



RURAL WORKING GROUP

UFFORD – 25TH NOVEMBER 2009

Present

Henry Clark, Chair, Peakirk & Rural Working Group
Nick Goodman, Environmental Capital Officer, GPP
Zena Coles, Bainton and Ashton Parish Council
Gerry Kirt, Glinton Parish Council
Sally Jackson, Peakirk Parish Council
David Buddle, Thorney Parish Council councillor
John Bartlett, Thorney Parish Council
Leonie McCarthy, Neighbourhood Manager – City Wide, PCC
Frieda Gosling, Ufford Parish Council
Richard Anker, Castor Parish Council
Rosemary Morton, Willowbrook Farm
Keith Lievesley, Ufford Parish Council
June Woollard, Barnack Parish Council
Alice Kershaw, Heritage Regeneration Officer, PCC and OP
Richard Tindall, Northborough Parish Council
Marion Browne, Ufford Parish Council
Joanne Fane, Willowbrook Farm
Robert Morton, Willowbrook Farm

Apologies

Richard Astle, Director, GPP
Cllr David Harrington, Newborough ward councillor
Cllr John Holdich, Glinton and Wittering ward
Cllr David Over, Barnack ward councillor and Chair of Rural Scrutiny Commission
Kirsten Bennett, Cambridgeshire ACRE
Cllr Diane Lamb, Glinton and Wittering ward
Graeme Law, Peterborough City Council
Cllr Peter Hiller, Northborough Ward Councillor
Judith Morrice, Bainton and Ashton Parish Council

1. Welcome and Introductions

Henry Clark welcomed members to the meeting of the Rural Working Group (RWG), individuals introduced themselves.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Nick Goodman updated the group that following the last meeting some further recommendations had been made regarding the Bus Service Review. These included reinstating some rural bus services and potentially implementing two *callconnect* buses in the future. It was also recognised that the Parish Council have a significant role to play in communicating these changes to residents and ensuring that information is available.

June Woollard suggested that a note of thanks be sent to Teresa Wood and her team but reiterating the concerns around urban to rural callconnect services.

Nick Goodman to draft note to be sent on behalf of the Rural Working Group

It was also reported that progress had been made on the issue of Affordable Housing for local residents. Agreement in principle from Cambs ACRE means they will set up a Rural Housing Partnership bringing together Registered Social Landlords and parish councils to identify the housing needs and then work to deliver exception sites in the rural communities. Whilst exception sites are not guaranteed (they can be a complicated process!), the partnership could help towards the delivery of affordable housing for local people in rural areas.

3. Rural Heritage

Alice Kershaw gave a presentation on Rural Heritage in Peterborough and introduced her role of Rural Heritage Officer (presentation available on-line). A wide ranging discussion followed, including...

Rural Skills – Rosemary Morton is interested to find out more details about Rural skills work.

Growing heritage – Frieda raised issues and ideas around the provision and management of hedgerows and verges around the city. Citing examples of where established verges had been cut in appropriately earlier this year.

Northborough Manor – Richard Tindall explained that time team had visited the manor in recent years. He also explained that the Conservation area review was underway in Northborough.

Landscape Character Assessment – The group discussed this at length and Sally-Ann explained that Peakirk are currently undertaking an LCA - <http://www.landscapecharacter.org.uk/> and http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/upload/pdf/CB47_05_NationalProgramme.pdf?1255685890

There is also a LCA for Peterborough - <http://www.peterborough.gov.uk/pdf/env-plan-ldf-cs-lca-intro.pdf>

Under threat churches – Keith Lievesley highlighted concern over the threat posed to churches in the area. Henry Clark reiterated what an asset churches were in our rural communities - www.visitchurches.org.uk – can offer help on this matter.

Gravel Extraction in Etton – Gerry Kirt raised concern over Gravel extraction at Etton and particularly that the post extraction plan was to create an unnatural (to the area) landscape. The group

recognised that this is a very difficult topic as people have differing views of what is and isn't natural - http://www.peterborough.gov.uk/planning_and_building/planning_policy/minerals_and_waste.aspx

Tree O'clock – Frieda urged to group to get involved in Tree O'clock, a nationwide effort to plant as many trees as possible, locally the plan was to plant 8000 in one hour - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces/treeoclock/>

Living villages – June Woollard reminded the group that our villages must be a balance of preservation and being alive!

4. Community Engagement – testing the initial outputs of the Solution Centre

Leonie McCarthy presented the latest stage of the Solutions Centre (available on line) focussing on Community Engagement. The Solutions Centre is a process designed to bring together key organisations in the city, identify the drivers and barriers to better performance, develop solutions and implement them. At each stage the centre tests the progress with a group of wider stakeholders (in this case the RWG). The drivers were presented to the group for comment.

Comments included –

1. People feel very let down by particular examples where they have been “wronged” – this creates a general air of distrust. Past experiences create negativity
2. The group were very scathing of planning and the planning system – particularly where decisions had been made with no consistency or against policy.
3. People felt very frustrated when they didn't understand why or how a decision had been made
4. The group recognised that rural and urban issues are very different
5. The group spoke at length about the value of people, the ability to build relationships with people and form bonds of trust and understanding.
6. Stability of postholders was also a key barrier for the group – high turnover of staff means that communities don't know who to speak to and how as people move on.
7. The group also felt that the use of jargon was a big barrier to community engagement, they don't like huge documents and we must recognise that in the main, residents are non specialist, willing volunteers and massive consultation documents are not appropriate or conducive to good engagement.
8. The group wanted to see a communications standard – i.e. officers should respond within a set period of time and if they don't, the matter can be elevated to their seniors.

These comments will be feedback into the Solutions Centre as it moves into the solutions stage.

Neighbourhood Councils – Discussion focussed heavily on the new Neighbourhood Councils. The group were concerned that the Neighbourhood Councils were simply another layer of bureaucracy and that they would take power away from Parishes. Leonie reiterated that this wasn't what the Neighbourhood Councils are designed to do and the Chair urged parish councils to work with the Neighbourhood Councils to try and make them work. It was reported that Cllr Cereste (Leader of the

Council) had urged Parish Council's to work with the Neighbourhood Councils and that if they simply didn't work, he would review them.

PALC (Peterborough Association of Local Councils) Meeting on Thurs 7 Jan at 19:00 in the Town Hall at which the main topic will be interaction between parish and neighbourhood councils.

5. Sustainable Transport in the Rural Communities – Update

Nick Goodman gave a brief update from the TravelChoice team but time was short. A summary is available on the GPP website.

The group requested that we have easy to read large print timetables for buses

6. AOB

Nick Goodman reported that he had been in touch with Tracey Blackmore (Castor) who is involved in a campaign to remove the manifold Homes and Communities Agency signs that have sprung up across the area. Peterborough City Council had been supportive and is undertaking a mapping exercise to establish where the signs are excessive. They will then be writing to the HCA to ask for the removal of the excessive signage, there is potential to prosecute against excessive signage.

The group agreed to write a letter to HCA in support of their removal and to also copy in PCC and MP.

7. Date of next meeting : Duke of Bedford School, Main Hall, Thorney – 3rd February 2010, 7-9pm

RESPONSIBLE	ACTION	DEADLINE
NG	Nick Goodman to draft a note of thanks to Teresa and her team for their work on the Bus Service Review – but with a reminder about urban to rural transport	ASAP
TravelChoice	Request that bus timetables are large print and easy to read.	April 2010
NG	Write a letter to HCA outlining concerns over excessive signage in rural areas – copy to PCC and MP	ASAP