

CHAIRMANS REPORT 2023

January

John Butterworth was elected as the new Treasurer, Chairman Ian Jackson expressed thanks on behalf of the membership to John Kay for his services over the years.

A resident contacted the Local Government Ombudsman re the proposal to sell land classified as "Green Space" to Russel Homes, the argument being that the land has not been put on the open market despite the resident offering to buy the land and being told it was not for sale.

The council have already built over its allocated number of housing and there is no need for any development of this land.

Local Councillors, meeting at 'full council' expressed concerns over various aspects of the Rail Corridor Strategy / Littleborough SPD. One area of concern was the council purchase of Littleborough United Reform Church with the aim of establishing a Community Hub. Littleborough already has several Community Hubs, Littleborough Coach House, Littleborough Boxing Club, Littleborough Cricket Club, Hare Hill House, Holy Trinity Church. Some of these hubs are struggling financially and the addition of a further Hub would not help.

None of these hubs have been consulted about the council proposals, and the council does not appear to have followed a democratic process when it comes to using public money to purchase land and buildings.

The land behind the opticians, café and pet supplies has now been fenced off, reasons unknown!

Local shopkeepers have been given conflicting information by council representatives that businesses will/will not be subject to Compulsory Purchase Orders.

February

A local Councillor stated that the public were being treated badly over the issue of the sale of land at Dearnley and not being informed of any updates re planning meetings. It was also pointed out that Russell Homes is not complying with the Littleborough Town Design Statement.

Two Councillors along with Tracy Furnell and Ian Jackson attended a Planning Inspectorate meeting for "Places for Everyone". Bloor Homes and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority were represented by KC's. Tracy and Ian were allowed to speak in opposition to the Bloor Homes proposal. A link to the meeting has been posted on the Trust Facebook page.

Car parking in Littleborough is an ongoing issue, it is felt that the old gasworks site on Hare Hill Road would make a good car park. Previously the council have said it would be too expensive as an environmental survey would be needed due to possible contamination in the ground.

Other rumours circulating is that there are to be houses built on the site or a nursing home. Suggestion was made of a possible petition to make council take a more serious view of the car parking issues. Younger people's needs in the area also seem to be ignored, particularly the need for affordable homes within all the planning applications.

March

The Trust have had further conversations with Planning but have got no further with their request to have the planning application for the back of the Lake withdrawn due to the number of errors.

Trust member Thomas Quine informed the meeting that activity was taking place on the Akzo site, clearing scrub, and ploughing.

Questions were asked as to where the funds to buy the United Reformed Church would come from and what would the building be used for?

Councillor Dearnley suggested it could be the home of Wardle Anderson Band in the event they are evicted from Wardle School, a Township Office (the present one is totally unsuitable) Potential use by "Your Trust"

Members who attended the Planning Inspectorate meeting were been asked to provide further feedback, regarding the over-capacity of the roads being one of the subjects. An ecology report has also been submitted.

It was suggested that a Gazebo be purchased with suitable logo to attend public events in Littleborough such as the Rush Bearing Festival.

April

An article in the Daily Mail newspaper reported the potential demolition of a substantial number of new homes due to contamination in the ground. A communication from the Trust has been sent to the Daily Mail and BBC News outlining the situation at the Akzo site with respect to the reported contamination there.

Trust members attended the council planning meeting to raise objections to the development.

Formal complaints have been made by both Councillors and Trust members over the way they were treated during the course of the meeting.

It was reported that the United Reform Church Trustees have revealed that the council have paid considerably more for the church than the original open market price.

An extra day was allocated to the Places for Everyone to deal with transport. Councillor John Taylor and Trust member Tracy Furnell attended to present their views of the lack of infrastructure and over capacity roads in Littleborough and surrounding areas.

On April 13th. Littleborough Historical Society gave a presentation on "The History of Littleborough Civic Trust". None of the current Trust members were invited to contribute despite representations from Trust Chairman Ian Jackson who is himself, a member of the Historical Society.

May

Two members offered the use of a Gazebo. It was suggested the Trust have a presence at the upcoming Food and Drink Festival. The Trust have a couple of 6ft. banners featuring the Trust logo and the Flood Group logo which can be used with a gazebo.

The Freedom of Information request made to the council concerning the High Nets application was passed to a Nathan Matley of Your Trust.

The Russell Homes planning application will be before the Planning Committee on May 25th. Local residents will be allowed to speak for 5 minutes to voice any objections. Councillor John Taylor will also be allowed to speak in his role as Ward Councillor. Councillor Taylor urges as many people as possible to attend the meeting, meet at No.1 Riverside at 5.30pm. Placards will be provided. Councillor Taylor has also arranged a meeting the day before (May 24th.) at Dearnley Methodist Church from 6-7pm for residents to attend and make their feelings known.

It is believed that the Planning Committee have been misled over the Akzo planning application due to the fact that underground water sources have not been disclosed. Anybody who observes any kind of activity on the Akzo site are encouraged to contact the Trust due to the possibility of contaminated ground being disturbed.

Peter Reed expressed his thanks to the meeting for the members support during his tenure as a councillor.

June

Barker's Wood: It was reported that there had been a number of camp fires and, possibly maliciously, some weed killer had been put down around the edges which was killing some of the plants.

Also, a memorial plaque to Marjorie Barker is to be erected within the woods.

Albeit nothing was declared under this item, given the fact that Cllr. John Blundell and Cllr. Richard Jackson attended the meeting, the Chairman, mid-way through the meeting asked them both if they wished to have an opportunity to speak.

They declined, stating that they were attending as local residents.

Inevitably, the attendee's attention turned to them which resulted in them putting everything and everyone down, no matter what the subject, which of course mainly related to planning matters.

We are reviewing our attendance policy as a result.

July

One minutes silence was held in respect of the tragic death of Trust member and Trustee Daniel Ames.

It is understood that the planning application by Spar, to turn the former Lake Garage into a convenience store has been “called in” by Cllr. Besford due potential to excessive noise that will be produced by ventilation fans running 24 hrs. Smithy Bridge “Mini Mart” have also raised objections. There is also concern for traffic issues.

Work has now started on the former AKZO Nobel site with initial ground clearance. Assurance has been received to say only the top layers are being removed and not disturbing the contaminated ground. Our concerns have been given to the council. Members have asked if the trees that have been felled will be replaced. Was an ecological survey carried out to ensure there were no birds nesting in these trees, no survey results can be found.

Members asked what has happened to the educational program that used to be a part of the old visitor centre. This was run by a company by the name of Nature Ed who appear to have gone into administration. There are rumours that the pond is to be drained. Councillor Jackson offered to make enquiries.

Discussions are still taking place with the Places for Everyone and the Planning Inspectorate. It appears that Andy Burnham only asked for greenbelt and not brown field sites.

Cllr. Jackson informed the meeting that the badly potholed section of the A58 Blackstone Edge Road is to be resurfaced 2024. The Greater Manchester “Clean air charging zone” is to be discontinued and a new “Clean air plan” is to be developed to meet government emission targets. Once developed, the plan will be subject to government approval. Full details can be found at cleanairgm.com

August

At the July meeting questions were asked about the educational facilities that used to be in the Visitor Centre prior to the RSPCA taking over the building and also the apparent loss of the Sensory Garden. Councillor Jackson volunteered to make enquiries.

Rake Wood Higher Mill.

The planning application for the site has to be re submitted due to inaccuracies in the original. A previous use of the building as an educational “energy centre” was linked to the wind turbine that is on site. It is unsure if the change of use of the site will result in the turbine being removed.

High Nets, Hollingworth Lake.

No new proposals at the time of writing, the Trust are still awaiting a response to our Freedom of Information request which has now exceeded the timespan for a reply.

Spar, Smithy Bridge, Smithy Bridge pub.

There are still concerns within the Planning Department over plans to develop the old Lake Garage site by Spar.

The Smithy Bridge pub site was to have been developed by RBH but government funding for them has been put on hold. "First Choice Homes", Oldham, have now taken over responsibility to build the proposed flats. It was suggested they are sent a copy of the Littleborough Town Design Statement to ensure designs are within keeping of the area.

Bloor Homes.

The proposed Bloor Homes development is Greenbelt land. With the refusal of the planning application for a farm shop and children's activity centre at Bank Top Farm on the grounds that it is Greenbelt land, it was asked, will the Bloor Homes proposal be refused for the same reason or will Andy Burnham remove the Greenbelt status for them?

AKZO

Enforcement Officers have visited the site. Action taken to halt development work until all pre commencement plans are satisfied. The location of unrecorded water course is still an issue to be resolved.

RSPCA / Visitor Centre

The education service provider is no longer trading, Your Trust (formerly known as Link4Life) has now taken over this service. Negotiations are taking place with the RSPCA for facilities to enable the education service to resume operations as funding is in place.

Funding has now also been approved to reinstate and increase the size of the Community Sensory Garden on the RSPCA site.

A complete set of rechargeable batteries have now been purchased for use in the time lapse cameras on the data logging site.

A set of readings were to be taken last week but have been postponed until next week due to Flood Group members being away on holiday or unavailable due to other reasons.

The Flood Group had a presence at the Picnic in the Park event with relevant literature available for the public to take away.

Work on the flood defence project seems to have restarted on Todmorden Road, hopefully the long-awaited visit to the Environment Agency staff on site will now soon go ahead.

Trust members attended the Rush Bearing Festival in Hare Hill Park with our new gazebo which was kindly donated by a member. Civic Trust and Flood Group banners were on display and associated literature. Hopefully the Trust will be able to

be present at future events, Treasurer John Butterworth has registered with LEAF our wish to be part of future events.

On a sad note, the Trust was represented at the funeral of the wife of Trust member John Kay and the funeral of Trust member Daniel Ames.

John informed the meeting that monies raised in donations will be given to the NSPCC.

Donations at Daniels funeral will go to the North West Air Ambulance.

September

Lots of activity on Facebook, Discuss Littleborough concerning the former AKZO Nobel site. Prime concerns seem to be the presence of wildlife on the site (deer) where deep excavations and earth moving is taking place which could result in the deer falling into or being trapped in the holes. The presence of the deer seems to indicate that the site is not secure which could result in children gaining access and being exposed to the same danger.

Members were encouraged to email their concerns to spcarochdale@btconnect.com Debris has been reported on Hollingworth Road, left by HGV's leaving the site, there seems to be no vehicle wheel washing facility on site.

With it locally known to be contaminated land being disturbed, any rainfall run-off is going into the canal.

An employee on site has informed a Trust member of the lack of any PPE or RPE on site as well as restrictions on mobile phone use and photography.

Our observations were sent to the council.

Questions were asked about the nature of the large metal mast and wooden posts that have been erected in and around Smithy Bridge.

They have been erected by a company called iX Internet and will be used to carry 6G fibre optic internet data.

October

A lot of earth moving is now taking place at the former AKZO Nobel site and HGV's are leaving lots of debris on Hollingworth Road. A street sweeper is being used at the moment but it is understood that a wheel washing facility should be in place on site.

Recent excavation has revealed a buried black substance. Speculation is that it could be bitumen from the time that Armour Hess, as Akzo was once called, were involved in the processing of hydro carbon products.

Recent rainfall has resulted in groundwater from the site finding its way into the canal making the water cloudy and people have stated that there is also a smell. The Canal and River Trust have been informed and have stated they will investigate.

Numerous emails have been exchanged between the Trust and council environmental department.

The Sensory Garden is soon to be planted.

The Education Hub will be restarting in line with the start of the school year next September but may also offer events next summer.

Parking bays beyond the RSPCA are to be clearly marked out to encourage more orderly parking.

Councillors have met with Your Trust who have outlined their future plans, some short term, others long term. A couple mentioned a new bird watching hut, the existing hut has been subject to vandalism.

November

The new National Flood Forum rep for our area attended the meeting and gave a short but informative presentation on all flood related matters both locally and nationally.

A set of data logger readings were taken on Friday November 9th.

RMBC have purchased the Toll House and the property next door at the end of Todmorden Road at the junction with the A58. The aim is to develop an Information Hub.

There is an e-magazine which covers everything talked about.

A visit to the Environment Agency works at Gale is still to be arranged. Drone footage of the site can be viewed on the "Flood Hub" website.

December

As most members will be aware, the Trust has been asked to vacate our Monday slot at the Boxing Club. Alternative dates and times were offered but none were deemed suitable. Consequently, the Trust have been offered a room at Littleborough Coach House which we have gratefully accepted.

Giving all time to recover from the Festive Season, our next meeting will be at the Coach House on Feb.12th, start time 7pm.

Ian Jackson
Chairman

Littleborough Civic Trust Finances 2023

Balance from 31st December 2022 **£2,868.90**

Income:

Membership (44) £440.00
Interest. £66.19

Expenditure:

Room Hire (13 Months) £325.00
Remembrance Wreath £25.00
Flowers & Card £31.58
Rush bearing Pitch fee £15.00
Civic Voice Fees £45.00
Misc' Items. £31.81
(Batteries, etc)

Total Income: £506.19

Total Expenditure: £473.39

Balance at 31st December 2023: **£2901.70**