

Present

Vincent Robertson far49@o2.co.uk

Tom Shepherd

Mary Sherwin

Sue Richmond, Councillor

Tony Cooper

Pippa Smaling

Rob George

Neil Brimer

Ann & Stan Parker annparker275@yahoo.com

Site maintenance

PS: Paths are nearly completed, should be so in the next few days. Play area, from the Hospital to near the orchard. Plug planting of identical species with Durham Wildlife Trust into the gaps on the meadows (which were funded by CITA based on landfill funds and partnered with DWT.) Nick Leaming working on fencing project replicating Comets Garth up to the bike track.

Events

Handed around the flyer for Music on West Park Hill (MOWPH). TS asked who was approached and was it via Darlington For Culture (DfC). TC replied yes, no funding from the council but Bussey and Armstrong (B&A) are half-funding. Spooky trail to be arranged after that (PS). TS question about rubbish collection; PS commented additional bins will be in place. VR questioned if there is a risk of damaging the new wildflowers; PS responded that it will be kept away from those areas. TS asked about staffing of the bike track; PS replied that 4motion will be doing it.

TC asked about a bulb planting event; PS replied that it could be done later in the year. TC asked who would do the plan. PS said daffodils and crocuses at main entrance. JB asked about the path up from the land bridge from Comets Garth. TC mentioned concern that planting randomly would not be appropriate; but asked if planting should be trialled on the old road leading to the main entrance. TC suggested to consult Nick Leaming. NB suggested lining the paths of the main entrances.

Community feedback

AB stated the level of expectation of outcomes from the meeting, in that only issues relating within West Park park boundary are applicable.

MS mentioned a parking incident on George Stephenson Drive; outside of the scope of West Park Friends Group (WPFG). Ann Parker raised an issue about anti-social behaviour on

people walking along garden walls adjoining West Auckland Road and trespassing into the back gardens, including theft of patio furniture which is possibly related. Echoed by MS. This is outside of WPF. Recommended to contact People and Communities Together (PACT) which hold regular meetings; RG explained the importance of PACT issues in elevating priorities.

TS said that residents have taken to mowing the broad verges along Collingsway due to grass being left long and then the cuttings remaining. TC replied that it's been adopted by the council; RG to mention to Street Scene.

AP asked about the responsibility for the condition of a tree on the corner of their property; TC replied that very small strips of green space are not adopted by the council, and that the flat owners (B&A) would look at it.

JB asked that the annual levy letter should state what the levy pays for so that people understand it, in agreement with AP that people don't understand what the levy should pay for. TC said that the annual letter does contain information. JB said that it's not enough because it doesn't get read fully and that a short summary in the front; agreed by AP. TC to speak to County Durham Community Foundation (CDCF).

VR raised condition of paths as being an example of something well done, but said that bikes from the bike track are mis-using the paths (e.g. by skidding) which is then damaging the path; therefore can we educate the users to not do this. VR said that motorbikes and quad bikes have been gaining access; PS replied that the gate lock has been taken, and TC commented that the gate cannot be permanently locked because ambulances have in the past struggled to get in to attend to accidents on the bike track. Clarification between PS, VR, TC around the gate in question; PS and VR confirmed the gate is being locked but the lock has been stolen. AB asked if there's any improvement that can be made to the paths which encourages bike track users to go a different way; TC and RG didn't understand why the users would use the pedestrian paths because there's an alternative anyway.

VR raised issue of air rifles, including shooting at people. AP asked if CCTV was an option; RG said that the price was prohibitive.

NB said that the Facebook page had experienced a very large increase in the number of likes due to MOWPH.

TC asked VR for a general view of the park given that nobody from the Cockerton side had attended the WPF before. Discussion around issues of dogs not being on leads. JB and VR said that they should be on leads with VR saying that there is a Darlington by-law; PS and RG stated that this was superseded by the Dog Control Orders in Darlington, of which one applies to the Play Park but not elsewhere.

AOB

JB asked about Green Flag; PS reported that it was awarded today and that a location for a flag is now required. NB talked about the lack of brown signs for West Park and could this be considered in with a proposal. RG asked for a poll on where it should be placed. TC proposed the main entrance. RG lead a proposal to place it near that entrance but towards the main road. TC asked if there's a requirement to reapply and therefore pay each year, and what the cost is. NB recalled £395. RG to check prices. RG suggested that the flagpole should not be on its own and should be part of a larger installation to draw attention to people on West Auckland Road. JB asked if levy funding could go towards an installation to include the flagpole; AB said that this was a question to Steering Group because it would not actually be on park land. TC asked if Steering Group would consider adding the balancing ponds, which are near the proposed flagpole site, could be added to the Park bounds. RG will include a brown sign request to Highways. All in agreement on the proposal to take to Steering Group.

VR talked about the redesigned bridleway work and horseshoe motif at Richmond Close, as paid by West Park Levy, but asked if it could be signed to explain the philosophy; TC explained the principle that the historic bridleway used to have a packhorse bridge over that 1862 railway line at that point, and therefore it is to echo that; and that the stone is from the same Teesdale quarry which related to the original railway line, and is the source for the stonework on West Park Village in general. TC mentioned a leaflet that will be created for the 10th anniversary.

TS asked who takes responsibility for the balancing ponds. TC responded that it is the council, but they were designed with a level of aesthetic above the civil engineering requirements; only the Play Area is decorative. TS asked if any Levy money was spent on the balancing ponds if they are maintained by the council; RG and TC responded no.

JB asked if fencing around the Play Area pond has been discussed due to observing older children on bikes almost accidentally knocking younger children into the pond. RG replied that Nick Leaming is being consulted on this as part of the overall fencing project, because it has already been identified as a potential problem. Discussion around the precise requirements. AB asked that we discuss it once Nick Leaming has come back with a proposal. RG asks that we circulate the proposal by e-mail rather than waiting for the next meeting, because it needs to be addressed more quickly.

TS asked about the geocaches; PS and NB said that they should still be up there but haven't been found for a few years.

PS asked if the Playbuilders sign, which has been defaced, should be replaced with a noticeboard or some sort of sign. General agreement for a noticeboard, with emergency contacts. **Action PS.**

TS asked if the new logo image has been used yet. AB replied that it hadn't been used but will sort it soon. NB requested it too. **Action AB.**

TS asked about the spending of the levy now that the value is increasing due to the new housing. AB outlined some of the spend as feedback from the Steering Group (reported during the last meeting) and lead into a description of the newer properties having a fund which is eligible for broader spending on community events. TC described the newer community levy, which ultimately will be approximately half on community events. TC said that CDCF have been capped to a maximum fee rather than a percentage of the fund present; and that some money will possibly be moved into an endowment fund for larger 10-year spend projects. RG explained that the amount earmarked for endowment is conservative based on estimates of previous spend.

JB asked if money could be set aside for replacing paths with more robust solution against bikes; PS explained that the Park's substrate does not permit solid paths due to movement; RG said that more robust paths do exist but would likely not work on a gradient.

VR asked which properties pay the levy, with respect to the new houses in the B&A build; TC replied that they are all to pay in, and that they will also be funding an additional green space. NB asked if they will be separated; RG said that this is open for discussion. TC said that the pot of money would probably be kept separate so that money from the existing funds is not bled into the new scheme, but that ultimately it would probably be combined. VR asked if he could voluntarily pay because he uses it extensively. NB mentioned that an earlier proposal was for other people or bodies to make donations. Discussions around the future possibilities of constituting a group for spending associated smaller amounts of money.

TC said that the watermain corridor will be started in Spring next year.

Time of next meeting

Thursday 22nd Oct 2015, 6.30pm, probably West Park Academy (Alderman Leach School)

Meeting finished 8.25pm

Andrew Buckingham