

## Hawes and High Abbotside Parish Council

### Minutes of the second part of the Meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2014 held at the Dales Countryside Museum, Hawes, at 7.45pm

**Present:** Cllrs J Blackie (Chairman), Cllrs Mrs S Alderson, Ms D Allen, A Fawcett, Ms CM Grainger, W Head, Mrs S Mason, A Sunter

**In Attendance:** I King (Clerk), and 27 members of the public. Mr John Moore, Chief Executive of Superfast Broadband North Yorkshire (SBNY). Mr David Bowe, Corporate Director of Business and Environmental Services for North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC). Ms Michelle Clough, Tour de France Project Officer for Richmondshire District Council (RDC).

**Apologies:** Ms A Caygill, S Hunter, KM Nugent

#### 10. Hawes Post Office

The Chairman introduced a fresh item of business due to its urgency. Mr and Mrs Reynolds wish to retire from running the Post Office, but not to sell the premises as a going concern. Post Office Management has investigated other retail businesses in Hawes to see if any of them wished to take over the business, but without success.

There have been ongoing discussions with the Post Office to seek a solution that retains an office based in Hawes, and a contract has now been offered transferring the Post Office to the Upper Wensleydale Community Office and to create a Sorting Office in an RDC unit on the Upper Wensleydale Business Park. The contract also requires that the outreach services to Askrigg and Bainbridge should continue, and that the same level of services carried on by the local Post Office should be provided.

Cllr Blackie believes that it is essential that Hawes should continue to have its own Post Office and Sorting Office, as the alternative would be that both would move 17 miles away, to Leyburn.

Mr Reynolds addressed the meeting to say that moving the service to the Community Office was the logical choice. He and his wife are very pleased with the plan, will continue to live in Hawes and will assist wherever possible.

There will be a public Board Meeting of the Upper Wensleydale Partnership on Friday, 14<sup>th</sup> March at 6.15pm at the Dales Countryside Museum to formally consider approving the new Contract.

Cllr Head declared a personal interest, and did not participate in the debate or subsequent vote. **The Parish Council resolved to very strongly support the above Proposal.**

#### 11. Superfast Broadband Project

The Chairman introduced John Moore to the meeting. He explained that the target is for 100% of North Yorkshire to have access to high quality broadband services by 2017. 90% will have access to a minimum of 25 mps (Megabits per second) while the remaining 10% will have a minimum of 2 mps. As a guide, a minimum of 5 mps is needed to access iPlayer or Skype.

The project is being installed by BT and works on the "Fibre to Cabinet" system, whereby fibre optic cables are run to a number of cabinets. 5 of these are being installed in Hawes, and customers need to live within 1.2km of the Cabinet. The cabinets are located near:

- the Primary School on Gayle Lane
- the old Police Station (Penn Lane)
- Townfoot (by the Telephone Exchange)
- Burtersett Road
- the Business Park (subject to location of a power source)

The cabinets are nearly ready, and are awaiting the cable laying up the A684 from Leyburn. This is due to be completed by the end of June.

John Moore noted that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are not obliged to offer the service even when the system is installed as this is a commercial decision. BT will be offering it when available as they are doing the installation.

In response to a question John Moore said that there are no tensions between SBNY and the NYCC Highways Department as the cable will be laid at the side of the road so it does not require any digging it up. Griff Thomas, Chairman of the local Tour de France Committee, urged that all efforts should be made to connect up the system before the Tour comes to town on 5<sup>th</sup> July.

## **12. Highways and related issues**

The Chairman introduced Mr David Bowe, who is the Director of NYCC Business and Environmental Services. This includes the Highways Department, and he is also responsible for the NYCC response to the Tour de France. The Clerk firstly handed him a letter from Richard Noble referring to a long-standing delay in resurfacing works on the Gaits in Gayle.

Mr Bowe described to the meeting the departmental restructuring process which had, belatedly, affected the way that NYCC Highways responds to Parish Council correspondence. Apparently this had been operating in the rest of the NYCC areas for two years before it was applied to Richmondshire, and requires the use of a central customer service point rather than personal contact with departmental officers. At the same time NYCC has changed the way it organises the work of its contractors. Together with the cuts in funding the service is having to be more reactive at the expense of planned working.

The Chairman commented that Mike Woodford, the highly respected and recently retired Highways Engineer for Richmondshire, had run an excellent and highly responsive local Highways Office, and it was a great pity that his style and highly satisfactory system of communications could not have been handed on to his successor.

Mr Bowe is concerned about the quality of communications between Highways and local Parish and Town Councils and local people. Often an inspection will be made in response to a complaint, but the officer will conclude that nothing can be done at once or that it has a low priority. However, this conclusion is not fed back to the complainant, who naturally concluded that nothing has been done. His Department is developing a Parish Portal which might help to improve this problem.

It has been calculated that NYCC would need to spend £320m to bring its roads back up to standard. Even if this was spent, the maintenance budget would need to be in the order of £60m a year, rather than the current £32m limit. The County is unusual in that it has a huge network of minor rural roads which worked when they were simply surface dressed. However, as the size of wagons and tractors has increased these roads are subject to increased erosion, especially of their edges.

Cllr Head raised the feeling that Highways Officers show a lack of respect to local Councillors, who need a commitment that any complaint should receive a response. Mr Bowe said that the Department promises a response within 20 days. The Clerk said that he had had no response to his email after the last meeting. However, he later found that it had gone to his personal email account rather than the Parish Council one.

The Chairman raised the question of a Winter Grit Store being maintained in the Hawes area. Mr Bowe made the commitment that "by next season there will be an operational Grit Clamp in Hawes - without fail".

A member of the public complained that there had been no road gritting over the Buttertubs Pass this year. It was reported our local tractor box gritter contractor, Peter Iveson, has been given a new snowblower and plough.

Cllr Albert Sunter said that the new road surface through Simonstone towards the Buttertubs was very slippery. Mr Bowe responded that this will improve over time.

### **Tour de France**

Miss Clough was asked about toilet provision, and advised that the RDC will be providing them to fill in any gaps in event provision and as a central hub. Plans for waste management are also in hand, with extensive cleaning before and after the event.

Cllr Head asked about the provision of the Little White Bus Service to Garsdale Station once the roads are closed. Cllr Blackie added concerns about emergency services and the potential need for a member of the public to need to visit a relative in hospital in a life and death situation.

Mr Bowe responded that the traffic management is incredibly complex, and there will be times when places will be inaccessible. "Blue light" emergency vehicles will be able to travel on the route of the Tour which will, of course, be kept open. He advised local people to regard the event as a "two-day whiteout" when travel will be virtually impossible. Questions were asked about deliveries such as milk and newspapers, access for vets and so on. Miss Clough said that the RDC will be working closely with agriculture and local businesses. The roads will be closed for a minimum of eight hours.

Griff Thomas said that local people need to see a Traffic Management Plan and a forecast model of how communications will be affected. Mr Bowe responded that there will be a website which will indicate areas of demand (on a red, amber, green basis) working interactively as the event proceeds. Advice will also be available on local radio, TV and through social media.

## **Signage**

A member of the public from Muker complained about the road signage used when roads are closed in Swaledale. On a previous occasion a sign was erected at the bottom of the Buttertubs Pass on the Wensleydale side which said that the road was closed. In fact it was open as far as Reeth, but Swaledale businesses suffered a severe drop in takings as visitors did not travel there.

Several affected people had attended a meeting with Mr Nigel Smith from the Highways Department before the latest round of road closures and had agreed some wording for the new signs. However, when these were erected they did not coincide with the agreed wording. They felt that a lot of time and effort had just been wasted.

Mr. Bowe said he was aware of some appalling examples of road closure and road diversion signage last year in the Upper Dales and he apologised for this. He advised that unsatisfactory and/or inappropriate signage should be reported immediately to the Highways Department, and agreed with the Chairman that often the quickest way might be to ask your local County Councillor to do this.

Gillian Harrison of Thornton Rust raised the issue of the YDNPA wanting to retain control of barn conversions to commercial premises when the remainder of the country were able to take advantage of the recent planning flexibilities introduced by the Government to allow these conversions without planning permission. The Harrisons were long established Upper Dales farmers, and wanted to convert a barn near the A684 to an ice cream parlour.

Mr. Bowe said that Cllr. Blackie had been in contact with him on these matters, and a joint objection from both NYCC and Richmondshire DC to the plans of the YDNPA to retain control was to be submitted to the meeting of the YDNPA when the decision will be taken whether or not to introduce the control.

He pointed out that both NYCC and RDC were the statutory authorities in all of Richmondshire, including the YDNP, for economic development. His view and the view of NYCC very much concurred with the view of the Chairman in his role as a District and County Councillor. Cllr. Blackie considered the intention to retain control by the YDNPA would be very likely to stifle new enterprise, employment and prosperity in the National Park.

On that note of agreeable concord the Chairman thanked both John Moore and David Bowe for attending the meeting, which he then closed.

**Meeting closed at 9.53pm.**