

Minutes of Joint Parish Council (Henshaw, Bardon Mill & Melkridge) and Northumberland National Park Authority Meeting held on Tuesday 23 May 2017

Present; Members of Henshaw Parish Council, Melkridge Parish Council & Bardon Mill Parish Council, Northumberland County Council (Alan Sharp), Northumberland National Park Authority (Tony Gates, Cllr Glen Sanderson), and 5 Members of the Public. Minutes taken by Michael Smith (Clerk to Henshaw Parish Council) & the meeting was chaired by Cllr Stuart Furlong.

1. Introduction and Welcome

Cllr Stuart Furlong (Chair) welcomed all in attendance. Cllr Furlong outlined that the meeting was as a result of resident's concerns about developments in the area, and in particular surrounding The Sill project. The Parish Councils believed there was a lack of feedback and involvement with the Councils and they would like to have had a Liaison Group with the Councils from the outset.

2. Issues Raised by Members of the Public

Clarification was sought regarding the boundary between the farmland and the overflow car park in relation to potential for car to slide down the slope into the burn, the poor quality of the fencing, whether the installed soakaway was adequate drainage, livestock issues, and potential of litter blowing onto the farmland.

The NNPA stated that the majority of these issues may in practice not occur but the management and monitoring arrangements that would be put in place would ensure any issues that arise would be addressed immediately with the adjacent owners. NNPA stated that their H&S advisor would assess the overflow car park and any action considered necessary would be undertaken.

Action: NNPA to monitor situation.

The problems regarding site vehicles using local roads was again discussed and that as a result of the failure of the contractor to deal with this quickly, many verges and drains had been damaged.

Action: NNPA agreed to look at the damage caused (with the County Council) and to look at measures to have the verges and drains repaired.

3. The Sill Junction Works/Highway Matters

It was raised that the junction at the Sill onto the Military Road was still considered to be inadequate and would prove to be a danger in future. Disappointment was expressed that issues were yet to be resolved. The NNPA outlined their position including the fact that the NNPA had paid to have the junction widened in the interest of safety, even though this was not required as a condition of planning consent for The Sill as NCC had raised no concerns and the following actions were agreed;

Action: NNPA confirmed a footpath connection to the Twice Brewed to be installed within the site

Action: Bus Stops – NNPA confirmed that Hadrian's Wall Bus stop to be located within The Sill car park; this will help improve sightlines and ease traffic flow, an improvement on the existing situation.

Action: Military Road junction – kink in stone wall to the west to be straightened. (NNPA)

Action: Lowering of 'National Trust' wall – Efforts would be made to agree this and undertake work as soon as practical. (NNPA).

Action: Safe pedestrian route – liaise with County Council re verge path from the Sill to Steel Rigg. (NNPA and NCC)

Action: Barrier at Crossing Point – to be installed to prevent people stepping directly onto the road.

Action: 40mph sign to be moved further back to East Twice Brewed and additional safety measures such as rumble strips, flashing signs to be considered. (NCC and local councillor)

It was confirmed that a footpath to the campsite was not going ahead as agreement with the landowner could not be reached.

4. The Sill

An update was given on the progress of the site works and it was hoped that the external works would be completed in the near future and followed by internal fit out.

5. Pedestrian/Visitor Access

Concerns had been raised previously about safe access and transport to the Sill from Bardon Mill/Henshaw. People alighting the train at Bardon Mill would have no option than to walk up the road to the Sill.

It was discussed that a bus service or extension of the AD122 service would assist.

Action: NNPA agreed to monitor the situation once the Sill was open to assess demand for such a service and whether funding could be obtained.

6. Traffic Issues

Concerns were raised about the overflow car park not being suitable (single gate entry/exit, poor surfacing, lack of internal road linking car parks).

The NNPA that the County Highways had approved the entry/exit and that the site levels were too great to enable a safe link road within the site. The surface would improve now that the grass was growing through to knit the matting into place.

Action: NNPA to monitor/review the overflow car park arrangements once the site was operational.

7. Proposed Signage Strategy

The PC's were of the opinion that traffic to the site should not be along the local roads as these were not suitable and there would be increased danger to local users, walkers, riders and cyclists.

The NNPA advised that the Highways Authority had raised no concerns about additional traffic using all existing routes. There were however plans to hold meetings with the Highways Authority and Roadlink on these issues and to develop a signage strategy. Once this had been done all the Parish Councils in the area would be consulted for comment.

It was also agreed that;

Action: All 'Sill/NNPA' literature would direct visitors and coaches to use the Military Road. (NNPA)

Action: 'Sat Nav' providers to be contacted to take local roads off the directions to The Sill. (NNPA)

Action: Review signage to restrict weights, HGV's etc as part of overall strategy. (NCC)

8. Planning Matters

All major works had been approved and only minor amendments to agreed plans may be needed

9. Future Communication and Consultation

Although there is an appointed representative of the Parish Council's on the NNPA board the Parish Council Chairs considered that feedback and involvement on developments was very poor. It was raised that perhaps one of the Chairs of the Parish Councils also be invited to attend any meetings.

The NNPA said they were committed to keeping the Parish Councils involved and would look to have more regular meetings in future. A site visit and walkover of the new development would also be arranged with the Parish Councils and other Local Group before the general opening.

It was agreed to hold a follow up meeting on all matters on Tuesday 11 July 2017 (Venue Bardon Mill and Henshaw Village Hall).