

EGREMONT & ST BEES NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

**Notes of the meeting held on Tuesday 14 September 2010
at the Adams Recreation Ground**

Meeting started at 6.30pm

Forum Chair: Cllr Margaret Woodburn

**Councillors Present: Cllr Michael McVeigh, Cllr Frank Morgan, Cllr David Southward,
Cllr Connie Watson and Cllr Peter Watson**

Apologies: Simon Walker

Councillors Code of Conduct – Declaration of Interest: None

Main Topic: Colourful Coast Project

Speaker: Chris Gomersall, Whitehaven and Ennerdale Ranger, National Trust

The Colourful Coast is a new initiative running along the coast between Whitehaven and St Bees. It is about improving footpaths, making new walking routes, caring for local wildlife, offering people opportunities to get involved, promoting points of interest in the area, giving the coast an identity, protecting the coast from damaging activities, and serves as an example of integrated coast management.

Community engagement events have taken place, which have included an Easter Trail, Festival of the Wind, Whitehaven Festival, Fun Days, Guided Walks, Walking for Health, workdays on the Wagon way, Raven Hill Track, educational school visits, guided walks, wildflower gardening and heather planting.

What has been done so far?

Research including survey of over 600 people, including people out walking along the coast and local residents who suggested improvements; cleared 1km of Historic Wagon way; installed new gates and fences; arranged open access agreements; permitted footpath to Rottington Common; commented on planning issues; set grazing regimes; hosted and held events; offered employment skills; increased biodiversity; marketing; walk leaflets; Wellington Pit Memorial.

Saltom Pit

£1¼ million has been spent on Saltom Pit to protect it from weathering – it was the first underground coal mine in England.

Community Led – have been asking for the opinions of people using the coast, revealed issues such as dog mess, poor way marking and overgrown paths. These issues were addressed; the Council was lobbied for dog bins and as a result 3 were installed, vegetation was cleared from the Wagon way, new way markers were installed along the whole route and there has been increased strimming of public rights of way. It is hoped this can be built on, and pose the questions ‘if visitors were to come here, what would you tell them to go and see?’

The presentation ended with photos of the hidden gems along the coast, which have been pointed out in the Colourful Coast leaflet; The Candlestick; Haig Colliery Museum; Saltom Pit; Barrowmouth Bay; St Bees Lighthouse; RSPB Viewing Points; Fleswick Bay; St Bees Beach; St Bees Priory.

Questions and Discussion

Q. Looking at the wildflower gardening, do you go out and advise groups?

A. We worked with Kells Infant School and did theirs for them; we sowed the meadow and then went back and looked for insects etc.

Q. At Egremont Castle we can't cut the moat for health and safety reasons. We had the idea to sow wildflower seed but it comes up in patches – could you help?

A. It can be hit and miss – we can't offer any specific advice. At Basket Road, residents asked Copeland Borough Council to sow a wildflower mix after there had been construction there.

Q. Copeland Borough Council has been looking at developing a partnership between St Bees/Whitehaven down to Millom, promoting the Coastal Park. Are you going to be involved?

A. Yes, we are involved. Our partnership also includes Copeland Borough Council. They haven't been able to attend meetings recently but we've been working together more closely around health & safety issues.

Q. Are you working further down the coast?

A. No, just Whitehaven & St Bees, but this is a good example of working together that could be extended to other areas.

Q. Have you advertised the Colourful Coast?

A. We have posters, adverts in the Whitehaven News, leaflets and our website www.whitehavencoast.co.uk

Q. Where does your remit cover? Do you cover inland St Bees?

A. Personally I cover Whitehaven Harbour up to North Row and High Road, Kells. The project area goes into the village along the B road to Whitehaven. It doesn't include Pow Beck.

Comment: St Bees Priory is a hidden gem that could be added to the list.

Q. Are there any leaflets around St Bees?

A. Not yet, they arrived from the printers this week and are due to be distributed.

Q. I see people walking up on the cliffs at the start of the walk, but I do wonder how far they go?

A. People don't seem to know what's up there.

Q. One of the slides mentioned a walk list – where can I get hold of them?

A. Walking for Health – they are held on a Tuesday evening at Anna's Café on the Harbour and there's also one on a Tuesday from Morrisons at 1pm. The project has stalled a little as the volunteers who were involved aren't anymore.

Comment: You could ask ramblers to get involved, they know the walks and it'd be nice if they took part.

Q. Has the Rottington route been publicised? I'm often asked where people can walk and I didn't know about that route.

A. Not yet but it will be on the map.

Comment: The Parish Council has published a series of walks leaflets, there are 7 in total and they're available from the Post Office.

Q. Are there any in Lowes Court?

A. Yes, they're also on the St Bees Parish Council website.

Report back and Presentation from the Girl Guides

The Guides received an Award of £800.00 from four Neighbourhood Forums in 2009 towards their trip to Bla Sommer Camp, Denmark; and they have just hosted a Centenary Camp at Keswick. The Girl Guides presented a slideshow of photographs from their trip to Denmark, along with a presentation on the County Camp. The girls concluded that last year had been an epic year to be a Guide, everyone who went to Denmark came back with a feeling of accomplishment and a group of new friends.

Q. Were there Scouts at the camp?

A. Yes, there were boys and girls there from all over the World.

Q. How much did it cost?

A. It was £650 per person; the Guides raised a lot of the money themselves from car boots, bag packs and Forums. Some families had more than one child going to Camp.

Comment: It's nice to see a group come back to the Forum after they've had a grant – thank you.

Community News and Updates

St Bees Beach Advisory Group – Pam Argyle

The St Bees Beach Advisory Group meets to organise beach cleans, which is their main function. There is a dedicated beach cleaner during the summer months who liaises with Copeland Borough Council to arrange things like cleaning shingle, improving access to Rottington and getting more dog waste bins in the area. The St Bees group is involved with discussions with other groups down the coast to Millom. They have qualified for the Quality Beach Awards and are now trying to make this a cohesive area down the coast instead of individuals acting separately.

Cumbria Amnesty Appeal

Rob Huck came to the Forum to raise awareness of the Amnesty Appeal, which has the support of Craig Mackay, Chief of Police and Councillor Ray Cole, Chair of the Police Authority. Previous campaigns suggest that amnesties do work – the first was in 1968 when 25,000 weapons were handed in.

The law states that if a person finds an illegal weapon, it is left at the discretion of the local Police force whether that person would be prosecuted for possession. This could be the reason why people are reluctant to hand weapons in.

Previous campaigns have seen: 48,000 handed in during 1987, 23,000 handed in during 1996 and most recently 46,000 handed in during 2003 along with one million rounds of ammunition.

The Cumbria petitions have gathered 3,000 signatures so far. Jamie Reed intends to present the petition to Parliament at the end of October

Comment: It's nice for someone to be here tonight to raise the profile of the campaign.

Comment: Craig Mackay has told us that knife amnesties aren't a problem, but gun amnesties need the permission of the Home Secretary. Every gun that is handed in has to be ballistically checked to make sure it hasn't been involved in a crime, and that can be a costly process.

Update PCSO Peter Bradley

PCSO Bradley introduced himself to the Forum. He is new to the area, is based at Egremont and covers Egremont, St Bees and Bigrigg.

