

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE HELD ON 1ST JULY, 2014

Present: Councillor Mrs J A Bell (Chair) and
Councillors B Allen, Mrs B E Allen,
Mrs M Baird, E Bell, B Burn Snr,
B Burn Jnr, S Cudlip, Mrs S Forster,
R Meir, Miss S Morrison, I Paul, K Shaw,
R Whitehead

Observer: Councillor Mrs G Bleasdale

Apologies: Councillors Mrs H Cahill, C Snowball
K Younger

1. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded prior to the start of the meeting of the need to disclose any interests, prejudicial or personal, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

2. DURHAM HERITAGE COAST

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mr Niall Benson of the Durham Heritage Coast who was in attendance to provide Members with an update on the work of the Durham Heritage Coast.

Mr Benson began by extending his apologies for his inability to attend earlier meetings. As Seaham Town Council is a partner of the Durham Heritage Coast Partnership he took the opportunity to thank the Council for its support. He then provided an update on the work of the Durham Heritage Coast in relation to Seaham.

The Committee was advised that in Durham there has been a coast path in existence for a number of years, however the England Coast Path is a new link to the north of England which opened in April. It is the the first in the north east, and allied to that new path Sunderland have put in £60k into interpretation from Wearmouth bridge south, so the communities from Ryhope, Grangetown and Hendon and, over the bridge Roker and Seaburn, will start to come southwards down that path. There is to be a double page spread in The Guardian in the next couple of weeks to give good publicity.

In relation to bathing water quality he advised that as it had not rained recently the quality of the water was good. 8 samples had been taken so far, all results being in the higher bracket. There was some new signage put in last year as a temporary measure and this was to be replaced next year to fit in with European legislation. Electronic signage was to be put in place over the summer on the 3 beaches in Durham, 2 in Seaham and one in Crimdon, which forecast the water quality for the day. The Government had given the money for the signs to be put in place but the County Council had responsibility for maintenance and renewing over time.

With regard to minewater the Whitburn consultation had commenced and the results would be advised in due course. The Durham Heritage Coast would respond and a copy of that response would be provided to the Town Council. A Member stated that there was a lot of concern about what was going to happen in that location and he asked Mr Benson to liaise with Mr Dave McAndliss from Inshore Fisheries and the Environment Officer in relation to this. Mr Benson stated that they were going through the process of bidding for PhD funding to try to find out more in-depth information in relation to the impact that iron has on water quality and sea life.

Because of the interest the Durham Heritage Coast Partnership has in relation to coastal waters they were also interested in the Wear catchment and are part of a group called the Wear Catchment Partnership out of which there is a sub-catchment called the coastal streams which don't flow into the main river, they flow into the sea. The Durham Heritage Coast partnership has been chosen to lead this initiative which is starting up now. This was interesting to Seaham because of the Seaham denes. This initiative would not be seen to happen immediately but it gave access to European funding so there would be an increase in activity.

Beach care – there is a group called the Unofficial Beach Clean Crew which comprises a number of Seaham residents and they go out regularly and clean both Seaham Hall and Red Acre beach. As a result of this a huge difference had been made to Seaham's beaches. Asda have introduced a 365 challenge whereby they aim to pick up 365 bags of litter throughout the year off Red Acre beach. It would be beneficial to encourage the work being undertaken by these groups going forward.

With regard to events a series of these are run every year by the Durham Heritage Coast, i.e 'Low Tide Day' in the middle of May in Seaham, 'Celebrating our Coast' which takes place on 19th July at Dalton Park and at the end of the half marathon they also had a small event. 'Big Watch' an event looking for whales and dolphins is to take place on 26th July. There will be a presence at the Seaham Carnival handing out leaflets. The partnership also provide guided walks – one of these is to take place in a fortnight on 13th July, and there are a few places left. The walk is from Noses Point to Crimdon with a bus in place to bring people back.

Mr Benson stated that next Monday he would be going to Westminster to promote Seaham at a Coast and Communities event where coastal issues could be raised direct with MPs. The event was aimed at trying to get the Coastal Communities Fund reinstated.

The Local Plan produced by Durham County Council has within it that any development within 6¹/₂ kilometres of the coast will impact on the designated nature conservation areas. Those developments therefore need to mitigate those impacts and this generally means that cash may be available. They have been working with colleagues at the County Council to work out the level of monies available and what that programme of development will mean. It also brings into focus the issues around those increased numbers so now that the coast itself is drawing in lots of people we need to start spreading that benefit inland whether it be with footpaths, bridle paths or cycleways.

The Heritage Coast Partnership Management Plan is also under review and the draft would be completed probably by the end of August. As Seaham Town Council is a partner he asked that the Council feed into that Plan with things such as access onto blast beach, and any other pertinent issues, to direct the future for the coast from the Town Council's perspective for the next five years.

Other things outside of Seaham's immediate interest are that the Partnership is working in Horden on footpaths, habitats and signage; there is the little terns at Crimdon and an amount of money had been obtained from Europe to look after them for the next five years.

At this stage questions were invited and the following is a summary of the comments made:

- (i) Could there be an information board placed at Noses Point to give the history of Dawdon Colliery and where the shafts were located?

Mr Benson stated that a fossilised tree stump had been provided to the Durham Heritage Coast and Limestone Landscapes have provided some funding for some interpretation so the Town Council's suggestion may be used in conjunction with this.

- (ii) A Member stated that the Town Council would like to have a ban imposed on all dogs on all beaches from May to September and asked whether this could be raised through their Management Plan. Durham County Council had been asked about the frequency of the beaches and promenade being cleaned. The Town Council has now employed two Environmental Wardens to clean up the town and beach areas and positive feedback has already been received from residents.

Mr Benson stated that the Town Council should feed in their wishes for restricting dogs on beaches during the summer months to the Heritage Coast Management Plan. As all services are now under pressure it may be that more can be achieved by joining together. He stated that Seaham Hall beach and all the way to the north is designated a European status conservation area.

- (iii) Are you working with the County Council with regard to the amount of cars on the promenade and the amount of fishing line on the beach.

Again these issues can be raised through the Management Plan consultation process and County Councillors could also use their influence to address the issue.

At this stage the Chair thanked Mr Benson for his informative address and he then left the meeting.

RECOMMENDED the Town Council send a letter of thanks to the beach cleaning groups detailed in Mr Benson's report, for their efforts in maintaining Seaham's beaches litter free.

3. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3RD JUNE, 2014**

RECOMMENDED the Minutes of these meetings, copies of which had been previously printed and circulated to each Member, be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman

4. **TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS ISSUES**

a) **Neighbourhood Services – Highways**

RECOMMENDED the weekly updates in relation to Highway Services for the weeks commencing 2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd June, 2014 be noted.

b) **Princess Road Footbridge**

The Committee considered an e-mail communication from a resident with regard to the state of the Princess Road footbridge.

RECOMMENDED the resident's e-mail communication be noted.

5. **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

a) **Pollution of Seawater**

The Committee considered a communication from Mr Bob Latimer in relation to the Whitburn Sewerage system together with an extract from the Sunderland Echo which indicated that an outfall was to be constructed at Whitburn.

RECOMMENDED the Council note the information now reported.

6. **GENERAL ISSUES**

a) **Police and Crime Plan**

The Committee considered a communication from CDALC with regard to the Police and Crime Plan which was launched by Mr Ron Hogg, Durham's Police and Crime Commissioner on 1st April, 2014 and which had now been reviewed. A copy of the revised Plan had been previously circulated.

RECOMMENDED the Council note the information now reported.

b) **PCC Newsletter – June, 2014**

RECOMMENDED the June edition of the PCC Newsletter published by the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, be noted.

c) **Neighbourhood Protection Team Update**

RECOMMENDED the May edition of the Neighbourhood Protection Team update with regard to Seaham, be noted.

7. **LICENSING ISSUES**

a) **New Premises Licence**

Prior to the consideration of this item, Councillor E Bell declared an interest and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

The Committee considered the response received from the Senior Licensing Officer at Durham County Council following the objection submitted by the Town Council to the application for the sale of alcohol and late night refreshment at Gills Fry Fry on North Terrace. In discussion a Member stated that there were requirements the Town Council needed to follow if they wished to submit a formal objection and this had not been the case when the first objection was sent. The Licensing Officer had responded advising of the guidelines to follow and Members agreed that the objection should be resubmitted.

RECOMMENDED the Town Council re-submit their objection in line with the guidance provided.

8. **PLANNING ISSUES**

a) **Monthly List**

RECOMMENDED that the list of planning applications referred to all Councillors since the last meeting, namely 5293 to 5295 as circulated be noted.

b) **Planning Consultation – Seaham Delivery Office, Adelaide Row**

RECOMMENDED the Town Council do not submit an objection to the application from the Royal Mail Group for demolition of a small outbuilding, re-configuration of yard area and creation of a loading dock ramp to east elevation.

c) **Planning Consultation – Change of Use from Offices to Residential (re-submitted) at Spectrum 3 Spectrum Business Park, Seaham**

The Committee considered a communication from Durham County Council in relation to the resubmitted application for change of use from offices to residential at Spectrum Business Park. A copy of the additional information provided by the Chartered Town Planners acting on behalf of the client was also considered. In discussion it was commented that if it was to become residential, there were no services in place, i.e. schools, shops etc.

RECOMMENDED the Town Clerk liaise closely with the County Planners to ascertain what their intentions are and to obtain suitable advice.

9. INAPPROPRIATE PARKING AT TOWN HALL

The Committee was advised of inappropriate parking outside the Town Hall on the footpath, more specifically a 4 x 4 vehicle which was blocking access for people with prams or pushchairs and forcing people on to the road. It was felt that measures needed to be taken to ensure this offender is advised that if such inappropriate parking persists, the police will be informed.

RECOMMENDED the Council approve the proposed action to be taken in respect of this vehicle.

10. HISTORIC COUNTY FLAG

The Committee considered a communication which advised that 23rd July, 2014 had been designated as Historic County Flags Day and requested that the Town Council fly the County Durham flag on that day.

RECOMMENDED the Town Council do not take any action with regard to this item.

11. LOCATION OF 1101 SCULPTURE ON TERRACE GREEN

The Committee considered a communication from Mr Grahame Morris, MP with attached e-mail from one of his constituents in relation to the location of the sculpture on the Terrace Green. Mr Morris had requested the Town Council review the situation and provide comments back to him to enable him to respond accordingly.

RECOMMENDED the Town Clerk investigate the legalities of the structure being in that location in respect of land ownership, title and planning perspectives and report back to Members prior to a letter being sent back to Mr Morris.

12. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

RECOMMENDED the Council note that no press opportunities existed from this meeting.