

The Minutes of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area Advisory Group Meeting on 12th January 2010.

In attendance:

Margaret Shaw	Castlegate Area Resident's Association
Annette Reeves	NCC Conservation Officer (North)
Peter Watts	The Greenses Residents' Association
Chris Burgess	NCC Conservation Team Manager (North) Chair
Peter Rutherford	NCC Development Management Manager (North)
John Robertson	Chamber of Trade
Tony Houghton	Town Council
Asif Khan	NCC Principal Planning Officer (North)

Asif Khan was welcomed and introduced to the group.

1. Apologies:

Mike Greener (SIT); John Robertson (WE); Tim Kirton (NCC); Alison Cowe (CS); Margaret Thomas (St B); Philip Miller (CDT); Cllr Smith (HELM).

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 15th December and matters arising.

The minutes were agreed. Matters arising;

- 4 c) CB confirmed PPS15/16 comments received but CLG had indicated the main body and content would *not* be substantially changed which was disappointing.
- 8 i) MS confirmed that Network Rail trials had taken place regarding the bridge lighting project; although some reservations about the use of the colour green; it had been signed off. Tenders; Jan/Feb.
- 8 iii) CB discussed HELM training with Cllr Smith who has reservations about continuing; due to large portfolio and cabinet responsibilities.

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

CB confirmed that AR officially on secondment (from 1st Jan 2010) to prepare the Stage II bid and re-submit the 2 Area Partnership Schemes which would hopefully commence on the 1st April. AR will continue to work with CAAG and provide conservation advice to Development Management (north) on applications affecting Berwick/Tweedmouth/Spittal Conservation Areas.

The North of England Civic Trust (David Lovie) will be providing conservation advice 3 days a week to back fill AR's post and shortfall

within the NCC conservation team. NECT will be managed through Elaine Gray at Alnwick/Morpeth offices. Development Management (North) request a meeting with NECT to discuss working arrangements. CB will need to look at recruiting full time cover for AR's post from April 2010.

4. Berwick Railway Station Conservation Statement (update).

AR/MS were due to meet the architect preparing the conservation statement but this (and the Gateway Station meeting) had been cancelled due to bad weather. AR explained a lot of the original contacts and personnel (and some owner/organisations) had changed and so it was important to progress the document through the right partners for it to be of value. The GS meeting had been rearranged for the 29th January. AR/MS to meet with the architect prior to this meeting.

5. Local Lists.

CB explained that "Local Lists" had been proposed by the Northumberland Heritage Forum – a group originally funded by the NSP – and continued by NCC. Local lists had *not* been a high priority but do feature in the new Heritage Bill. The Bill proposed they went wider than buildings; to include archaeology, places and landscapes. It had been suggested that NCC look at 3 case studies and prepare lists through the community forums.

Local lists must be entirely community based but Berwick does not (yet) have a community forum. CB suggested the Berwick CAAG could be a suitable group to take a pilot forward. There were opportunities to apply for funding. EH offers training/capacity building.

AR raised two issues on capacity and policy. EH had already invested a lot of time and training in setting up the Berwick Recording Group. This group appeared to have stalled with no lead or clear focus (but did have a mailing list of interested local people and volunteers). EH's own research project within the 3 conservation areas was providing invaluable information; as well as a data base of locally important buildings. For a local list to be effective its status needed to be understood; where would it sit? How would it be used? It was only a "list" unless it was linked to a planning policy that set out *how* the list was to be interpreted.

CB/TH considered the Recording Group was only concerned with buildings. Local heritage value and "policy" was concerned with much more than that; archaeology, landscape and context. Did it have to be linked to a planning policy?

PR considered the Character Appraisals were the basis for looking at wider conservation and heritage value. It could be that the Townscape

Heritage Initiative – which included an element of learning could be used as a resource to build capacity. The bid had included the provision of training from a conservation engineer to help interpret buildings. The Stage II work could include a template on *how* the resource could be used to build local capacity. This could be rolled out across the 3 conservation areas. Understanding context/setting and the collective heritage asset would then form the evidence base from which the policy grows.

Should this be CAAG driven? – or someone else like CITTASLOW; History Group; Archaeology Group or local wildlife group.

PR suggested using the THI work being undertaken for the Stage II bid to form the appropriate guidance/template for capacity and training. This could form part of the launch of the THI and 2 Area Partnership Schemes that brought in the wider community and local interest groups. The THI and AP Schemes provide the training opportunity – the outcome is the local list. If successful, this template could be used for all of Berwick, Tweedmouth and Spittal conservation areas.

Agreed; The Berwick CAAG is involved in the THI/APS work but local lists need to have a wider focus. CAAG is not necessarily the best group to lead or produce it; it should be programmed into the THI Stage II work; launched as an initiative with the 3 partnership schemes and have a broader community input.

6. Design Guides (examples and continuation of discussion; AC).

In AC absence; this item deferred to the next meeting.

7. Current Planning Applications.

None for CAAG consideration. TH raised the Ravensdowne Hotel (Villa Spice) and concern that consent not yet issued for re-painting/signage. Owner keen to progress and considered this was holding up refurbishments. AR involved in provision of conservation advice; colours had been agreed after sample patches produced. AR to check why not yet determined.

8. Any Other Business.

1. Development Management Service – PR conveyed it had been confirmed at a senior management meeting that Paul Gee; Peter Biggars and 2 other senior officers from Building Control were leaving the authority at the end of March. The head of Strategic Planning was also under review. This left Richard Robson as the Director of Place but effectively took out a whole tier of senior

management. It was not known if the planning functions were to be reviewed or how they were to be effectively managed beyond this date. There were potential implications for the development management service and possible centralisation of the DM teams. Peter Biggars was also HELM champion at senior officer level.

CAAG expressed concern with the possible loss of HELMs at officer *and* Member level; as well as the potential centralisation of the development management service. PW suggested making representation via a letter to NCC.

Agreed; PW to circulate a draft before Margaret Shaw (as vice chair) signs a letter. The letter will convey CAAGs collective concern on behalf of a number of local community groups.

2. Public Realm Strategy – JR reminded that this was an important piece of ‘Berwick’s Future’ work. It needed to be agreed and moved on very quickly. AR advised that the Public Realm Strategy Group should be in a position to present the brief to CAAG at the next meeting.
3. Berwick Ramparts public access consultation – TH had previously circulated the consultation documents which had also been sent to individual groups and organisations. TH suggested removing the path or putting up additional signage. CB conveyed there were many options being proposed and discussed previously. All were valid at this stage of the consultation. Some organisations had already sent in their responses. For CAAG to respond as a group; it needed to reflect a consensus view. PW offered to coordinate; circulate and submit CAAG’s response. The deadline for consultation responses was 29th January. AR to email the group today with the following dates;
 - Responses to PW by Friday 15th January.
 - PW circulate draft CAAG response by Friday 22nd January.
 - PW to send in CAAG response by Friday 29th January.
4. Sustainable Living Project & Conservation Areas at Risk – AR conveyed that EH were looking to update the Conservation Areas at Risk document which *would* be re-launched this year. It had also been announced that Berwick had been chosen as a ‘sustainable living town’ and would receive government funding for a “solar panel project”. Whilst we wanted to promote sustainable living; we also needed to resist additional clutter and unnecessary interventions in the Berwick roofscape. The cumulative effect of satellite dishes/blocked gutters etc., had featured highly in the

“conservation areas at risk” debate previously. Solar panels/community wind turbines and highly visible energy saving devices could contribute to that debate and concern. PW/JR suggested contacting Berwick Borough Housing as they would be the main recipients of the government grant to offer advice/guidance and remind them of the possible need to obtain planning and/or listed building consent.

9. Dates of Next Meetings.

2nd February 2010.

2nd March 2010.

6th April 2010.

9.00 a.m. start. Venues/meeting rooms to be confirmed.