

WHALEY BRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

Mechanics Institute, Market Street, Whaley Bridge, High Peak, SK23 7AA
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ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11

The parish of Whaley Bridge covers four wards; Fernilee, Taxal, Yeadsley and Furness Vale. There are three councillors representing each ward and the council meets in the Mechanics Institute on the second Thursday of each month (except August) at 7.30pm. Meetings are open to the press and public and local people are invited to address councillors during the agenda item "Open Forum" about any issues of concern.

Your council is officially recognised as a "Quality Town Council" and has achieved the Power of Well Being which means that it has the power to do anything that it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well being of its Parish.

Town Clerk

The Town Clerk is Mrs Stephanie Raybould. The Clerk's Office is within the Mechanics Institute and is open to the public between 9.00am and 12.30pm each weekday morning to provide information, advice and to deal with queries. Tel: 01663 733068.

Chair and Vice-Chair

On 13th May 2010, Cllr John Swift was elected as Chair and Cllr Jon Goldfinch was elected as Vice-Chair of Whaley Bridge Town Council for 2010/2011.

Councillors Expenses

Members of Whaley Bridge Town Council do not claim any expenses although they are permitted to claim "out-of-pocket" expenses in accordance with statutory regulations. They carry out their roles as town councillors voluntarily giving up time and effort for the benefit of the community. Councillors must also declare a personal or prejudicial interest in items on the agenda in which they could influence decisions directly affecting themselves.

Whaley Bridge Community Website - www.whaleybridge.com

The Town Council sponsors the community website. This provides a wealth of local information, photos, historical notes, local events, news, etc. It is for the benefit of both local people and visitors alike and hosts a discussion forum where people (following registration) can enter into local debates and post messages. This year a new updated website has been designed and launched. The website also has a section for the Town Council with copies of all recent Town Council Minutes and Planning Committee Minutes and details about your Councillors and how they may be contacted.

Planning Applications

All planning applications for the parish are considered by the council at their monthly meetings and relevant comments and recommendations made to the Planning Department at High Peak Borough Council. Members of the public are also able to view all applications in the Clerk's Office weekday mornings.

Precept, Income and Expenditure

The income for the year amounted to £89,298 and the expenditure was £82,454. The precept for 2010/11 was £70,552 and there will be no increase for 2011/12. A copy of the receipts and payments account for the year ending 31st March 2011 is attached.

Grants and Donations

The council donated £1,600 to local organisations during 2010/11. Plus an amount of £2000 was given towards the expenses of the annual Whaley Water Weekend event and £1300 paid for the hire of the marquee for the Welldressing week.

Safer Neighbourhoods Team

PC Andrew Crosthwaite and PCSO Tracy Jones lead the Safer Neighbourhoods Team for this area. They attend Council Meetings and liaise with councillors about crime and local community issues. The Team hold regular meetings with members of the public to ascertain issues of concern and priorities for action. These are usually held in the Mechanics Institute during the evening.

Bridge over River Goyt to Bingswood Industrial Estate (Goyt River Bridge)

The failing of the bridge bid was a great disappointment to the council. They felt that the liaison between High Peak Borough Council and United Utilities was very poor. The council is now permitted to join in any discussions between HPBC and United Utilities when the effort it made to facilitate these meetings. Any future meetings of our Regeneration Partnership need the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and the HPBC Officer present.

We want more jobs in Whaley Bridge and the surveys point out that at **least** an additional 100 jobs would have been possible.

The Tesco side of the river bank is owned by HPBC and obtaining the other side belonging to United Utilities should be our objective.

Furness Vale Village Park

The organisation in Furness Vale managing the project is called Furness Vale COGS (Community Organising Green Spaces). They have applied for QE11 status for the field with the support of the council and HPBC who currently own the area.

Architects have drawn up initial designs for the park and a ground survey has already been carried out. And the FV COGS hope to get the input of the community at their next Field Day event but the main design incorporates all the findings from the local consultation which was conducted in May 2010. The field will be an open space for all sections of the community to include sporting facilities, a garden area and activities for children and young people. New seating is planned, together with litter bins, dog waste bins and new signage.

Brookfield Pond Nature Reserve

This nature reserve is owned and managed by the council. It is open to the public at all times for enjoyment and relaxation. Fishing at the pond is managed by MSSAS (Moss Side Social Angling Society), the local fishing society, who also manage fishing on Toddbrook Reservoir. The council has donated £100 towards the cost of installing three new fishing platforms which will be suitable for use by people with disabilities.

Sports Pavilion and Multi Use Games Area

The Multi User Games Area is situated next to the football pitches at the top of the Memorial Park. The MUGA along with the nearby Pavilion and associated car park were conceived as a project back in 1998, and eventually built in 2002 following a successful bid for grant funding from Sport England, which financed the construction costs. High Peak Borough Council own the buildings and land, and WBTC lease them from HPBC on a 25 year lease. In line with the original grant funding model, and covenants for the land in the area, the MUGA supports a number of different sports, and tennis, basketball and football have all been played there. Taxal school is also a user.

Over time, the primary users of the MUGA and pavilion have proved to be Whaley Bridge Football Club, but the tarmac surface considered to be best in 1998 is now considered by all parties to be dangerous and out of date. For health and safety reasons junior teams have been moving to safer surfaces at Chapel leisure centre. WBTC rely on income from users to pay for the significant rent, electricity, gas, cleaning and other bills which add up to around £7000 per year, but as the main users move to safer surfaces elsewhere, the income is dropping - from £4600 in 2009/10 to £3000 in the year just gone. This means WBTC is now subsidising the facility by around £3000-£4000 per year, equivalent to around 12% of the total money WBTC has available after administration costs. This is unsustainable, yet at the same time WBTC does not want to lose such a local facility.

The solution chosen is to work closely with Whaley Bridge Football Club, who are the primary users and to obtain grant funding to resurface the MUGA with a 40mm third generation (3G) artificial surface. It is agreed that this particular surface, suitable for

football, hockey and other sports, will bring back the original football users as well as many new ones, whilst still retaining the multi-user/multi sport aspect of the existing facility. The demand for such a quality surface will help to make the facility self-sustaining, which is the Town Council's aim.

As main users, it is also an aspiration of Whaley Bridge Football Club to take over the lease for the Pavilion and the MUGA, and to run these themselves to the benefit of the local community. This is not financially viable while the MUGA surface is in its current state. The football club have recently amalgamated their junior and senior arms, and have just obtained Charter Standard Status from the FA in order to help pursue this aim, one of only 11 clubs in Derbyshire to obtain this highest level of the award. WBTC see this as a very positive scenario for the future prosperity and retention of the facility. Such a change would not be to the exclusion of other sports and other users. On the contrary, a diversity of users would be vital to the ongoing financial security of the facility.

In November 2010, following a grant application, WBTC and WBFC representatives met at the Derbyshire FA headquarters where it was announced that our project was to be approved in principle for 50% funding of the overall project costs, subject to WBTC and WBFC finding the additional 50%. WBTC have put £5,000 towards the project and DCC have put forward £4,000. A further £1,000 is anticipated from other sources and WBFC will be attempting to raise around £10,000. Assuming project costs remain at £65,000, this leaves us with around £13,000 to find from other grant sources, which is the immediate aim over the next couple of months. A final decision is also required as to who will be the lead applicant in the formal grant application to the FA. It makes good sense for WBTC or HPBC to do this as they can recover all the VAT costs associated with the project, whereas the football club cannot.

Skatepark and BMX Track

This area is adjacent to the football pitches and is owned and maintained by the Town Council. Regular inspections are undertaken to ensure that the area and equipment is safe, at a cost of £318 per year. The facility is provided free of charge for the enjoyment of our younger age group.

Jonathan Carnall has worked very hard and obtained a Big Lottery grant of £50,000 to expand and improve the skatepark facilities. This work should take place later this year alongside the greater refurbishment plans for the entire Memorial Park.

Annual Firework Display

The Town Council contributed £1200 towards the annual bonfire and firework display in the Memorial Park, organised by the Goyt Valley Round Table.

Christmas Trees

Christmas trees are provided in Whaley Bridge Furness Vale. This cost the Town Council £757 this year which was slightly less than usual as the trees were donated by United Utilities. Many thanks to Footsteps for organising the Christmas festivities in Whaley Bridge including the Father Christmas Grotto and Table-Top Sale in the Mechanics Institute.

Hanging Baskets and Tubs

Seventy-five hanging baskets and 25 flower tubs are provided in Whaley Bridge and Furness Vale by WBTC to enhance the town centres. The cost of providing grounds maintenance during this financial year was £5676.

New Cobbles and New Planter

This year the Town Council purchased a new wooden flower planter for the town. It is located outside the pet shop on Market Street on the newly cobbled area of pavement which replaces the old iron grid and unsightly tarmac left by HPBC.

Community Newsletter

The council produces a quarterly newsletter which is distributed to each household in the parish free of charge to keep the community informed about council activities, news, local events and contact information. This cost the Town Council £952 to print and distribute this year.

Sunnybank Allotment Site

This allotment site is managed by the Town Council providing 18 allotments. There are still over 40 names on the waiting list for allotments so the council continues to try to identify an additional site.

The annual rent for an allotment is £20. The Community Services Team (Buxton Probation) carried out some removal of vegetation and path-clearing work earlier in the year. The Town Council is investigating harnessing the natural water supply running through the allotment site to provide a source of fresh water for the tenants to use on their plots.

Parish Paths Map

The updated Parish Paths Map is widely available and costs £1.50. It gives details of all the public rights of way in the parish and three detailed local walks to enjoy.

Route of Cromford & High Peak Railway – Shallcross Incline

The Shallcross Incline is part of the route of the disused Cromford & High Peak Railway line which connected the canal system at Cromford to the Whaley Bridge Basin. The Shallcross Incline runs from Shallcross Road to New Road running parallel with Elnor Lane.

Derbyshire County Council has submitted a planning application for the work to clear the route, lay an appropriate surface and carry out landscaping. This is progressing at the present time and it is hoped the work will be completed during the summer months. It may eventually be designated as a Greenway and Public Right of Way.

Mechanics Institute

The Town Council is Trustee of the Mechanics Institute which is run as a registered charity for the benefit of the local community. Rooms can be hired for local events, meetings, classes, etc seven days a week. It incorporates the Town Clerk's office, CAB sessions, WB Volunteer Bureau, Darby & Joan sessions and many other interesting activities for local people to enjoy.

The council contributed £3085 to replacing six windows in the Main Hall with double-glazed upvc units which will help to conserve heat and reduce energy bills. Additional loft insulation and low-energy lighting was also installed.

The Reading Room is open to the public on five mornings a week where people can read the daily newspapers provided and obtain public information leaflets.

Grit Bins

Twenty-five grit bins are filled annually by the council costing £600 this year.

Annual Community Award

The Town Council gives an award each year to a person or organisation, which has contributed outstanding voluntary work within the local community for the benefit of local people. The award was made to Maureen Roberts this year for her hard work on behalf of the community at Footsteps and for the Rose Queen Carnival. Nominations are being invited at present for the 2011 award which will be made at the Town Council meeting on 9th June 2011.

Whaley Bridge Station

Phase One of Network Rail's plans for Whaley Bridge Station is almost complete. The £1000, which Whaley Bridge Town Council set aside in its budget for the financial year 2010-2011, to demonstrate its support for the project, has been gratefully received by Network Rail. The work to bring the Station Building back into use began in late Spring 2010.

First the floor level of the whole building was raised, in preparation for the time when the platform level is raised to mitigate the problem of "The Gap". The interior of the building has been reconfigured to incorporate a self-contained Booking Office with its own entrance, toilet and kitchen facilities.

The Waiting Room remains the same size and some of its Victorian features have been restored: e.g. the original fireplace and the sash windows have been exposed. Beyond the Waiting Room, a kitchen area and a DDA compliant toilet complete the refurbishment of the interior space.

The entrance from the Car Park into the Booking Hall has yet to be finished and there is still some external work taking place, but it is hoped that the building will soon be back in use.

Toddbrook Reservoir Valves

Background: In January 2011, May Gurney, specialist civil engineering contractors to British Waterways, completed a programme of work at Toddbrook Reservoir, which was constructed in 1831 as a 'feeder' for the Peak Forest Canal. A double valve and two single valves have been replaced and become available for display following restoration (sandblasting and painting). The valves are very heavy and have to be moved by crane and crane lorry; it is believed that the small ones weigh in excess of one ton each, and the double valve nearly three tons. It is understood that, when these valves were installed in the early 20th Century, a local master stonemason, Mr Edwin ('Ned') Drinkwater, constructed the surrounding stone structure. Descendants of Ned live locally and are interested in the project to restore and display these Historic Valves close to their original operational location. After restoration, the double valve will be displayed at Bugsworth Basin, and the two smaller valves at Whaley Bridge.

Site and Site Access: The preferred site in Whaley Bridge for the display of the pair of smaller valves is on grassland adjacent to the Public Right of Way linking Reservoir Road with Memorial Park (upper level). The site is in the ownership of British Waterways. It can be visited by wheelchair users by crossing (from Reservoir Road) over the small wooden bridge over the Toddbrook, whereupon the site is immediately on the right.

Partners: Currently, project partners include: Whaley Bridge Community Trust, Whaley Bridge Amenity Society, Whaley Bridge Town Council, Inland Waterways Protection Society (Mr Ian Edgar MBE), British Waterways.

Costs: Fund raising events are taking place for **Phase 1 (provision of valves)** this year, followed next year by **Phase 2 (provision of interpretation board)**.

Tescos Extension and Donation for Town Centre Regeneration

In 2001 Tescos applied to build a new store in Whaley Bridge. Amidst much local debate a store was eventually built, and Tescos agreed to make a £100,000 S106 contribution towards a bridge to open up the Bingswood Industrial Estate.

In November 2010 Tescos applied to extend their existing store by 1,250sq m bringing up to 50 new local jobs to the town. Whilst welcoming the new jobs, and accepting in principle the extended store, WBTC were highly sensitive to the potential retail impact, and suggested strongly to HPBC, the planning authority, that Tesco should consider a new 106 agreement to help mitigate the retail impact in the town. WBTC worked hard with HPBC to achieve this and we are pleased to report that we were successful.

On commencement of construction of the Tesco extension, Tescos will make a payment of £115,000 to HPBC, 82% of which will then be spent on projects in Whaley Bridge, the remaining 18% shared between WB and New Mills (considered also to be affected by the store). The existing £100,000 S106 contribution for the original store, which can only be spent towards construction of a bridge, and which runs out in Aug 2015, remains untouched by this new agreement.

The £115,000 is to be spent on the following projects, all aimed in different ways in attracting trade, at making the town more viable and mitigating retail impact. It can be spent over a 5 yr period:

1) £46,000 - Whaley Bridge Townscape Improvements- Improved Pedestrian Linkages, street furniture and parking.

2) £24,150 - Whaley Bridge Regeneration Shop front project. - Funding for selected shop front improvements in WB up to 70% of the total cost of the individual project - e.g repainting, resigning etc.

3) £24,150 - Whaley Bridge Gateway project - Provision of village entry signage and associated features at selected locations in WB including highway verge planting schemes and associated maintenance.

4) £20,700 - Vacancy project - funding to promote occupancy of vacant retail units in WB and New Mills. £3000 max per individual project.

Further, Tesco's will, within the bounds of employment law, be targeting both the local long term employed and other local people when filling vacancies. Up to 50 local jobs are possible.

Finally, a long standing litter problem at the canalside entrances and exits to the store will be dealt with by additional waste bins.

Cllr John Swift
Chair, Whaley Bridge Town Council
15th April 2011