

LAKES NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

Summary of meeting held on 14th January 2009 at the Kelsick Centre, Ambleside.

County Councillor Brian Barton welcomed everyone to the Forum.

THE FUTURE FOR BROCKHOLE

Bob Cartwright, Director of Park Services with the Lake District National Park Authority, with responsibility for Brockhole redevelopment, explained the background to this late Victorian property and the Mawson gardens. He suggested Brockhole - the first significant place for visitors travelling into the Lake District from junction 36 – offers a fantastic location, car parking, public access to the lake shore, walks, woodland, café etc. and attracts around 120,000 visitors annually, though numbers are falling. However, running the house and 30 acres of grounds costs the LDNPA £300K annually and Bob suggested this was a disproportionate amount of the LDNPA budget.

Bought by the Lake District National Park Authority in 1966, Brockhole became the first National Park Visitor Centre in the United Kingdom. The LDNPA feels Brockhole is now suffering from a loss of clarity and a lack of investment and a decision needs to be taken as to how it can make best use of Brockhole in the future. Consultants confirmed the LDNPA's analysis of the situation and put forward the following suggestions:-

- Hotel
- Conference Centre
- Landscape Art Gallery
- Cultural Centre
- Historic House and Garden
- Centre for National Parks
- Commercial Visitor Attraction
- Sell Brockhole

Bob suggested the objective is to create a vibrant centre in an iconic setting. It should be an exemplar of partnership working with public and private sector partners, and could enhance the economic value of the whole area. Any development would be of the highest quality and whilst the LDNPA would set the direction, it would be prepared to go to the commercial marketplace. If it failed to find a partner organisation, the fall back position would be:-

- Keep running
- Lease out
- Sell

Bob stressed there will be more public engagement on this issue and mentioned that a page on the LDNPA website is dedicated to Brockhole. He acknowledged there is a limit to the number of visitors Brockhole can take and suggested better use could be made of access from the Lake, especially in view of the difficulties motorists face in accessing the road in summer months and explained why the LDNPA does not use Brockhole for its admin. centre. Concerns were expressed that if Brockhole became a

'super duper' tourist attraction, it would be too expensive for local people to use and many people would like it to stay as it is. Bob stressed the need to find the balance between reducing the cost of the LDNPA and achieving an inspirational facility, and confirmed plans to redevelop Brockhole were unconnected to the World Heritage site bid. Concerns were also raised that the imposing architecture to the front of the building may be lost in any redevelopment.

Bob suggested if the existing shell could meet the criteria for redevelopment, there is a strong case for keeping the building. Alternatively, the decision may be to build a high quality purpose built centre for future generations or to combine the two. No decisions have yet been taken.

Bob invited people to contact him about the project on 01539 724555.

CHANGE FOR LIFE

Sean Thornton, a Director of LIFE Ltd., provided the background to his involvement in Troutbeck Bridge Swimming Pool. He explained when the Pool was built in the 1960's as a cheap community resource to provide swimming opportunities for all, it had a life expectancy of around 25 years. LIFE is approaching the project in two phases:

1. to stabilise the situation and enable the facility to stay open for the community, and
2. create long term plans for a new sport and recreation facility for the area.

Sean explained that whilst still operating at a loss, the pool's usage has increased to over 2,000 weekly visits, including schools and a growing swimming club and membership, and urged local people to come along and use it.

After two months of detailed discussions with agencies with a vested interest and possible funders; Sean has identified regional strategies and is looking at the development of the whole site to include the school, the pool and sports hall, tennis courts, astro turf pitch and affordable housing. Sean stressed no plan has been agreed or partnerships formed, and suggested that in order to maximise funding, LIFE would like to embrace as many sports facilities on the site as possible – all of which would be available for community use outside school hours. He stressed that plans would not be made public without prior public consultations and stressed the need for LIFE to secure funding – to date South Lakeland District Council is supporting the development with £100K over three years.

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Sean confirmed the proposed pool would incorporate a 6 lane 25m pool, a spa and a learner pool and would cost in excess of £8.5million. Concerns were raised that it would become too expensive for local people to use it, but Sean stressed that the aim was to create a facility with a wider appeal than swimming and charges for other recreational facilities would subsidise the cost of swimming sessions. Sean can be contacted on 015394 43243.

FEEDBACK FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS AND UPDATES ON LOCAL PROJECTS

Lakes Parish Council update

Michael Johnson explained the increase in the Parish Council precept aimed at specific projects – the Parish Handyman, the quarterly Newsletter and the contribution to the public toilets. He mentioned that the Highway Steward is now very much a part of the parish and he and Michael may soon feature on the back of the 555 bus service! Michael also provided feedback on his meeting with Gordon Brown last week when issues raised included public conveniences; affordable housing, gridlock in the National Park and services provided at Westmorland General Hospital.

Police update

PCSO Laura Jackson introduced herself and her colleague and encouraged people to take the bells provided on the tables to attach to purses/wallets so people can hear if their purse is being 'lifted'! Concerns were expressed over the recent publicised closure of the A591 because of floods, (in reality traffic continued to travel both ways all day) and the lack of co-ordination between police and highways authority. The PCSO's undertook to pass these concerns on to their Press Officer.

Lake District National Park update

Steve Gaskell reported:-
> lots of activities taking place at Brockhole over the coming year.
> The Local Development Framework report should be available on the LDNPA website soon or available from Council offices.
> The LDNPA sustainable development fund is funding for the Green Boat Festival on Coniston on 2/3/4 May. Watch the press for details.
> Lots of rights of way issues following Sunday's rain.
> Steve will shortly be losing Skelwith parish to Tony Hill and taking over Kentmere from Sue Thompson
> Review of conservation areas finishes at the end of January (Apologies to the Lakes PC who had not been consulted.)
> A welcome day for new Fix the Fells volunteers will be held at the Old Dungeon Ghyll on 7th March. Steve confirmed urban footpaths are the responsibility of the County Council.

Clappersgate new sewer update – pipework finished by end March. Other work will continue until June/July.

National Trust update

Ruth Williams, Community Links Officer, mentioned footpath issues at Elterwater and Grasmere and dredging at Skater Tarn. Work is beginning on a tree survey in Troutbeck and on the Wansfell footpath. Ruth will raise the condition of the White Moss Car Park with Lowther Estates and check on what is happening at Hodge Close.

Town Centres update

Paul Holdsworth raised five issues:-
> A friends of Rothay Park group is to be considered by the Parish Council.
> The Parish Council has been approached to see if it can offer any help in keeping the Langdale Valley News going.
> The Chair of the Parish Council has suggested a daffodil themed fund raising event for cancer charities in 2010.
> Waterhead enhancement – SLDC acting as lead organisation and looking again at all options.
> The pedestrian crossing on the A591 at Windermere is now up and running. If anyone becomes aware of problems, please pass them on to Paul on 015394 40020.

Lakes Parish Plan Task Groups update

Youth – a recent 'up the wall' project was very successful and a new project funded by Cumbria Community Foundation starts shortly. There are also plans for a street dance project for girls over 11 – details from PC Dave Buxton.

Affordable Housing – Vivienne Rees said a lot is going on, including negotiations with local landowners, and plans will be explained in the Parish Newsletter shortly.

Learning Plus

Kristen Green explained that this self help group which meets at Ambleside Library, became a charity in 2003. The groups' aim is to help people, including foreign students wanting to learn English, in a friendly informal environment. For more information call Kristen on 015395 67606.

COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

Community Travel Plan meetings for Grasmere & Rydal at Grasmere Village Hall at 7pm on 22 Jan/5 Feb/19 Feb and for Troutbeck & Troutbeck Bridge at Troutbeck Institute, 7pm on 19 Jan/2 Feb/16 Feb.

Highways Hotline – 0845 609 6609

GRANTS

Langdale Village Hall
Requested £350

Awarded £200



DIARY DATE

The next Lakes Neighbourhood Forum will be held at Grasmere Village Hall, 7pm on Monday 16th March 2009. All welcome