

Friends of West Park Meeting
Thursday 26th Jan 2017

Meeting started, 6.00pm.

Apologies: Tony Cooper, Jackie Buckingham.

Present: Andrew Buckingham, Marleen Vincenten, Bill Herbert, Evan Madison, Peter Anthony, Tom Shepherd, Rob George, David Oliver, Pippa Smaling (DBC), Dean Scott (DBC)

Art project.

MV & BH gave background to the art strategy, and the intention to engage residents to ask their views on the use of artwork on the next phase of the development; to gauge what people's ideas are about what's important: e.g. architecture, layout, green space, noise, and artwork.

PA asked if BH is involved in the layout of the paths etc, and praised the artwork which he and many others enjoy; but is concerned due to standard of paths in winter months sticking to dogs' feet; also due to quad bikes etc.

TS: some of the higher viewing points have been affected by the height of the tree growth, so perhaps this concept of sight lines needs taking into account.

RG asked if it positive to try and find out about things rather than have it very obviously told?

PA and BH mentioned car parking for people who are visiting. RG: South Park is OK because there is easy parking along the roadside.

PA: some signage with distances would be good, rather than just signs with cycling times.

TS asked if there is an option to control the topography. BH confirmed due to the requirements to build a mound to quieten the motorway.

AB asked if we should postpone further discussion for a workshop or focus group meeting to discuss this in full.

Site Maintenance, specifically Play Area Improvements.

DS is responsible for play areas across Darlington. Issues to discuss are rope bridge repairs, rope bridge safety, potential CCTV, issues of water accumulation, and feedback from users particularly on the Facebook site. DS: should rope bridge be retained? All: general agreement.

PA: misbehaviour is the main problem, have even called Police; issue around the shops too; no point fixing until the vandalism is addressed. DS: strong feeling that surveillance is required? All: general agreement. DS: possibility to ask the school (ALPS) if could use their CCTV; alternatively can put in a system connected to DBC's with loudspeaker to address them; no cost because this would be a trial. All: agreement. RG: worth collecting a baseline statistic of how bad it is now before CCTV equipment goes it.

DS: summarised that the opinion is to retain the bridge and modify it; 7m timber beam is difficult to source so perhaps steel beam (painted) would be better, potentially matched into the green of the railings etc. PS: volunteers are being lined up to repair the graffiti inside the playhouse using repellent paint. AB: decision is to use a metal beam given that the playpark needs re-opening as soon as possible, in the face of the timber being too difficult to source.

DS: safety factor of the surface below the bridge needs consideration; either to change the surface underneath or to reduce the drop. RG: building up the land underneath to reduce the drop would also help with drainage. PA: where would the cost come from? RG: discussions to be had around the service level agreement (SLA) which will encompass setting boundaries for costs more precisely. AB: suggest we proceed and then agree the cost split afterwards.

DS: rotator dish drainage issue; is there approval to correct the drainage? RG: possibly a land drain is required and would be feasible given the topology. DS: will look into land drains.

DS: is there desire to keep the sandpit in current state, given that the buckets etc are being damaged; would swings be a better match? RG: sandpit is popular in Broken Scar. DS: asked if another piece of equipment there would be wanted instead. BH: if the CCTV works, and the drainage is sorted, perhaps repairing the sandpit would be worthwhile. PA suggested addressing the other issues first and patching up the sandpit for now, then delaying a more significant decision until later.

PA: gate at the playpark keeps getting vandalised; option for a stile? PS: not possible due to accessibility. PA: will CCTV increase engagement with the Police? DS: no, recommend ring 101. PS: West Park is listed as a patrol area for PACT.

DO: paths are being damaged due to council vehicles going up to do work. RG: problem with having bins in centre of the park, because collection needs to take place in winter and the paths are large enough to accommodate the vehicles. PA: cycles are taken up by cars taking cycles up there. RG: this is the club which partners in the maintenance of the bike track; can have a discussion with them.

TS: leaves on footpath behind the hospital making it very slippery. PS: will look at getting

AB: email has been received from a resident asking for a discussion about how to prevent motorcycles and quad bikes getting in. RG: compromised between barrier and ensuring access for cycles and pushchairs etc. AB asked if circumstances have changed since the last evaluation which did not result in any solution. PA asked if we could consider

blocking quad bikes. AB asked if there was any objection to installing objects to block quad bikes; no objections. BH: perhaps the blacksmith who was involved in the project would like to propose something.

Events.

AB: if anybody has any ideas then let Pippa know. RG: perhaps the park should be promoted to local groups, so that they will form their own usage without requiring a lot of management resource for events.

PS: litter pick will be arranged. DO: domestic wheelie bins being left out has resulted in rubbish being blown onto the park.

AB: RG's comment about engaging local groups; any practical suggestions for which groups might be engaged? MV: running groups; will contact them. BH: Scouts; PS can speak to them. BH found a list of groups on the DBC website. RG: suggest a reciprocal arrangement, e.g. usage of the park in exchange for activity in return such as a litter pick.

Community Feedback.

DO: publicity on website needs updating; levy price has gone up each year: require an income and balance sheet; should be a formal process for notifying residents of the spend. AB: the website and information is all done by volunteers and therefore we need more people to get involved, such as you are. DO: somebody should be paid to do it. RG: the information is available by turning up to the meeting and asking about it. General agreement that more formalised arrangement upon publishing financial information should be made. RG explained that 30% to 50% management fee is not unusual, so this model is efficient. JB: engagement with residents has been difficult, including surveys and anecdotal comments with neighbours. TS: did a leaflet drop, only 4% response in having an interest in where the levy is spent.

DO: previous meeting mentioned funding for Cockerton Library; how is this possible? AB: Levy terms of newer properties allow for community engagement; this is separated between the newer and older properties and cannot be mixed.

TS: an inventory of trees in the park was mentioned; is this still an active concern; could perhaps a masters degree student have a project to map which trees are in each block? PS: have a map of what was originally. TS: required for ecology and habitat management. RG: action for the group to look into somebody to do a tree management survey and policy. BH may have a contact at the landscape company which is involved in the new phase of the park. RG to also obtain a contact for giving a quote.

AOB.

Meeting ended, 8pm.

Date of Next Meeting: 6pm, Thu 20th April 2017.