

THE WIDCOMBE ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the Autumn Meeting held at Widcombe Junior School on Thursday 25th October 2015

Welcome and Apologies About 50 members attended. The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Chairman's Report

Paddy's report was an up-date of reports published in the Newsletter.

Vision for Widcombe:

All residents should have received a copy of the 'Vision for Widcombe' document, letter and questionnaire and Paddy urged those who have not already done so to send in their responses. Despite some misgivings about certain aspects of the scheme being expressed, the overwhelming reaction has been positive. Paddy thanked Richard Wales, who would up-date the meeting on the current situation. We are close to achieving what the Widcombe Association has fought for for over 30 years although the realisation of a perfect scheme to suit everyone within the budget constraints is unlikely. Negotiations on improvements must be carried out carefully to ensure that councillors remain committed to the scheme.

Entry to Widcombe

This has been covered well by Helen Peter's article in the Newsletter. As the A36 traffic will be diverted from Widcombe Parade by the Rossiter Road scheme, it is essential that we not only secure the Parade we envision but encourage pedestrian traffic into Widcombe. To this end, an "Entry to Widcombe" sub-committee has been formed which will look, initially, at the improvement of the Halfpenny Bridge entry. A question was asked in regard to the condition of the underpass. Paddy pointed out that details about the clean up to be done are on the website.

Two Tunnels

Sustrans has withdrawn its planning application for an access ramp at the end of Lyncombe Vale Road. They intend to resubmit plans, which will address the arboricultural aspects of their application. There were many objections on traffic related issues. It was discovered that a fence, varying in height from 1.1m to 1.8m was to be built on both sides of the track between the tunnels, thus destroying the ambience of the area and denying access via existing pathways. It is now proposed that a plan to provide fencing on approaches to bridges and in rock-fall areas. WA would be happy with this if these measures are imperative for safety. WA has also said that all residents should be given the opportunity to comment. Asked for the WA standpoint on this access point, Paddy replied that, after consultation with the Lyncombe group, WA had made a statement to the effect that the Association was in support.

Beechen Cliff School Lights

Half the lights have been removed and the intensity of lighting on the main pitch reduced to half. This level is acceptable for training but not matches. The school is willing to investigate using trees and acoustic fencing to reduce noise nuisance. An application to extend playing times to 9pm will be made shortly. If the Development Committee reviews this application, it

will not be approved before mid-December giving time for proper trials without leaves on the trees and opportunity for affected residents to give their views. WA will let members know the situation after trials have been satisfactorily completed.

Beechen Cliff Stabilisation

The Steering Group is making good progress. A final inspection of the cliff should happen shortly and remedial work be carried out this winter in preparation for full maintenance by NT to begin in the spring.

Abbey Cemetery

David Waterstone has agreed to chair a sub-committee to explore ways to liaise with the NT, to encourage the Abbey to have a dedicated cemetery team and to organise a volunteer workforce to improve maintenance and take on schemes such as opening out the view by tree thinning.

EEW

On October 9th, EEW, working with the NHS, BANES and Age UK, launched “Warmer Widcombe for Older People” to work with local agencies and the community to safeguard vulnerable older residents from the effects of cold weather. District nurses, GP surgeries, pharmacists and chiropodists have information, leaflets and temperature gauges available to the public. EEW is currently working with St Matthew’s and St Mark’s to provide expert advice on energy saving in these buildings.

Working with others

A small group has been set up to talk to other groups in Widcombe to explore ways of working together. There has generally been positive feedback from the groups approached so far.

Newsletter

Paddy appealed for someone to take this over.

Widcombe Rising

Paddy felt this was the best yet and congratulated Ralph Oswick and Nick Steele. The future of this event is not certain.

Thanks

Paddy thanked the committee for their hard work, advice, support and ideas. He also thanked the various sub-committees mentioning Chris Rogers in particular for his work with Events and for setting up the Choir.

Choir

Chris Rogers gave a brief promotion of the Choir.

Treasurer's Remarks

The Treasurer assured the members that we are in good financial shape. The figures published in the Newsletter remain unchanged. The Association currently has about £18,000 in the bank, of which £6,000/£7,000 is money remaining from the EEW grant of £61,000, which has yet to be spent.

Membership subscriptions will remain unchanged for 2013. Jeremy reminded members of the discounts offered by many of our Business Members.

Ozzie pointed out that the £61k was given to EEW to deliver a specific agreed service.

Elections

Andrew Gordon-Duff, proposed by Liz Doyle, seconded by Ro Emsley, was elected nem com as Vice-Chairman.

Keith Palmer, proposed by Helen Peter, seconded by Sarah Lewis, was elected nem com as a committee member.

Vision for Widcombe – Richard Wales

Richard explained that the plan shown on the website is an engineering drawing and that such detail as it shows is indicative rather than final. The detail is being worked on by the urban design consultants to whom all the comments on the Vision have and will be passed. These will be taken into account as the design plan progresses. Peter Hendy, in the Newsletter, has suggested that there should be no urban clutter. To achieve this we need to avoid traffic lights, traditional pedestrian crossings, box junctions and so on.

The biggest problem is the budget. Projected costs have risen so it is unlikely, unless tenders come in below estimate, that we will be able to make changes to the basic scheme or do as much as would be liked in the way of urban renewal.

In the Public Consultation last year over 80% were in favour of the scheme as were over 90% of those who have responded to the Vision document.

Richard asked that comments and concerns be e-mailed to widcombevision@gmail.com or sent to Mike Wrigley rather than residents contacting Cabinet members or Council officers, which might send the wrong message about community support for this scheme.

If it transpires that elements of the scheme have unforeseen safety or traffic flow issues, changes will be made. For example, ducting is to be installed at the White Hart junction so that lights could easily be installed should this be necessary.

Richard was asked when the design would be finalised. Although there is no fixed date, it is hoped that all will be ready for the physical work to begin in late autumn 2013. Consultation will continue during the design process, but there will be no further consultation once it is completed.

A second member queried whether the priority to be given to traffic turning out of Prior Park Road would result in tailbacks in Widcombe Parade. Modelling has been done which shows an improvement outside rush hour with possible tailbacks occurring along the Parade in rush hour. However, queues waiting to turn out of Prior Park Road would be considerably shortened. The problem of juggernauts was raised. If the council are able to impose a ban on their use of Cleveland Bridge, this may increase the numbers using Rossiter Road but they will not be using Widcombe Parade. A final question was on the subject of crossings at the White Hart junction. Richard assured members that there would be crossings but these were planned to be of the raised table courtesy crossing design so as to avoid road markings and street furniture.

Presentation by Stephen Baddeley

The Chairman introduced the speaker, Stephen Baddeley, Director of Sport at the University of Bath, who spoke about the University's contribution to the Olympics, the success of Team GB and what it takes to be an elite athlete.

Social end to the evening

The evening concluded with drinks and an opportunity for members to talk to the speaker, the WA committee and each other.