

Minutes of the meeting of Elsdon Parish Council held in the Village Hall on Thursday 8 August, 2013

Present: Councillors Colby (Chair), Maddison, Simmance and Tait. Clerk Martin Chilvers. Duncan Wise (NNPA), Cllr Bolam, and Parishioners J. Scott and D. Coles

1. Tourism in NNPA / Elsdon (Sill project) & Dark Sky initiative

The Chair welcomed Duncan Wise of NNPA. Mr Wise provided a background to the Sill project including the reason for the location of the facilities, funding for the project and purpose of the Sill. One objective of the Sill will be to 'sell' the rest of the National Park including Elsdon for people to visit.

The Chair asked how will the NNPA support Elsdon. Whilst it would be good to attract visitors at present the village does not have adequate parking or toilet facilities available to the public. It was agreed that Elsdon does have a lot of history to share and is very popular centre for both walkers and cyclists. However in the absence of funding the toilets cannot be opened and despite NNPA literature advising otherwise there are no basic facilities for tourists. There is a concern that actually visitors will have a worse impression of Elsdon than if they had not stopped at all. Furthermore there are reports that the sheep pinfold and bus stop being used as a toilet.

Mr Wise advised that whilst a long term funding commitment could not be made an offer had been made recently to the Village Hall committee for funding for the next year with an annual review. It was reported that as the offer had only been made for one year that it was not worth taking forward.

Cllr Bolam advised that the members of NNPA all supported the funding that would allow the toilets to be open for tourists and that past surveys always had the top two priorities for Elsdon as toilets and car parking. Mr Wise advised that there was no funding to support toilets in Elsdon long term however it was highlighted to him that funding was being made available to maintain public toilets in Alwinton and Ingram. Mr Wise confirmed he would look into what could possibly be done for Elsdon.

Cllr Tait spoke of the success of the 'Past, Present and Future' (Parish Plan) events that created a wealth of material reporting the history of Elsdon. There was talk of a possible Heritage Centre in Elsdon and that ultimately it would be excellent if the School House could be purchased for such a use. Mr Wise advised that a feasibility study would need to be conducted and suggested his colleague; Richard Austin may be able to assist.

The Chair also reported that the edges of the village green required reinforcing after being damaged during the underground cabling project. Cllr Bolam suggested there may be funding available under 'Market Town' funding scheme to assist with this.

Mr Wise moved on to talk about the success of the Kielder Observatory since it opened in 2008. In conjunction with NNPA and Kielder Water & Forest Park an application is being made for International Dark Sky status. If received this would help to put Northumberland on the map bringing more people to the area and thus helping small businesses such as catering and B&B. There is a programme to educate people about type of lighting to use in and around their homes to maintain the dark skies.

The Chair advised that it was planned to have a star gazing event in the near future and it was hoped Northern Powergrid may assist with funding the event following the poorly managed project of underground cabling in the village.

Whilst there was agreement the new style street lighting will help towards maintaining the dark skies locally the Parish Council were still seeking confirmation when the work would be completed and the old street lights removed. The Chair thanked Mr Wise for his time.

2. Apologies: There were apologies from Cllr White.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting: The minutes of the previous meeting was accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

4. Matters arising:

- a) It was agreed that that progress made to date with the burn near Crawford Crescent was very good. The communication had been clear and timely and that the NCC contractors were doing an excellent job.
- b) There was agreement on the content of the letter to be sent to Northern Powergrid regarding their role and lack of communication in respect of the underground cabling project. It was agreed that the Clerk sent the letter to Paul Nicholson of Northern Powergrid.
- c) With still no response from NCC regarding the TV signal in Elsdon and Alwinton it was agreed the Clerk chase this up again. It was agreed to question the service level agreement NCC has in responding to letters given that the original was sent in April, 2013 without a response to date.
- d) There was discussion about how to communicate news, events etc. around the community. It was established there was a record of the majority residents email addresses and consideration would be given how these records could be used to help improve communication throughout the parish.
- e) It was agreed that parts of the local road network had improved considerably in the recent weeks. However there were still several sections that seemed to have been missed and require attention from NCC.

5. Finance:

- a) The reimbursement of payments made to the recent Parish Plan events was agreed and cheques signed.
- b) The Clerk advised that Barclays Bank had now confirmed all Councillors now had signing authority on the Parish Council bank account.

6. Planning:

- a) There were no planning applications this month. There was however an enquiry as to the progress of the application at Barnacre Alpacas and the Clerk was asked to investigate.

7. New business:

- a) The Clerk talked through the Parish Council risk assessment and all present agreed to adopt the plan.
- b) It was agreed there was nothing new to add to the Local Transport Plan although it was questioned why Snaiths did not provide a service in the morning through Elsdon.
- c) The Clerk shared the most recent report received.

8. Any other business:

9. Date, time and place of next meeting: The next meeting will be on 12 September, 2013 starting at 7.30pm at the Village Hall, Elsdon

Visit Elsdon Parish Council's website at www.parish-council.com/elsdon