committee has worked long and hard to complete the exhaustive Ofcom five-year licence application form – it runs to more than 30 pages – which was submitted on deadline day, January 29. A decision regarding the awarding of a full-time licence is unlikely to be announced by Ofcom until the autumn.
- Town, parish and the county council have sent letters of support as have many organisations such as the Bedlington Forum, the Samaritans, Salvation Army, British Red Cross, Wansbeck Centre for Voluntary Service, Northumberland fostering and adoption service, Friends of Gallagher Park, Age UK, Carers Northumberland, and Skills North East. In addition we've had messages of support from Alan Shearer, former local author Paul Mann (now living in the USA), MPs Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley) and Ian Lavery (Wansbeck), the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland, Blyth Spartans, Ashington FC and Bedlington Terriers, and Sir John Hall who is currently chairing a committee which aims to breathe new life into Ashington town centre.
- Colin went on to report a massive .....£6251 Big Lottery Fund grant offer! This gives SNRG enough to apply for another 28-day restricted service Ofcom broadcast licence on FM. Group management committee members will be discussing potential dates for our second broadcast which we hope will be even better than the very successful RSL in March last year.
- We hope we can count on your continued support for what we are trying to achieve and look forward to contacting you again in the near future to invite you to again get involved in what we believe is a very exciting project which will prove to be a great asset to the community. We will continue to keep you up to date with messages on Facebook, Twitter, and the Bedlington.co.uk and snrgroup.co.uk sites."
- This was generally accepted as great news for SNRG and Bedlington.

### **4. Bedlingtonshire Development Trust update:** Malcolm Robinson.

- "Malcolm spent his Xmas working on and putting in various funding bids! We have two different bids in for more upgrades for Gallagher Park.

- The Heritage project has opened up other funding opportunities and he has applied to them.
- He has had a meeting with the Leaders at NCC, unfortunately he couldn't quite convince them to back our building project for the BDT base with hard cash, even if we do feel conned out of the Golf Club and Tesco money!
- Gallagher Park and I have levered in yet more funding there. We are working with the partners to deliver the improvements through the SITA funding we received, based on the on the community consultation we did this time last year! In all it's about £30K, but as far as I am concerned that's just a start, the real ambition is to see a community sports and leisure building down there and that's the buttons we are now trying to push.
- Our manufacturing project is taking shape literally and we have only just done more technical work on the design of our special 'Bedlington' seat!
- Malcolm attended a VCS meeting regarding the recent £2.4M awarded to a consortium of bodies from this area; it came from the Arts Council. Let's just say between Malcolm and Brian Oliver, Bedlington was well represented and we both asked for some of that cash to be spent here! I have since had further meetings and correspondence and the aspirations in Bedlington seems to have shocked some people into agreeing to be as supportive as they possibly can, Bedlington is now a targeted area! One of the associated projects which have and which has only just now come to fruition is the fact that there is now a writing group in the Town. If anyone wants to become part of that please see me or get in touch through the [Bedlington.co.uk](http://www.Bedlington.co.uk) website.
- Malcolm has also put in a reply to the NCC Core Strategy and has been asked by the Locality team in NCC to request as many people as possible to take part in the online consultation. It doesn't have to be online but it is quite a weighty tomb if you want a hard copy. The web address if there is anyone interested:- <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Default.aspx?page=3443>
- It's all about how you want to see this county develop over the next 17 years up to 2030 and you have until the 20th March to get your comments in. You can pick and choose areas of specific interest you don't have to cover the whole document. You might, for the sake of argument, like to highlight the fact that Bedlington seems to have fared pretty badly in the areas such as Market Town hierarchy, sporting and leisure provision and targeted area for permitted commercial development.
- The Heritage Project:  
Malcolm handed out flyers at our last meeting about the Heritage project that is being rolled out in conjunction with Leading Link. They are creating a mobile exhibition (trailer) and have commissioned a local artist to paint the top and side panels. Please remember when you see these panels they have been painted by a local artist, we think they are fantastic! Sadly this guy has passed away very recently and we have had to ask another artist to finish off the project. We are going to dedicate the trailer to his memory, as some small memento of thanks for the help he has been.
- There will be three quite large scale public events this year as part of our heritage project. We are working with NCC and the Police on the first one and as soon as we have some definitive answers and a bit more of the planning worked out I will be able to tell everyone just what we have up our sleeves for that! The first project has again opened up other funding opportunities and we are going after them as we speak. If possible these will lead to major physical improvements in our Town! I have to keep the Heritage Lottery people informed about how our project develops and they have already said they liked our application which we submitted and would look to promote it locally and regionally. I hope everyone saw the full pages in the News Post Leader and the Journal about this project. Heritage Lottery (HLF) understand a little more about what we intend to do and the events we have planned so much so, they now want to make our project a national showcase! Lyn Horton (Leading Link) and Malcolm (Bedlingtonshire Development Trust) have been invited down to the People's Museum in Manchester to

present the project to the board of HLF and over 100 invited guests as well as the national media. Once again where Bedlington leads the country follows!

- Malcolm mentioned one very important piece to this particular jigsaw. Yes he identified this funding, spoke to the Heritage Lottery people about it and applied, but what turns it from an average project into one of national significance is what Lyn Horton and her team at Leading Link are doing and the prestige and accolades Bedlington is getting now is really down to the farsightedness and hard graft the team at Leading Link are putting in. It was intended to have Lyn give a short presentation about this work but she is still at work, on her day off.
- The mobile exhibition or “Pandora’s Box” will be fitted with these painted panels on the outside but it opens up to show the Bedlington Conservation Area on the inside. That is going to form one of the work sheets the schools will get, to make the whole thing as interactive as possible. Because we are using a trailer and the panels are basically on top we have the body of the trailer to use. This will hold the various materials needed to bring this project to life. The ‘trailer’ is to be taken around local schools where workshops will be given and students encouraged to add to the contents in whatever medium they want to use. The schools will keep the ‘trailer’ for the rest of the week and hopefully use it to do more heritage work with their young people. There will be things like passages replicating mines where students have to go through various tubes and retrieve nuggets of coal.
- ‘History Boxes’ on loan from Beamish Museum and Woodhorn will be used by students to show what the normal dress of the day was and the sorts of materials used in everyday life.
- Students will be visiting Woodhorn Museum not only to see our mining heritage but also to look at and use the archives kept there. They will also make films using the facilities at Woodhorn.
- We also have a potential project working with Newcastle University, again about accessing and using archives.
- It is hoped that everyone will appreciate that this is about enthusing our young people to take pride in their culture and heritage and this in turn may just lead to a renewed sense of civic pride in their present day environment.
- We are also putting together a repository of stories and anecdotes about living in Bedlington. Again if anyone wants to have theirs included just see Malcolm.

## **5. AOB:**

The Chair read out an update which had been provided by Richard Schofield of the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI), this is the final year of the project.

### **Building Grants**

- The budget remains ring-fenced and we aim to complete all schemes this summer followed by an event to mark the end of the THI in November – details to evolve. Once all schemes are complete around £1.2m will have been invested in restoring 18 buildings and supporting 26 businesses. Update as follows on each scheme:-

#### *1 Market Place, Custom Ink*

Start date delayed due to title issues – now resolved. Works due on site Feb/March. Work to include roof & chimney repair, new shop front, signage, windows and doors.

#### *4-7 Market Place J R Johnson & Flower Stop,*

All external work complete. Internal work, which will see refurb of former shoe store and vacant first floor, to complete March. Informed that good interest in vacant shop and flats above by prospective tenants. One of the best schemes in my view.

#### *20-20a Market Place, Munchie Moos Café, Silver Cells & Gerez -*

Due to complete this month. Another excellent scheme.

*104-106 Front Street East, R&S Convenience*

New tiled entrance to complete – weather dependent.

*1-3 Vulcan Place, Verdi Restaurant and Renown Estate Agents*

Due to start March/April

*2-4 Vulcan Place, Lloyds Pharmacy and residential above*

Start has been delayed. Due to start this month.

#### Community Activities:

Leading Link is doing an excellent job in progressing and delivering a Bedlington Heritage Project with a small amount of funding from the THI – watch for details and events during the course of the year.

Later in the year we will produce a final newsletter and update the conservation area leaflet to capture the THI regeneration – ‘the heritage of the future’

#### **AOB continued:**

- The acting secretary gave an update on Radio Northumbria as Stewart Allen had tendered his apologies. “During the last two months we have completed a successful Christmas of broadcasting with some fantastic locally made festive shows.

We continue to grow our schedule of local programming, have been on the front page of the News Post Leader, we were live from Croft Park for last weekend's Blyth v Buxton game and our Geordie Hour presenter Gary Hogg from Blyth is up for a National Radio award.

Radio Northumberland has been broadcasting non-stop since January 2011 and as usual we are happy to be involved in any forthcoming local events.

Details should be sent to: [requests@radionorthumberland.com](mailto:requests@radionorthumberland.com)

We are looking forward to several events taking place over the next few months and will be continuing to work with our partner organisations to bring them to the radio audience in Bedlington and South East Northumberland.”

**Date and time of next meeting: Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April 6.30pm**

**Salvation Army Hartford Road Bedlington**

**This will also be an AGM.**

**Trading Standards will be present to give a short presentation.**