

## **The Minutes of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area Advisory Group Meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2011.**

### **In attendance:**

<b>Chris Burgess</b>	NCC Conservation Manager (Chair)
<b>Annette Reeves</b>	NCC Conservation Officer (North)
<b>Peter Rutherford</b>	NCC Development Management Manager (North)
<b>Cllr John Taylor</b>	Chair of North Area Planning Committee
<b>John Robertson</b>	West End Resident's Association
<b>Margaret Thomas</b>	St Boisil's Resident's Association
<b>John Robertson</b>	Chamber of Trade
<b>Dorothy Slater</b>	Spittal Improvement Trust
<b>Alison Cowe</b>	Berwick Civic Society
<b>Philip Miller</b>	Building Study Group

A presentation/update on the Public Realm designs for Bridge Street and Maltings Lane took place at the end of formal business (recorded at the end of the minutes).

### **1. Apologies:**

Margaret Shaw (CARA), Peter Watts (The Greenses).

### **2. Minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> July and matters arising.**

The minutes were agreed. Matters arising;

- i) The response letter received from the Regeneration North Area Manager had been acknowledged by the Vice Chair (MS). Rather than accept a presentation to CAAG it was felt more pertinent to wait for the community conference in the autumn. Many CAAG members would be contributing to the conference and following on from the presentation on the 'Berwick Project' at the July meeting, the distinct roles of this project and the 'Berwick's Future Partnership' were clearer and could be shared as part of the imminent debate and community conference.
- ii) AR/CB conveyed that work was concluding on the HELAC project (reported under AOB previously). A workshop event had been held to discuss the role of the 'third sector' facilitated by the NECT who are leading on the project. AR had attended and presented the Berwick model and contribution of CAAG (and its individual interest groups/partners) but none of the third sector bodies/groups from the Berwick CAAG had been invited to attend. AR had offered to host workshops so that Civic Societies/community interest groups in other parts of the county could benefit from CAAG's experience.

The AONB were looking to set up a forum and there was potential interest from Hexham and Ponteland. It was not clear how the 'Big Society' or Localism agenda would expect the voluntary sector to provide, but some of these questions were being explored as part of the pilot project. The findings would be concluded and published at the beginning of September. It was disappointing to report the HELAC study had produced strong criticism from EH (who were a consultee) on the overall Northumberland conservation service and unfortunately, the failure to back fill the Berwick Project Officer post *could* have a direct impact on future funding. (See 3 below re; project updates).

**3. Regeneration Strategy – Protecting and enhancing the heritage asset (Update on THI and Area Partnership Schemes).**

AR reported the annual reports/budget forecasts and action plans had been submitted to HLF and EH. Approval had been received by the Heritage Lottery Fund. As conveyed previously the reports were partly looking back at what had been achieved and delivered in Year 1 and partly looking forward to which buildings/schemes and projected funds would be drawn down in Year 2. The HLF and EH had visited together in mid August to view the projects that were completed/ongoing, as well as forecast. English Heritage's formal offer of grant award was still outstanding and although the HELAC project had resulted in some frank discussions, the Berwick AP scheme budgets had been discussed and verbally agreed. EH had promised to issue the grant offer letter in the next week.

**THI** – Grant application has been submitted for the substantial group of interconnecting listed buildings at the corner of Marygate/Eastern Lane; the priority/critical buildings within the THI. This application had been discussed briefly with HLF on site, as this was a scheme that required their approval before a grant offer could be made. This would be the first THI grant scheme that would show real townscape enhancement, make links to the Eastern Lane public realm works, as well as be a prominent frontage/enhanced shop front in Marygate.

Unfortunately, the work being progressed on the former Happit building has not produced a potential THI application in spite of recent meetings/discussions. A listed building application had very recently been submitted that dealt with first floor improvements as part of residential conversion at first floor, but this was not grant eligible and did not address the issues of townscape regeneration.

Other smaller THI grant schemes are still being discussed/progressed in West Street.

**Area Partnership Schemes – Bridge Street;** new application received. Repairs imminent for a grant approved scheme and works to 11 Bridge Street to be completed by early September.

**Castlegate;** 1 application contracted on, works likely to commence in September. Planning application submitted for another new shopfront/window replacement in advance of possible grant application and agent appointed to progress window repairs to a number of other adjacent properties. Grant applications likely therefore, as part of Year 2 programme.

**Public Realm** (Maltings and Bridge Street car parks) Designs being presented at the end of CAAG on the final scheme.

**4. Berwick Listed Building Surveys.**

No further buildings to report. CB/AR continuing to raise the possibility of a future project to capture the data.

**5. Design Guides – draft leaflets (AC).**

AC not been able to progress these but will liaise with AR for discussion at a future meeting.

**6. Berwick's Future (update on progress of project groups).**

**Movement Group** – progressing three schemes; Bridge Street car park (Area Partnership Scheme); Maltings Lane car park/open space (THI) (presentation at end of meeting) and Golden Square bus stop improvements (CAAG commented on at the last meeting).

- **Public Realm Group** – technical sub group concentrating on detailed designs for the public realm components of the THI and Bridge Street Area Partnership Schemes.
- **Barracks Group** – project group meeting to be re-convened in September.

**7. CAAG website (CB).**

CB had updated the website (but it was not yet CAAGberwick.org) but was missing the March 2011 minutes (AR to forward). CB still requesting articles and information about the interest groups and happy to put links on regarding other websites and links. AC bought website CAAGberwick.org and CB in process of updating information/minutes etc.

Need to ensure members provide up to date information and news for the website.

## **8. Current Planning Applications.**

- No formal applications for consideration.
- Informal consultation received for Golden Square Bus Shelter improvements (does not require planning permission). Movement Group/Public Realm Group representatives present to discuss the scheme that has been progressed through these groups. The shelter will be;
  - Single cantilever,
  - Glass panes,
  - Single curved glass roof,
  - Wooden seating benches,
  - Painted in graphite (RAL from the Public Realm Strategy),
  - Lighting with real time passenger information displays.

CAAG approves of the overall modern design but wished to enquire as to whether glass will be self-cleaning glazing and requested that no external posters/adverts/signage would be placed on the glass. AR to convey CAAG comments to highway colleagues separately.

- Berwick Breakwater. AR informed CAAG that complex engineering works underway to the breakwater (Grade II listed building). The philosophy and conservation approach was no different to any other listed structure, but the sheer scale of stone/concrete/fabric repairs that was mainly seaward side and below tide (huge areas of erosion/loss of stone and failure of earlier repairs to the base/sub structure) had made access and repair solutions difficult. AR had been in consultation with the engineers/consultants for the last couple of years and was overseeing 'like for like' repairs to ensure samples/materials and methodologies were appropriate, along with retention of historic features (like mooring rings, capstans). The lighthouse had been re-appraised recently by EH and was confirmed as being included in the listing. The repairs had to be undertaken within a narrow timeframe under licence from Natural England due to the nationally significant marine ecology/nature conservation designations. It was hoped the repairs would not only protect historic fabric/structural integrity but also enhance access to the area.

## **9. Any Other Business.**

- i) MS – Magistrates Court is celebrating 650<sup>th</sup> year anniversary and would be holding an open day on the 9<sup>th</sup> September.
- ii) JR (West End) – Reported Tweedmouth heritage trail community works near the old bridge (timber bollards/paths/tree planting) had been vandalised. This was organised vandalism as equipment had been used to remove materials/trees that had been left on site. The police considered it the work of poachers clearing access to the river bank/vantage points.
- iii) JR (CofT) – Reported 3 new benches/serpent head/town benches had been purchased that followed the public realm strategy. Lamp columns in the town centre had also been painted matt anthracite grey (as recommended in the public realm strategy) and this was getting mixed views/public response. Need to let colour settle in; it represented a change but was a first test of smaller maintenance/enhancement items in the public realm strategy.
- iv) JR (CofT) – Raised the stocks at the side of the Town Hall (repair and who responsible). Issue has been debated at CAAG before and AR to check minutes to see who is responsible for maintenance.
- v) AR – reported on a local government initiative looking at built conservation resources in the face of budget reductions and changes in local government. Historic Environment: Local Authority Capacity (HELAC) is a partnership initiative with English Heritage and the Local Government Group, Institute of Historic Building Conservation and the Planning Officer Society. The HELAC board selected 5 pilot study areas to develop a model of learning. Northumberland County Council is one of the pilot areas. The North of England Civic Trust is undertaking the research/recommendations and AR wanted to inform CAAG that Berwick's input and contribution to the study is slightly different to the rest of the authority in the light of current regeneration initiatives and involvement of CAAG (seen as an exemplar model of working). AR also contacted by Northampton Council's Conservation Officer for assistance in how to set up/administer a CAAG. Information on the work of the group (remit report/protocol/model of working etc.) had been passed to this officer who may want to attend a future meeting of the group.

**10. Date of Next Meeting.**

**25<sup>th</sup> August 2011.** 9.15 a.m. Chandlery Building.

**Nb. Notes of the presentation/discussion on the Berwick Project set out in an appendix to the minutes.**

**Berwick Project update/presentation by Sue Milner (Director of Public Health and Protection) & Martin Ryan - Project Manager.**

## **APPENDIX**

Sue Milner explained her role was to promote and protect the health of the community. She was also the 'sponsor', at Director level, of the Berwick Project. Martin Ryan was the project manager of individual projects.

They wanted to explain, clarify and seek views on the Berwick Project. It is as much about 'what it isn't' as much as 'what it is'.

It is really a 'transformation programme' – NCC looking closely at what it does; assessing priorities/processes against shrinking budgets; an aging population and increased demands. NCC needed to look at the reduction in resources; maintain/improve services without spending any more money.

The Berwick Project is the overall policy context (previous government's "total place agenda") that covers a geographical location that aims to pool resources, work better together and take out areas of duplication. Children's Services started the process with their 'family project'; this is confusing and got mixed up with the wider Berwick Project.

Berwick is one of 6 projects in the transformation process. This is being managed via a programme of inter-related work streams. The 2 most advanced are around families (prevention/early intervention with households that have high complex needs) and the elderly. Are looking at a new approach and way of working with local services/neighbourhood teams embedded in the community that can perform a range of functions. Berwick is a test bed/guinea pig. The aim is to establish joint responsibility for issues within their own communities.

What's not included; no intention to include or compete with regeneration; Berwick's Future Partnership or heritage projects already up and running.

Other streams relate to social intelligence; bringing together citizen concerns, provide information and confidential information (soft systems approach) and health and well-being of people in later life.

PR – can align objectives of the Berwick's Future work, Regeneration strategy with the Berwick Project – previously we did not know what the BP objectives were. Can see that the BP is seeking to address aspirational deprivation and the various cycles of education/low wage economy and breakout from family by tackling the infrastructure needs of the Berwick community.

This will supplement/complement the work of BFP/Regeneration strategy and support for small businesses by addressing aspirational needs and deficit within the family side and the reluctance to seek further education/qualifications. By looking critically at existing services and local authority NHS/NCC service delivery and provision (and how to deal with it better) can only help with the delivery of the Regeneration Strategy.

JR (CofT) how does this relate to the Local Agency Multi Problem Solving (LMAPS) agenda on the ground?

Intention is to liaise with LMAPS and feed information into this problem solving process. Solutions/support can come back out via the LMAPS process.

Berwick's Future Partnership looking to host a facilitated event in the autumn; Berwick Project can attend be part of this event.