

Newsletter November 2021

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Welcome to what is our final Newsletter of 2021. On behalf of all of us at BW, can I extend to you and those close to you, our best wishes for the festive season and for a happy and a hopefully less disrupted 2022.

Whilst the latter part of the current year has seen a greater return to normality, we are still some way away from pre-pandemic times, but here at BW we have been trying hard to catch up on some of our lost time and opportunities with some success.

Regular readers will know we have been looking for a new Treasurer for some months. I am therefore delighted to announce that Sally Anne Hannington has joined us to fill this position and she will be attending her first meeting in the next two weeks. I would be very remiss if I didn't thank Mike McKinley for 'holding the fort' over recent months. He has done a sterling job with regard to our statutory obligations and has kindly offered to assist Sally Anne if needed. Mike has now also stepped down from the Board of BW and personally I will miss his sound counsel. This all means we have replaced two key positions. In addition to Sally Anne, we also have the previously announced Secretary in Barbara Harris.

This brings me to my comments in previous newsletters about our Strategy Workshop held during the summer. The follow up from that is now complete and, thanks to work done by my predecessor Pete Swales, assisted by our Secretary, we know exactly where our strengths and weaknesses are. As a voluntary organisation none of us are able to work full time for BW but we have the benefit of some very positive skill sets within the Steering Group. However, we need your help. We cannot expect many people to give a regular commitment, but there are many of you out there who, without doubt, will have specific skills or interests, or even hobbies, which come into play in our own activities. This may mean assisting a specific Steering Group member with a short term project and then moving away.

If you think or believe you can help with short term commitments please get in touch. To find out how you can help, please contact me on 07973 805055 email at roger.owen.3@btopenworld.com.

Thanks for reading. Once again, Season's Greetings to you all.

Roger Owen

Chair: **Better Wetherby Partnership**

BELLWAY SPOFFORTH PARK UPDATE

BW has continued its rigorous pursuit of the proper implementation of planning conditions relating to the landscaping of the Wetherby boundary with Harrogate District, the proper surfacing of bridleways and drainage issues. It is pleasing that progress has been made. The first stage of this landscaping work, addressing the bridleway was recently completed. The second stage of grass seeding and, we hope, major tree and shrub planting has just started on site.

It was initially encouraging to see this bridleway resurfaced by Bellway in accordance with their planning conditions. There is however a 5 metre strip at the North Eastern end of the bridleway where it joins the track of Harland Way which has not been resurfaced. This has rendered it impassable for mobility scooters, and very difficult for cyclists/pushchairs etc.



We, together with the Sustrans representative, also have concerns that the current 'finish' on this bridleway as it is not very suitable for cycling, and is potentially unsafe for mobility scooters. Our efforts to satisfactorily resolve this matter continue.

Full details can be found on our website at www.betterwetherby.com/spofforth-park.html

RACECOURSE APPROACH

BW continues to be involved in the progress of this huge housing scheme which, [as previously reported](#), now has outline planning consent, subject to some 50 planning conditions. BW will be working hard with those conditions with the aim of getting the exemplar scheme which Wetherby deserves. Sadly the process has 'gone quiet' over recent weeks. This would seem largely to fall at the door of Leeds City Council Planning Department, which has experienced a large increase in workload and has not been helped by the continuation of staff working from home in many cases.

BW is especially concerned around how the planning conditions will be met around matters arising from COP 26, and how the current Building Regulations need major updating to reflect Government aims on reducing the carbon footprint. Chair, Roger Owen, is pushing the developers, Taylor Wimpey, for a speedy resumption of the previously successful Design Workshops in which BW played an important part. Roger said:

“Over recent months at events such as the Eco Fair in October, I was amazed at how many Wetherby residents seemed unaware of the scale of this development and the impact it will have on the Town. With planning permission already granted, BW will be continuing our efforts, working with the developer and the LCC planning officials, to mitigate the negative impact on the Town and try to get the best possible outcome.”

PLANNING WHITE PAPER ON HOLD

In August 2020, the Government published a White Paper called 'Planning for the Future'. This contained a package of proposals for the reform of the planning system in England with the aim of speeding up house building. It proposes to streamline and modernise the planning process, improve outcomes on design and sustainability, reform developer contributions and ensure more land is available for development where it is needed.

Although developers welcomed the proposals, various organisations, including BW, had serious concerns that the planning changes would take power out of the hands of communities and into the hands of developers. Following the reaction to the White Paper, the [BBC reported in September 2021](#) that the Government had 'paused' the controversial planning reforms and that the new Housing Secretary, Michael Gove, intended to address the concerns.

BW is continuing to monitor the situation and will provide an update as and when further information becomes available. Given the problems experienced locally over the last few years, we will, amongst other matters, be studying carefully how any new proposals will ensure consultation and cooperation between adjoining local authorities. We would very much appreciate assistance from any of our supporters with expertise in the planning system to help in these endeavours.

COP 26 CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE



The UN Climate Change Conference, popularly known as COP (Conference of the Parties) 26, recently concluded in Glasgow. This was the latest in a series of major international climate conferences held over more than a quarter of a century. At a previous meeting in 2015, culminating in the Paris Accord, a target was agreed to keep global warming below 1.5C by the end of the century.

What came through, loud and clear at COP 26, is that current efforts to reduce emissions and achieve the 1.5C target are proving insufficient. There was a stark reminder from the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, that it's not just our environment that is under threat, but our whole way of life. More action is required to reduce the use of oil, gas and coal, as these fossil fuels are the main cause of the rapid climate change we have experienced in recent decades.

There were many pledges to take action. These included a promise by over 130 nations to halt or reverse deforestation by 2030. This was particularly welcome as safeguarding the world's forests is essential to help pull huge amounts of carbon pollution from the atmosphere. Plans supported by over 100 countries were announced to cut methane emissions by 30 percent by 2030. Richer nations agreed to pay poorer ones \$100 billion a year by 2023 to help them make the transition to greener economies. However, none of these pledges are binding. With no financial or legal sanctions it remains to be seen if the urgent and necessary action is actually taken.

An announcement by the USA and China to work together to slow global warming, was welcomed given that these two countries produced nearly 40 percent of global emissions in 2019. However, China, along with another major polluter, India, continues to invest in fossil fuels. The stance of these two countries, top coal-burning nations, led to the watering down of the final wording of the Glasgow Climate Pact. Rather than agreeing to a phasing out of coal, India and China insisted on replacing 'phase out' fossil fuels, with the ambiguous "phase down."

For all the fine words, pledges, promises and spirit of cooperation in Glasgow towards reducing emissions, it is now time for the leaders and policy makers to take the necessary action to achieve their emissions goals. Time will tell if the Glasgow Climate Pact proves to be a success. The next UN Climate Change Conference (COP 27) will take place in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt in November 2022.

WETHERBY HIGH SCHOOL

Many will have read of the welcome [plans to rebuild the High School](#) for 11-16 year olds. The decision is a personal 'pat on the back' for the efforts of Ward Councillor and BW Director Alan Lamb. BW together with Wetherby Civic Society have been invited to join a panel involved in the redevelopment. Chair Roger Owen said ***"The invite came out of the blue and is a huge compliment to BW and possibly the part we have played in the Racecourse Approach scheme"***. Two meetings have been held so far and BW is looking forward to full involvement in a scheme which is much needed to replace out dated facilities which are in a poor condition.

BW AT THE WETHERBY DICKENSIAN CHRISTMAS MARKET AND CRAFT FAYRE

This charity event, organised by Wetherby Lions, will take place in Wetherby town centre between 9am and 3pm on **Sunday 12th December**. Alongside various charity stalls will be some 30 commercial artisan stalls. There will be festive attractions and music from the Silver Band and other local musicians. In addition, there will be a Craft Fayre in the Town Hall. BW will have a display in the colonnade of the Shambles to highlight our work and efforts to protect the local environment. Please try to find the time to visit us and learn more about our activities. All proceeds will be used to fund the Wetherby Lions complimentary 'Elderly Persons Party' to be held in January 2022.

CONTACT US

We welcome further volunteers and supporters to assist our efforts. Please contact us with any comments and queries. If you wish to be included on our mailing list please send a request by email to betterwetherby@gmail.com.

Please feel free to share this newsletter - the more people that are aware of these important issues, the better.