

THE WIDCOMBE ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the Autumn Meeting held at Widcombe Junior School on Thursday 22nd October 2015

Welcome

71 members attended. The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and explaining the format of the meeting.

Chairman's Report

Jeremy introduced himself and said that he has felt privileged to be Acting Chairman.

Widcombe Street Party

This was a great event attended by about 7,000 people and took place once the first lot of work on the Parade was completed. There was a good community spirit, lots of local engagement and a wide variety of entertainment provided. Our main sponsors were Honda.

Opera at Widcombe Manor

Jeremy thanked Chris, Denise and the team for a very successful event held at Widcombe Manor thanks to the generosity of the Bamfords, who also kindly provided the marquee.

Events

WA Events are not intended to be fund-raisers. However, both the Opera and the Street Party made a healthy profit allowing us to donate £1,500 to Action on Hearing Loss and £1,100 to the School's Great Hall Appeal.

Jeremy thanked the organisers, the administrators and all those who contribute behind the scenes for continuing to run a fabulous series of events.

Railway Electrification

WA is punching above its weight on this with a sub-committee, part of our "Improving Widcombe" initiative, working to ensure the best possible outcome for Widcombe. BANES, Wilts County and Historic England have included this group from WA in their consultations.

Elections

Jeremy Boss, proposed by Paddy Doyle, seconded by Denise Rogers, was elected nem com as Chairman.

Deborah Clements, proposed by Mike Wrigley, seconded by Ro Emsley, was elected nem com as Treasurer.

Treasurer's Remarks

Deborah reported the Association to be in good financial health. Total funds stand at about £18,000. After allocation of funds already committed and retention of one year's running costs, we have free funds amounting to about £8,000. We have donated £1100 to the Junior School Great Hall Appeal and are reserving £2500 as an Improving Widcombe Fund.

The new subscription rate of £10 per annum will remain unchanged.

Calendar, Newsletter and Website

Jeremy reminded everyone that the new Widcombe Calendar would be on sale at the end of the meeting.

Paddy Doyle has produced yet another excellent Newsletter but is looking for someone to take over as he has now been compiler/editor for a large number of years. He will be organising a meeting to take this forward.

WA Member Rory McAuley has generously put a great deal of time and effort into producing our new website which will be fully launched shortly.

Presentation

Tom Boden, General Manager for the National Trust in Bath, gave an interesting presentation, "The Vision for the National Trust in Bath and its engagement with Widcombe". Included was a suggestion that creating an entrance in Church Lane would be trialed. Members welcomed this and WA could help to publicise it in due course.

The Presentation was followed by a Q and A session.

Jeremy thanked Tom and suggested that WA could work more closely with the NT.

"Question Time"

1. How can we maximise the engagement, input and involvement of as many Widcombe residents and traders as possible, so that we know that we're doing things that matter to all the demographic groups in the area?

Reply from David Maxwell:

The traders have engaged through the Street party and will continue to do so with the 'Christmas Lights Switch On' on December 3rd with late night shopping, food and music.

Reply from Sian Lewis:

Two focus groups on Improving Widcombe held earlier in the year asked people to come up with ideas for 'people' and 'place'. "People" is harder to address. There are lots of other groups well placed to do things so, for WA, it's about connecting with these groups and helping and supporting them. The Events committee is trying to broaden events to appeal to a wider selection of people.

From the floor:

i) Areas of Widcombe containing long term residents are not engaged, e.g. Arches Street and Excelsior Street. Perhaps these areas should be approached at a personal level.

ii) Should we have more sporting events?

Sian replied that more walks for families are planned.

iii) A 'Picture Quest', i.e. photo treasure hunt, was suggested as a WA event.

2. Does the membership value the special interest groups supported by the WA - what else should we be doing?

Reply from Sian Lewis:

Sian wondered if members were aware of the groups such as Choir, Widcombe Wobblers, and Mummers etc.

From the floor:

i) The formation of the cycling group was welcome as a way to get to know people and learn about cycling routes. What about holding regular walks and possibly producing a Widcombe Walks brochure?

ii) The following were suggested; Boule in Queen's Square, a cricket team, more Quiz Nights, something for younger people.

3. I would like to know whether the majority of Widcombe residents and traders think the Rossiter Road scheme was value for money and if it achieved the desired objectives? What is the situation as regards pedestrian crossings at the bottom of Widcombe Hill and Prior Park Road?

Reply from Mike Wrigley:

The contract was completed by mid September. WA is carrying out its own review, which BANES will take into account in their review. Key issues for WA are a) the system around the White Hart Widcombe Hill, Prior Park road and Pulteney Road resulting in problems for traffic and pedestrians b) cycle lane issues, signage is confusing, there are problems getting on and off the lane and safety issues near parked cars. General issues include signage and signalling, particularly at the eastern end where there are too many signs, and signs for the service area, which are unclear. There are construction flaws such as damaged kerbs and cracked paving. No one has expressed concern that the scheme has happened but answers are qualified generally as regards the previous points.

Reply from David Maxwell:

From the traders' perspective, David felt that the scheme would represent good value for money over a number of years, say 5 to 10. Unfortunately the plans were not adhered to so there has been loss of parking. The traders are hoping for parking to be increased and for improvements in arrangements for loading and unloading. On a positive side, there is space for tables and chairs outside, there are no fumes and a reduction in noise. Due to mismanagement by the contractors, there is no money for enhancement such as flowers.

From the floor:

i) A member provided quotes from traders about loss of trade, lack of disabled parking outside the surgery, the dangerous state of the crossings by the White Hart and that the traffic flow does not work.

ii) Turning left from Prior Park Road onto the cycle track is dangerous for cyclist as pedestrians do not recognise the track and walk in it. **Mike Wrigley** explained that symbols for the track were included in the design but have not yet been fitted.

iii) Crossing from Morrisons to the Parade is an accident waiting to happen. **Mike Wrigley** confirmed that this would be one of the principle issues addressed in the WA review. He had thought that the crossings would be raised to make them more visible. (A member confirmed that this was in the original design). He also agreed with the suggestion that the road surface should change before these crossings to warn motorists and thought this should be at a distance of about 100 metres from the junctions. Cllr Becker will raise solving this problem with the council and wondered if would either lights or zebra crossings should be installed instead. He also suggested removing the bollards and the cycle lane to restore parking but **Helen Peter** commented that this leads to motorists parking on the pavement. A show of hands indicated that about 70% of those present supported improvement of the current crossings at the White Hart junction, about 30% favoured installing zebra crossings and no-one would support putting in lights at the crossings.

4. One thing I have been wondering about is provision of cycle parking around Widcombe Parade. Are there any cycle racks planned - or maybe there are already some that I have missed?

Reply from Mike Wrigley:

He has asked for four more hoops where the seat is at the eastern end and for more in the centre of the Parade.

From the floor:

The cycle racks are too close together at the western end.

5. There are a number of major developments which could impact on Widcombe. Which do you welcome, where do you have concerns?

Jeremy qualified this question by asking which members would like WA to focus on.

(Developments are: Viaducts, Social club, Foxhill development, electrification, rugby at eh Rec, Beechen Cliff School development.)

Reply from Jan Shepley:

WA is concerned about the impact on the skyline of the Foxhill development as the buildings are too close to the edge and there is also the problem of the effect of lighting. There is to be a meeting about appropriate planting to screen the development.

Reply from Helen Peter:

The Viaduct scheme fits well with the subway group work.

From the floor:

i) The development plan for the school will impact on the skyline.

Jeremy Boss said that the School is now having regular meetings with local RAs. The views of the different RAs vary.

ii) Has the problem of the school's lights on the sports pitches been resolved?

Jan Shepley commented that the school has planning permission to use the lights as they are, but acknowledged that they have a wide impact. The School recognises the problem and intends to install short-term screening of individual lights. They will look at an improved scheme when the lights need replacing.

On electrification, **Mike Wrigley** said that the Railway Group is looking at the design of the overhead gear and the clearance of the vegetation along the line in order to minimise the impact on Widcombe.

Social end to the evening

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