

The Civil Parish of Wheldrake, York

Report to the Annual Meeting of the Parish by the Chairman of the Parish Council April 2015

The adoption of the Village Design Statement was approved early in 2015 which was over 2 years since it was submitted by the Parish Council. A large number of copies are being printed for reference by residents, land owners and Developers.

The final draft of the York Local Plan has been delayed by changes in the political make up of the city Council and the imminent local elections. During the past year an Alliance of Parishes has been formed to give a combined response to proposals in the outer York area. A Manifesto has recently been produced which sets out Alliance objectives for sustainable development. This has been financially supported by the CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England). It is anticipated that there will be a reduction in the global house building targets originally proposed in the light of the latest population growth statistics for the York area and the rejection of bloated Local Plan proposals for Durham. The original proposals for Wheldrake may be modified as a result.

The opening of the refurbished Play Park in March has been widely welcomed. The work of the Park Project Group members to achieve the outcome is appreciated. Funding was provided by several sources including the accumulated Section 106 money held by the Parish Council restricted to this kind of community project.

Although a few mature trees have had to be removed in and around the Parish this loss has been more than offset by the planting of new trees, mainly by David Liptrott. Trees have been planted along Green Gales Lane up to the Elvington Parish boundary and on the wide access track up to Sandholes Wood. Further planting will be carried out where practicable funded by the Parish Council.

The Parish Council recently reached a financial agreement with commercial users of Beck Lane and City of York Council over the removal of spindly hedge trees. The Council also established that the Lane has no registered owner and has been in contact with Escrick Estates with respect to their placing of signs to prevent access to the field to the north of Derwent Park. The signs along the lane have no legal basis but the Estate is entitled to prevent access to the field which has Conservation Headlands by use of appropriate signage.

The extension of the 20mph zone up to the Village Hall entrance on Broad Highway was eventually established after a long drawn out assessment by City of York Council which was in marked contrast to the introduction of 20 zones elsewhere in the City.

Bus services have generally been reliable over the last year. After some doubt about the future of the 36 service after March this year, City of York Council decided to financially support it for the current financial year.

There has been no further progress in the establishment of additional Rights of Way within the Parish although it is anticipated that the path between North Lane and Sparrow Hall farm will be added to the Definitive Map in due course.

Since the change of ownership of Mount Pleasant Farm there have been some problems with maintenance and signage of the important path to Elvington although these have been largely resolved. It is disappointing to note that the new owner has removed significant lengths of hedgerow albeit with approval from the City of York

Council Countryside Officer.

At the budget meeting in January the Parish Council increased the precept by just over 2% to £16,300 for the financial year 2015/16. The main expenditures will be explained in the Parish Council financial report which is to follow. This has included renewal of the Village maintenance contract which was awarded to A2Z Groundworks. Work has been continuing by BT Openreach to introduce fast Broadband to the village although there is some concern about the expected improvements in some outlying parts of the Parish.

Some new festive lights were on display over Christmas; thanks are again due to David Dick and his helpers for erecting and dismantling the lights. Thanks are also due to residents who provided the power connections.

The Parish Council on behalf of itself and all residents of the Parish wish to acknowledge the support and encouragement provided by retiring Ward Councillor George Barton. The help and support of all volunteers and those who have contributed to the wellbeing of the community in any way is also recognised.

Finally I must express the concerns that the Parish Council and some residents have about the future of the Recreation Association and in particular the Village Hall. The fact is that in common with many similar communities with similar demographics there is a lack of interest in the volunteer management of community facilities. It became clear some time ago that the Recreation Association would have increasing difficulty in complying with its legal and charitable obligations. Some changes agreed by the WRA and Parish Council are already in progress to vary the original Trust Deed and to modify the Constitution of the WRA. to reflect the changes over the years and to comply with the terms of the Charitable status enjoyed by the Association. There is now a further crisis in that the main hall has become unusable due to roof structural problems which requires complete renewal above wall level at an estimated total cost of at least £50,000. There are alternative aspirational proposals to build a new Village Hall. If there is the will this is achievable but the cost is likely to be over £250,000, will require a dedicated fund raising/management team for the duration of the project and it could be at least two years before the building would become a reality. There seems to be support for the idea for this but is there the enthusiasm to carry it through as there was forty years ago for the construction of the present hall ?

David Randon

Chairman of the Parish Council