

Newsletter January 2021

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Welcome to the first Better Wetherby Partnership Newsletter of 2021. A belated Happy New Year to you all.

As we ring out the old year, this is a fresh beginning and a time to be optimistic. After such a dreadful 2020 dominated by COVID-19, the current roll-out of vaccines seems to be going well. Over the next few months, as a greater percentage of the population receive the jabs, we can perhaps allow ourselves to be hopeful that our lives will return to something like they were before the arrival of the pandemic around 12 months ago.

My BW colleagues and myself look forward to a successful year in our efforts to help make Wetherby and the surrounding villages better for the community of both current and future generations. We continue our meetings, both internal and external, and over the next week we will be meeting with representatives of Leeds City Council (LCC) to discuss Wetherby centric issues around Climate, Transport and Sustainable Development. These are very important matters to our town, especially with planned housing developments on the horizon.

One of these is the large, 800 house development by Taylor Wimpey on Racecourse Approach. In the December newsletter we reported on the participation of BW representatives in the Design Workshops for this large project (FYI, discussion documents can be viewed [here](#)). The Workshops started in September 2020 and good progress has been made despite the fact that they had to take place virtually via Zoom. It is unfortunate that, due to the pandemic, there has been some slippage in the timetable for these meetings. However, once the workshop programme resumes, hopefully over the coming weeks, BW will be contributing and progress will be reported in future newsletters.

In the previous newsletter I also reported on efforts being made to resolve outstanding Landscaping issues with Bellway at the Spofforth Park development. These efforts continue, as you will see from the report below.

I have mentioned in previous newsletters that we are seeking volunteers to take over the roles of Secretary and Treasurer. I regret that both positions are yet to be filled. I know that there are many highly capable people amongst our supporters, so I really would appreciate it, dear reader, if you would think about helping. I will be delighted to hear from anyone interested and can be contacted on 07973 805055 or by email at roger.owen.3@btopen-world.com.

Although the vaccine is coming over the hill, there is still a long way to go, so please remain vigilant and keep safe. Thanks for reading and for your continued support.

Roger Owen

Chair: **Better Wetherby Partnership**

COVID AND CLIMATE CHANGE – Impact on local Bridleways & Footpaths

A chink of light in the depressing gloom of COVID has been the enthusiasm of local people in recent months to take full advantage of the Harland Way footpath and cycle route between Wetherby and Spofforth, along with the wider network of linked bridleways and footpaths. BW welcomes this increase in public usage and wishes to encourage access and the appreciation of the outstanding open rolling countryside on this western side of Wetherby and Kirk Deighton. However, we also have to acknowledge that such increased usage too often comes at a price, with problems including lack of signage, poor maintenance by farmers, increased litter and failure by some inconsiderate dog walkers to both clear up after their pets or allowing them to foul on crop growing fields.

BW has been in contact with North Yorkshire County Council's (NYCC) Public Access department seeking their cooperation to address the lack of signage, together with maintenance issues, particularly by the farming community, where NYCC has good relations. It is hoped that discussions can take place with NYCC in the near future. BW is also fortunate in having an excellent local contact with Sustrans who is prepared to assist, especially over the junction designs of bridleways and footpaths with Harland Way.

BW has also been in contact with Bellways. They have yet to reinstate a competent surface and drainage to the existing bridleway and its junction with Harland Way, on the western boundary of their Spofforth Park development. As can be seen from the images below, recent snow and heavy rain has added to the problems, highlighting the need for proper maintenance both now and in the long term.



To maintain good public access through the countryside calls for sustainable solutions and fresh thinking on how we can realistically meet these climate emergency challenges. BW is looking for new ways towards linking up with other organisations and individuals who share our concern to look after our wealth of public footpaths. We welcome your thoughts and ideas, so why not contact us in our efforts to make a 'Better Wetherby'.

SPOFFORTH PARK – LACK OF PROGRESS ON OUTSTANDING LANDSCAPE PLANTING

The builders, Bellways, are making good progress towards the completion of the large Spofforth Park housing development. However, the same cannot be said in relation to their responsibilities to carry out a number of key landscaping matters required as part of the planning approval. It is disappointing that little progress has been made by Bellways to implement extensive tree planting on the western boundary of the site or to remove a temporary substantial concrete access way in the open fields alongside this new estate. These are critically important factors in screening this hard urban edge from some of the best countryside setting surrounding Wetherby and Kirk Deighton.

A detailed report from BW highlighting concerns about these outstanding matters was submitted in September 2020 to the LCC Planning Department. In subsequent discussions in November with a LCC Senior Planning Officer, BW was advised that Bellways had been asked to respond to these concerns and that an early reply via the Planning Department could be expected. However, to date, no response has been forthcoming from the Chief Planning Officer. Although BW accepts that some delays are due to the impact of COVID, with a number of key Planning Department officials handling heavy case loads and restricted to working from home, these are important matters that need to be addressed. Supporters can be assured that BW will continue to vigorously pursue this.

LEEDS TRANSPORT STRATEGY CONSULTATION

A public consultation on a draft Transport Strategy for Leeds is currently taking place. This follows the declaration of a climate emergency by LCC in March 2019. The vision is for Leeds to be a city where you do not need a car, with the ambition towards Leeds becoming a net zero city by 2030. The draft Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy sets out how it is proposed to achieve this.

A key factor in the success of the strategy will be the provision of improved bus services. Yet, paradoxically, for a strategy with such an ambitious vision, the current draft includes no prospect of better public transport for Wetherby and the outer suburbs of Leeds. It is important that LCC are made aware that in addition to providing efficient and regular bus services to Leeds and Harrogate, the current lack of bus services from Wetherby to York needs to be addressed to give people wider access for business, education, employment and hospitals and also to railway stations such as York and Cattal.

You may wish to make your views known in the consultation exercise that runs until 26th March 2021. To find out more about the plans and register your comments, please go the link below:
<https://leedstransportstrategy.commonplace.is/about>.

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.