

General Meeting of Wookey Hole Residents Forum (WHRF)

Wednesday 30th April 2014

Wookey Hole Community Hall, School Hill, Wookey Hole

Report

Apologies: *Michael Astle, Louise Burton, Ed and Linda Danson, Lucy White, Juliet Davey, Bima Clark, John Winstone, Rowland Marshall, Chris Briton, Dave Hayward, David Ball, Joanna Davey, Nicki Davey, Paul and Sophia Harris, Justin Harris.*

The first meeting of Wookey Hole Residents Forum was attended by seven members of the committee and 25 residents. The meeting was chaired by the Rev: Hugh Talbott.

1. Members, Jenny Lewis and David Scarth, proposed and seconded respectively the appointment of a committee. A vote was taken and the motion was passed, 32 voting for and 0 against. The membership of the first committee of WHRF is therefore as follows:-

Hugh Talbott	Chair	Mary Gaunt	Committee member
Chris Blackford	Vice chair	Julia Scarth	Committee member
Nicky Venning	Secretary	Louise Burton	Committee member
Roger Hancock	Treasurer	John Grange	Committee member

2. Members, Jenny Lewis and David Scarth, proposed and seconded respectively, the ratification of a Constitution in the format attached. A vote was taken and the motion was passed, 32 voting for and 0 against.

3. **Treasurer's Report**

Roger Hancock advised that WHRF had received a donation of £187 from an inactive Wookey Hole group. £57 had been spent on 'wine + cheese' at the meeting held on January 29th 2014 to discuss the formation of a Resident's Association. A net sum of £130 is now available. Mr Hancock will consider whether a bank account is needed by the Forum.

4. **Working Party Reports**

At the discussion meeting in January it was agreed that WHRF should be an 'umbrella organisation' formed to support Working Parties of local residents who have a particular interest and '*want to do something about it*'. Above all else, the Forum wished to avoid being a 'committee-led' organisation where a small number of people work very hard, then '*run out of puff*'. The ten groups formed since January gave a brief summary of what they had achieved so far and what they hoped to do before the next meeting.

- a) **Buses and Footpaths Working Party**

Mary Gaunt marypigs@hotmail.co.uk

The mooted reduction in the 670 service has been avoided for the time-being but County Council funding cuts mean the operator, Webber, must make a profit on the service if the timetable is to continue unchanged. Mary encouraged us all to use the service, which, she said, takes no more than 12 minutes to reach Wells. She advised that numbers using the bus are monitored closely and even 'non-payers,' using a bus-pass are counted as 'users'. Timetables are on display on village notice boards.

Mary and her team have improved the drainage on the Wookey Hole to Wells footpath, which had become wet and muddy. Residents are asked to ring Mary if they know of a path/stile/fence that

should be looked at. She encouraged us all to carry secateurs when walking and to 'adopt a path' if we use it regularly.

Continued:

Mr Livings advocated that 'kissing-gates' were better than stiles for older residents and dogs, especially. Mr Livings made mention of a path near Reservoir Lane. Mr Livings will discuss the problem with Mary after the meeting.

- b) **LA Moore Pyrolysis Plant Group.** Roger Hancock roger.hancock2@tiscali.co.uk

Mr Hancock advised that in 2007, local company, LA Moore Ltd, was given planning permission to build an incinerator, fuelled by waste products in order to produce and sell electricity. The plant is to be located on LA Moore's yard at Haybridge with a new access road to be built in Titlands Lane. Bob Mills at SCC has confirmed recently that the plant has technically been 'started' so the planning permission (PP) remains in place. Penny Gadd from the Environment Agency has confirmed that notwithstanding EA budget cuts 'continuous monitoring', a condition for the PP, would be undertaken if the plant came into production. Roger has been told that changes to the economics of the pyrolysis process means that in SCC's view 'the plant is unlikely to go ahead'.

- c) **Neighbourhood Plan** Nigel Clarke for Joanna Davey joanna@jdavey.fsnet.co.uk

8 members of this group (plus two councillors as observers), have met 4 times since January. Neighbourhood Plans were introduced in the Localism bill. The intention is that through a Neighbourhood Plan villages can make their opinions on planning issues especially, known in a formalised manner. St Cuthbert Out Parish Council have decided that a Plan can be produced for the whole parish. To this end similar groups have been set up in South, West and East Wards too.

SCOPC have now applied for external funding to finance for example the public consultation elements of the plan.

Two members have joined the Group from Easton and so this working party is now the North Ward Neighbourhood Plan group.

In due course all groups/clubs/households/businesses in the village will be asked for their opinions on items that should be included in the plan for this Ward.

- d) **Playground Working Party** Julia Scarth julia@chewvalleytrees.co.uk

The group now has seven members and has had three meetings. Their key focus is to identify suitable locations for an outdoor area for young children and/or possibly older people. The area should be about 25m x 25m (about 1/8 acre). There have already been valuable discussions with some landowners. The group would welcome anyone with ideas who would like to be involved, to get in touch.

- e) **St Cuthbert's Mill Development Working Party** Chris Blackford chris@blackfords.org.uk

The sale of the Mill site has been agreed but the legal formalities have so far not been completed. The name of the buyer has not so far been disclosed. The Working Party feels that although the building is not listed the adjacent Geological SSI should be noted. The Working Party feel that 'jobs' should be a key criteria for any new use of the site.

Continued:

- f) **Elm Close** *(received since the 30th April)* Chris Briton chris.briton@mbzonline.net

Since the Wookey Hole meeting in January an outline planning application has been received by Mendip District Council (2014/0437/OTS) from Gladman Developments to build 145 houses on a green-field site adjacent to Wells Cemetery, in Elm Close.

A number of residents of the surrounding villages, including Haybridge and Wookey Hole, have expressed concerns about the proposal because: - it is on a green-field site when close-by, brown-field sites are still undeveloped; the new houses would be visible from Glastonbury Tor; there is opposition to any development that would 'join-up' Wells and neighbouring villages; there is a widespread view that 'urban sprawl' is to be discouraged; there is a widespread view that good quality agricultural land should be retained for agricultural use in view of increasing demand for food and problems with flooding on low-lying land; a widespread view that the case for building more housing in the Wells area has not been made, concerns about loss of wildlife areas; concerns about increased pressure on local resources and concerns about traffic congestion.

At their meeting on 30th April St Cuthbert's Parish Council voted to reject the application, and at their meeting of 1st May Wells City Council voted not to support the development. The application is currently being considered by Mendip District Council who have scheduled to decide by 13th June. MDC are accepting comments on the proposal until **15th May**.

The draft Mendip District Council **Local Plan** is still under consideration by the Planning Inspector. In the absence of a Local Plan, should MDC reject any planning application, the applicant has right of appeal to the Secretary of State, who can only consider the application against the National Planning Policy Framework. This framework carries a "presumption in favour of most types of development".

- g) **Wookey Hole Website Working Party** John Grange john@thegranges.co.uk

The group have met several times and agree that a Wookey Hole website would benefit the village. At the moment there are websites for specific village interests but no central website showing history, events, groups etc. The group has developed a prototype and estimate hosting would cost £50/100 per annum. Nicky Venning proposed and Dave Hudsmith seconded that the Wookey Hole Website group should be under the aegis of WHRF. This was passed, 31 voting for and 0 against. The Group would like to find someone with a design bent who would like to be a member of the group. Interested parties should contact John.

- h) **Additional Post-box** Hugh Talbott talbott@talktalk.net

There is a need for a new central post-box near the Club. The Community Council for Somerset have given Hugh a contact and he has started the ball rolling. Mary Gaunt mentioned that there had been a 'Gentleman's Agreement' to provide a new post-box when WH Post Office closed and the Post Office post-box had been removed.

Continued:

- i) **Memorial Trees** David Scarth David@chewvalleytrees.co.uk

David would like to start a group to check on the Memorial Trees planted as part of Wookey Hole Millennium celebrations. The tree guards on some require maintenance and one tree has died. There is also a thought that a tree could be planted this year to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the start of WW1. Roger Hancock, Elizabeth Sidwell, Les Cloutman, Raj Rastogi, Katie Stenhouse, Hugh Talbott and Sid Hodges volunteered to help.

- j) **Notice boards** Jenny Lewis j.lewis072@btinternet.com

Some of the notice boards in Wookey Hole need maintenance and there is a need for some extra ones to reduce fly posting. Jenny has contacted The Co-Op who have a rural fund, to enquire about a grant.

5. **Consideration of requests for endorsements of new Working Groups.**

Two new groups, i) and J) above have been suggested and agreed.

The Chair reiterated that for WHRF to succeed it is very important that residents do not rely on the committee to 'do' everything but take the initiative when they see something that needs doing. Also noting that many tasks are the responsibility of our Parish Councillors or the Parish Council.

Parish Councillor Mary Gaunt mentioned how pleased SCO Parish Council are that Wookey Hole now has a Resident's Forum, and mentioned that some other villages in the Parish are considering forming something similar too.

6. Nicky Venning who is a Community Correspondent for the Wells Journal organised a photograph of the Committee and will ensure a press release is sent as appropriate.
7. The next Public Meeting will be on **Thursday October 2nd at 8pm** in the Community Hall.

Nicky Venning
Secretary

May 10th 2014

Signed.....

Hugh Talbott, Chair Wookey Hole Residents Forum

October 2nd 2014