

# High Furness Neighbourhood Forum

## Summary of meeting held at Hawkshead Market Hall on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2011

County Councillor Claire Salisbury welcomed everyone to the Forum, including Cllr Rod Wilson, whose Cartmel Division covers Colton

### LOCAL UPDATES

**Police:** PCSO Lague reported that locally during December there had been one incident of theft resulting in an arrest and a call about a suspicious vehicle led to three arrests. Community priorities for the Safer Stronger team are speeding and parking in Coniston and dog fouling in Hawkshead. Inspector Kevin Spedding attended the Forum as new head of the Neighbourhood Policing team from February. He is keen to get to know all local communities within the area and will encourage the team of 5 officers allocated to the area to do the same.

**Hawkshead PCC:** Judith Marshall brought in the wheelchair which had been purchased earlier this year with the help of a grant from the Forum. It is available in the church for use by anyone living in or visiting the community.

**Local Area Partnership:** Dave Fletcher gave apologies from Slinger, the LAP chair, and presented an update on Slinger's behalf. The last meeting discussed public participation at the LAP and it was agreed that members of the public could attend if they wished, but the most appropriate channels for spreading information remain the Neighbourhood Forum and Parish Councils. Various projects have been allocated funding including provision of 22 new salt/grit bins. Broadband speeds and access have also been looked at. A steering group has been set up to link in with a wider initiative to secure Government funding for Cumbria and the High Furness area in particular. The next meeting of the High Furness LAP is on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2011; contact 01539 713419 for future dates.

**AGEUK:** Pam Kirkbride introduced herself as the Village Agent for Coniston and Hawkshead. In post since May she works 10hrs per week to assist those aged 50+ in need of support to reduce isolation and promote independence. Contact Pam via 01539 728180 or [va@ageconcerns.org.uk](mailto:va@ageconcerns.org.uk).

### COMMUNITY JUSTICE IN ACTION

This year marks the 650<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the set up of the magistrate service in England. Gerald Rees, Legal Advisor to magistrates at the courts in Kendal and Barrow gave the Forum an interesting account of the way the service continues to dispense justice in modern times. In the 1970s Hawkshead actually still had its own courthouse but now the building has been converted to apartments and local offenders will probably appear at Kendal court.

In England there are currently 29,000 magistrates, all unpaid volunteers from local communities, sitting in panels of three, with the aim of giving balance to each hearing. They deal with all criminal cases and are a good barometer of what is happening crime-wise in the community. There are very few restrictions on what can be reported in the press and members of the public can freely attend proceedings.

There are many options open to the magistrates to punish criminal behaviour, ranging from a prison sentence to community work, a tagging/curfew order to fines and payment of compensation to victims. It is not realistic to expect to change a criminal's behaviour by sentencing but Parliament states that there has to be a purpose in the sentence given and the public should be protected if possible. There are also national sentencing guidelines to be followed. Compensation to victims is collected and paid out through the court and the criminal's means have to be taken into account, often leading to payment by instalments, sometimes as little as £5 per week. This can make it a long process for the victim to receive what they are due as the court can only pay out to victims what money it receives, as it comes in.

The average cost to keep someone in prison is £23,000 per year but this has to be weighed against the cost to property and communities of keeping an offender out of the prison system.



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## THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

Dave Lowe, Grizedale Area Manager for the Forestry Commission England, outlined for the Forum some of the background and facts regarding the sale of forestry land in England. The situation is slightly complicated in that there are four strands to the issue, all running concurrently.

The first strand is the Public Consultation regarding the future of Public Forest Estate which is seeking views on the best ownership and management options for all of the Public Forest estate. The ownership options being discussed at present include ownership by private individuals and companies, charities and community/big society groups. The consultation opened on 27<sup>th</sup> January will last for 12 weeks and stakeholders can present their views at meetings to be arranged across the country. Individuals can also express their views by completing the questionnaire that can be found on the DEFRA website at [www.forestry.gov.uk/england](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/england). It was stressed that it is essential that both groups and individuals make their views known and use the forms available to ensure accurate analysis of the results. The Government expects to publish its response in late summer 2011. Once meeting dates and venues are confirmed these will be published on the website, alternatively contact 01229 860373.

The second strand is the Comprehensive Spending Review 2010 which requires the FC to make savings of 25% which will inevitably involve changes to how the Commission operates. As part of the CSR10 settlement the FC is also required to sell 15% (£100m worth of assets) across England to contribute to the structural deficit by the end of 2010/2015. Across England it is the FC's desire to protect the larger forests that deliver the greatest multi purpose benefits such as Grizedale or Whinlatter. Because a number of these forests such as the New Forest or Kielder are very large then a significant proportion of the FC's woodland in Cumbria will be affected over the next four years. The criteria for the selection woodlands for sale in 2011/12 have not yet approved.

A Regulatory Reform Task Force, set up by DEFRA,

is the third strand. This will consider how woodland can and can't be used and will examine the current controls on felling and replanting licences etc. This will cover all woodland in England and not just the 18% under the control of the Forestry Commission. Finally, most people will be unaware of the Public Bodies Reform Bill which is a piece of legislation that will allow the Secretary of State to dispose of all land in England currently held by the Forestry Commission. The Bill is currently being debated in the House of Lords.

## BETTER HIGHWAYS

Cllr Salisbury reported that the roll-out of this new programme for better response to remedying highways defects was due to begin on 6<sup>th</sup> December but had stuttered somewhat due to teams being needed for gritting at that time. She urged everyone to ensure that any defects are reported either via the website [www.cumbria.gov.uk](http://www.cumbria.gov.uk) or the hotline 0845 609 6609. If you report a defect and it is not repaired your councillor can chase it up but make sure you have the reference number!

## COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

**South Lakeland District Council** are seeking community views on the new Land Allocation plan for new sites for homes, jobs and community facilities in South Lakeland (outside the National Parks) to 2025. Go to [www.southlakeland.gov.uk](http://www.southlakeland.gov.uk) and follow the link to the Land allocations page. The consultation ends on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

**Rural Poverty:** A one-day conference entitled "Child Poverty in Rural Cumbria" will be held on 10<sup>th</sup> March at Thursby, Carlisle. To book call Dani Hudson on 01768 869511

**A2BNoW Card:** A new travel card for 5-18 year olds gives reduced fares for bus travel across South Lakeland. For more details visit your local library or [www.cumbria.gov.uk/a2bnow](http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/a2bnow)

## NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March at Water Yeat Village Hall, starting at 7.00pm.

**Get in touch: 01539 713419**



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