

Upper Kent Neighbourhood Forum

A summary of the meeting held on Wednesday 30th November 2011 at Skelsmergh Community Hall.

County Councillor Stan Collins welcomed everyone to the meeting. County Cllr Brenda Gray and District Cllr Chris Holland were introduced.

LOCAL VIEW

John Chapman, Vice Chair of Skelsmergh and Scalthwaiterigg Parish Council gave an update on life in and around the Skelsmergh and Scalthwaiterigg Parish. Skelsmergh straddles the A6 between Kendal and Selside; it is caught between the two rivers Sprint & Mint. The Parish consists of scattered farms although the number of active farms has considerably reduced over the last 25 years; however, the land is still used for agriculture. The bulk of the parish lies to the Southeast of Skelsmergh, with Benson Knott being the highest point and provides a 360° view around Lakeland Fells.

This is a very interesting Parish, which is very proud of the many Scandinavian names. There is a large water treatment works and also the Dales way, a long distance footpath which attracts many tourists.

Unfortunately, many motorcyclists drive through the area which is very noisy and disturbs the peace and quiet.

There was a problem with the private sewage disposal in Meal Bank, to help solve this an experiment was carried out with a Street Surgery and those who took part thought it went very well. The Parish Council consists of 7 members and there are about 6 meetings held per year.

New projects are often being looked into which include the extension of a footpath along the A6, which will also be used by cyclists; at the moment this is a messy, grassy stretch of roadside that cannot be walked or ridden on. More road safety measures would like to be seen near Burneside and the A6. There is concern with salting and gritting this winter, the Parish Councils are involved with this but there are a number of obstacles that need to be overcome first.

A nice scenic area is the Community Woodland, a planting of an acre and a half of woodland at Garth Row in the millennium; the same trees are now 25 feet high. The community plan has been a guide over the last 3 years for the Parish, this consists of 4 groups which include the Environment Group who have been chosen for extra investment by CCC Countryside Access.

Recently finger posts have appeared, footpaths opened and litter collected (25 bags of litter were collected in the Autumn, although the problem is not solved but if the Parish is clean to start with it will hopefully stay clean). One or two Parish walks are organised each year, these introduce people to places they have not seen before. The Community Group focuses on the work done by the Community Hall Committee including classes, clubs, school gatherings, meetings and more, lots of this work is done by volunteers. The Communications Group shares the information on the Parish Councils' website – www.skelsmerghandscalthwaiterigg.org.uk. The improvement of Broadband is also a common interest. Cllr Stan Collins goes out with a highway engineer up to 3 times a year to point out all the problems, sometimes they are easily sorted, sometimes they are not. Cllr Collins talked about further requests for 'no HGV' signs to stop drivers following unsuitable routes via Sat Nav, however he is also pursuing the banning of HGV drivers using non HGV Sat Nav's with the transport minister.

LAND ALLOCATIONS – LAKE DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK

Carissa Lough, Policy Planner spoke to the Forum about the recent consultation undertaken by the LDNP on the allocation of land for housing, employment and open space. The closing date for comments was the day of the Forum but Carissa did have an email address she could provide for additional comments that will be taken for another week. The consultation started on 26th September and 30 drop in events were held across the National Park, it is thought that there will be 2000-3000 responses from these in total. All the issues that are raised will be looked in to and re examined. The plan is for 900 new dwellings across the National Park between last year and 2025; this averages 60 houses per year across the whole National Park. There is 9.2 hectares of employment land committed for the next 15 years. Open spaces are being allocated for parks, village greens, playgrounds etc, these areas will be protected

from development. Anyone putting forward planning permission for a housing site will still have to have evidence that there is need, the evidence needs to be recent or the application will not be supported. The affordable homes will be 'affordable' permanently, not just for the first buyers.

LDNP are aiming for the final report to be done by autumn 2012, the planning inspector will then hold a public hearing, probably late autumn or early winter 2012. The inspector will consider all sites including objections and then the final recommendation and report will be done.

The plan is for 3 sites of affordable housing in Staveley and 2 sites for employment. To qualify for the local occupancy housing, the applicant must live in Staveley or one of the adjoining Parishes, or worked there for the past 3 years, if someone has moved out of the area and want to return they remain eligible for local occupancy for 4 years. The Housing Association deals with the affordability criteria. The housing need is based on the most recent survey and LDNP have to assume that those people will use the new developments. If the housing need reduces any further planning applications will be rejected. The houses will always have the local occupancy clause and if the house is not required under restriction, residents in the next parish would have the opportunity to apply. Individual planning applications are still being supported; these do not have to be affordable homes but do have to meet the local occupancy clause.

LOCAL POLICING UPDATE

PCSO Alex Potter introduced himself and colleague PCSO Tom Howard, they spoke about local policing matters. The levels of crime remain low, the year on year reports show a 13% decrease with the most recent quarter showing a 7% decrease. The crime trends seem to follow patterns and the full crime report can be found on Cumbria Police website.

As this is a rural area, the main concern seems to be Poaching; this is from Deer and Rabbits to shooting Sheep. These are organised criminals who plan their crime in advance. The Police are asking members of the public to contact them if there is anything that seems suspicious, for example torches in fields; normally the police know when someone should be there.

Oil thefts are on the rise, as is the thefts of scrap metals. On the 12th Dec, the non emergency number is

changing from the 0845 number to the single number 101. In most areas this number will put you through to the local police.

The two PCSO's cover 250 sq miles which is a large geographical area for just two officers.

BROADBAND

Cumbria has set aside 20 million pound for broadband, the ambition is to achieve 25MB speed by 2015 for 90% – the target is quite far away, however, 2015 is not. It is still in the contract phase and the provider is going to be decided soon.

LAP – UPPER KENT LOCAL AREA PARTNERSHIP

The main discussions at the LAP are Broadband and Grit bins. 13 grit bins were ordered through the LAP fund, Margaret Belk has been working on this and she has been made aware that all grit bins have been delivered and are on site. The grit bins will be green within the National Park and yellow outside. Anyone wanting a grit bin should contact Cllr Stan Collins.

AGE UK

Wendi Lethbridge, Village Agent spoke to the Forum about the types of things Age UK do and help with. All the money that is donated in South Lakeland is spent in South Lakeland. There are currently 12 village agents working throughout South Lakes and this could increase to 15 by the end of the financial year. The idea of a village agent is to have a familiar face in the community, someone that can go round coffee mornings, attend WI meetings to get the information out to those who may benefit. Age UK work in partnership with many organisations including McMillan, Jewel Sensory Loss, Sight Advise and many more. They run many activities such as voluntary car schemes, advice on debt and men in sheds. Lots of leaflets were displayed for members of the Forum to take.

GRANT APPLICATIONS

St Anne's Parish Church Hall – Awarded £675

Kentmere First Responders – awarded £413

NEXT MEETING

The date for the next meeting is still to be confirmed but details will be circulated as soon as possible. To get in touch, please call 01539 73405 or e-mail:

alison.love@cumbria.gov.uk