

Chairman's Report 2024

February (no meeting is held in January)

Several local planning applications were discussed; along with local eyesores in need of demolition.

Members of the Littleborough Flood Resilience sub-Group along with a representative from Rochdale Council and another from the National Flood Forum attended a presentation at the flood alleviation scheme site at Gale. Places were limited as we had to share with the Wardleworth Flood Group. The presentation was very informative with lots of visual content and covered the recently completed Riverstone Bridge project and an up-to-date account of the Gale site. Lots of preparatory work is still to take place before actual construction of the flood defences starts. The National Flood Forum are going to prepare a presentation for the members and will be given at our March meeting.

One member/trustee was given Life Membership of the Trust in recognition of all her work over the past years.

The council litter picking policy only seems to favour groups and not individuals who are concerned they could be accused of "fly tipping" when leaving bags by litterbins. Councillors Taylor and Jackson volunteered to look into the matter.

Why is there not 3-hour free parking at Hollingworth Lake similar to car parks in Rochdale? Parking at the Lake was free after 6pm, this has now been pushed back to 8pm, local businesses were not consulted and are concerned that this will cause loss of trade.

Recent filming by TV companies resulted in the car park being closed to accommodate film crew vehicles. Local businesses expressed concern that this had caused loss of trade. Walkways around the back of the Lake were closed off when filming took place there. Members of the public have paid for memorials to loved ones which are placed at the back of the Lake but were denied access to them by the film crew security people.

March

Wallis's Amusement arcade has kindly offered assistance to litter picking groups with provision of equipment and use of bins.

Monies from TV filming at Hollingworth Lake given to Rochdale Council are to contribute towards improvements of footpaths and car parking at the RSPCA site.

As always, local planning applications/updates were discussed.

Following concern regarding a major housing development on a former brownfield site the Environment Agency have visited the site following complaints of water run-

off into the canal and mud being deposited on Hollingworth Road by HGV's leaving the site. The EA were happy that these issues have been dealt with.

Greater Manchester Save The Greenbelt Group are still fundraising to finance a judicial review in an attempt to stop Greater Manchester Mayor's scheme called 'Places for Everyone.

April

The site has been cleared and construction work has now started on land that was the Smithy Bridge pub.

An email has been sent to the MP, George Galloway's office inviting him to a Trust meeting. A reply has been received stating that as a new MP he is very busy but will get back to us when time permits.

Members expressed to local councillors present regarding Neighbourhood Watch.

Lots of reports of Anti-Social Behaviour in the area, cars damaged and written off in the Todmorden Road and Calderbrook Road area as a result of dangerous driving. In one incident the perpetrator fled the scene.

Groups of youths throwing eggs at passing vehicles.

There is a gang of youths riding around on off road bikes with no number plates and the riders not wearing crash helmets but covering their faces with balaclavas.

Vehicles are regularly exceeding the speed limits, driving on the wrong side of the road to avoid traffic queues, particularly on the A58 and Smithy Bridge/Hollingworth Road area.

Inconsiderate vehicle parking blocking pathways. Dog walkers failing to clean up their dog's mess.

As a member of Neighbourhood Watch the Trust will upload these concerns to the Neighbourhood Watch website. Anybody can do this, just go on their website, and sign up. Photo/Video footage is always welcome.

Lots of trees have recently been planted in the Ealees / Whittaker area, nobody seemed to know who by but one suggestion was it could be part of a carbon offset project.

The Trust are to contact Star Academies for any updates on the proposed new High School.

May

Planning updates.

a) Rake Wood Higher Mill.

It has been deemed not necessary to make disabled access compulsory in this application. Persons with disabilities may wish to object to this.

b) High Nets, Hollingworth Lake.

There are still concerns about the validity of the planning application and these have been highlighted in an email to RMBC. The Trust is still waiting for a reply from the Case Officer.

c) Spar, Smithy Bridge, Smithy Bridge pub.

Spar are expected to appeal the latest planning application refusal.

Construction of the apartment block continues at the site of the old Smithy Bridge pub.

d) Bloor Homes.

Nothing to report.

e) AKZO

Construction work has now started. The stonework being used appears to be artificial and not real stone as stipulated in the Littleborough Town Design Statement.

Issues were raised over the new bus timetables. Complaints can be made on the Transport for Greater Manchester website.

June

Planning updates:

Greater Manchester Mayor's scheme called 'Places for Everyone: one member gave an update about the proposed judicial review. The costs of £30,000 already accrued and appears it will take a long time and be very expensive.

Flood update: major works at Gale to continue until end of 2027. Mr Butterworth agreed to help with data collection from Blackstone Edge moors.

Food and drink festival a great success.

A member informed us that Pennine in Bloom are running a competition for children to name the boat at canal side and has had great engagement from local primary schools

Barkers Wood, of which the Trust are custodians. A group of children will be going in for forest activities with the countryside rangers from Hollingworth Lake.

July

Gale flood defence work. Local residents have complained about tree felling on the site. Members of the Trust's Flood Group have met with site management who insist they are in regular contact with the residents. Piling work is to start circa July 15th.

Network Rail

Following on from complaints about the regular failure of the level crossing barrier at Smithy Bridge, Network Rail have responded by stating it is a result of increased rail traffic preventing repairs to what they say is ageing equipment. No reply has been received following complaints of the level crossing subway flooding during periods of heavy rainfall.

Local amateur photographer Andrew Lupton gave a brief talk to the members expressing his concern over wildlife on the Akzo building site, mainly deer. There seem to be a number of gaps in the security fencing around the site. He was to meet with the RSPCA and council but the meeting was cancelled. Councillor Jackson volunteered to report the issue to the council Enforcement Officer.

A Trust member spoke to the meeting to expand on his original submitted document on the upkeep by volunteers of the three church graveyards. 'Action Together' have donated a cordless lawn mower and strimmer. Anyone wishing to volunteer in the upkeep of them would be most welcome.

August

Guest speaker Sturt Mendelsohn gave a short presentation on the archaeology of the area. Roman coins and lead artifacts have been found close to Hollingworth Road suggesting that a Roman Road passed through the area. A full archaeology survey is incomplete so there could be more to discover. Geophysics survey also suggests the existence of a Roman Road.

Local councillors are against the Bloor Homes plan and are working together to formulate an official objection.

Anybody wishing to make their own objection should include valid reasons for their objections. A simple "I object" will not carry any weight.

Members have noted that Heavy Goods Vehicles are parking on Hollingworth Road and on the pavement making it difficult/impossible for pedestrians to pass.

Members of the Flood Group attended a workshop hosted by the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee. Organizations represented at the workshop were The National Flood Forum, Environment Agency, RMBC. Presentations were given covering various aspects of the impact of flooding in the community including insurance and access to personal flood protection equipment. As mentioned in a previous email. The Environment Agency will be holding drop-in sessions at Littleborough Library.

An Olympic Event was held in Hare Hill Park, Sunday August 18th. mainly for the kids by the Archery Club to celebrate local girl Sybil Fenton Newall (17 October 1854 – 24 June 1929), best known as “Queenie” Newall who won Olympic Gold for archery in 1908 and who lived at Hare Hill House.

Work is to start on the drains under the railway subway at Smithy Bridge to address the flooding problem.

Members were advised/given advance notice of the following:

There will be no rail services between Rochdale and Manchester from Friday September 6th. until Monday September 23rd. for replacement of a bridge over the M62 west of Castleton. There will be a replacement bus service from Rochdale to Manchester.

Latest information is that trains from Leeds to Manchester will terminate at Hebden Bridge where there will be a replacement bus service.

Trains from Blackburn to Manchester will terminate at Todmorden where there will be a replacement bus service.

The tram service from Rochdale to Manchester will restart on Monday August 19th. following the closure due to a land slip.

The M62 will close on Friday September 6th. pm. until Monday September 9th. am.

It will close again on Friday September 20th. pm. until Monday September 23rd. am.

Diversion signs will be in place but there could potentially be a lot of traffic on the A58 through Littleborough on these dates.

It was noted that Network Rail could take advantage of these closures to make permanent repairs to the Level Crossing at Smithy Bridge.

September

Bloor Homes.

The Trust have pointed out to the Planning Dept. that they feel there are numerous flaws in the planning application one of which is a breach of data protection and should be withdrawn. Local councillors have submitted a comprehensive and detailed objection to the application.

The playing fields at the side of the Cricket Club where the proposed new School is to be built, Littleborough Junior Football Club have played on this field for a long time, but now the council has stopped cutting it because it has been handed over to the Education Department and they don't want anything to do with cutting the grass.

The Football Club has to cut it with a little hand mower, and there is now a big loss of playing ground in and around Littleborough.

October

Councillor Taylor requested a Public Meeting to discuss the Bloor Homes planning proposal but was unsuccessful, he plans to re submit the request.

It is understood that Rochdale Council's Planning Department and Highways Department would not attend any such meeting.

'Your Trust' (an organisation/offshoot of Rochdale Council) have submitted an application to increase parking charges and extend the hours they will be applicable. This will be discussed at a Pennine Township meeting at No. 1 Riverside 6pm on November 12th.

November

Bloor Homes.

There has been much recent discussion about holding a public meeting concerning the Bloor Homes potential planning application. It seems that neither Bloor Homes or the Planning Department would attend such a meeting. Councillors Jackson and Dearnley suggested it would be better to make a constructive objection to present to the Planning Department once the details of the application are fully known.

At previous meetings with Bloor Homes, we were assured that access to the development from the Smithy Bridge Road side would be limited to emergency vehicles only. Members have seen plans that show what appears to be public access for vehicles to the site.

Information requested by the Trust in connection with planning matters has still not been received.

Work to convert the building commonly known as the Toll House at the junction of Todmorden Road and A58 into a community hub has been delayed due to it being listed and carrying a Blue Plaque. Littleborough Historical Society advise that it was never a Toll House and as such should not have been given listed status. The Trust accept this and the Blue Plaque will be removed; Historical England informed and the building will be de-listed, this will allow refurbishment work to commence.

Pennine in Bloom achieved Gold as this year's awards

Littleborough achieved Gold which covers Shore, Canalside, fire station, Smithy Bridge Library, Little Clegg Road in Smithy Bridge, and a back alley in Smithy Bridge.

Hollingworth Lake, Hare Hill Park and Watergrove reservoir all received Gold

All areas were judged to be outstanding. Winter pansies, primulas and bulbs have been planted in all areas now plus Smithy Bridge playing field

Remembrance Day service was well attended, many thanks to all who assisted.

Members commented that it is a pity the church clock is not working. It was suggested that the council is responsible for maintenance of the clock but it seems that there is a health and safety issue with access to the mechanism.

Road markings in the village need repainting, in particular at the junction of Hare Hill Road and the A58.

The AGM will precede our next meeting which will be strictly members only. In line with the Constitution, three Trustees will stand down so there will be vacancies for a secretary and a minute taker. Would anybody interested in either position please give forward notice.

December

Local playing fields.

Money has been earmarked by the government to go towards playing fields. It is hoped that Pennine Township will receive some of this funding. Councillor Jackson volunteered to investigate.

New Street.

Work has started on the second phase of the New Street development. Reports of heavy plant vehicles using the existing residential roads to access the site are to be investigated by Councillor Branton.

Local bus services.

There seems to be confusion over local bus services, in particular No. 590 which is run by Calderdale. TFGM are willing to meet with residents to discuss Bee Network routes, timings and frequencies. Councillor Jackson volunteered to act as go between.

6 Church Street, 2 Todmorden Road.

The building known as the Toll House has now been delisted by the Historic England and work has now commenced on renovation. The first phase will be to make the building safe due to its poor condition.

Parish Church clock.

It is understood that the clock, which has not worked for some time is the responsibility of the council for maintenance/repairs. It seems that there is an issue with Health and Safety concerning access to the clock mechanism.

Chairman, Ian Jackson has volunteered to approach local businessmen at an upcoming Gentleman's dinner to ask if they would be willing to contribute to the cost of repairs.

Amendment to November minutes.

Approximately a week before the Remembrance Day service, the Council's contractors placed the black/yellow road signs around the Square and relevant points around the centre of Littleborough, advising of travel disruption on Sunday 10th.

Unfortunately, the one at the junction of Hare Hill Rd., and Church St., also had a 'Road Ahead Closed' placed with it.

During the week leading up to the 10th, bus drivers were taking heed of the 'premature' signage and refusing to enter Hare Hill Rd., thus causing significant travel disruption for the residents of Shore and Calderbrook. Councillor Richard Jackson volunteered to investigate.

Littleborough Civic Trust Finances 2024

Balance from 31st December 2023 **£2901.70**

Income:

Membership (66) £660.00
Interest. £82.56

Expenditure:

Room Hire (11 Months) £275.00
Remembrance Wreath £25.00
Civic Voice Fees £45.00
Internet Domain Name £9.05
Web Hosting £22.78

Total Income: £742.56

Total Expenditure: £376.83

Balance at 31st December 2024: **£3267.43**