

## **NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL AREA COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the **North Northumberland Local Area Council** held at Northern View Limited, Highcliffe, Spittal, Berwick-Upon-Tweed, TD15 2JL on Tuesday, 16 July 2019 at 6.00pm

#### **PRESENT**

Councillor T. Thorne  
(Vice-chair (Planning), in the Chair)

#### **MEMBERS**

G. Hill  
A. Murray  
W. Pattison

G. Renner-Thompson  
G. Roughead  
J. Watson

#### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

M. Bird  
G. Bucknall  
I. Hewitt

B. Hodgson

P. Jones  
T. Kirsop  
R. Tweedie  
N. Walsh

Senior Planning Officer  
Highways Delivery Area Manager  
Northumberland Coast and  
Lowlands LEADER Programme  
Officer  
Neighbourhood Services  
Area Manager (North)  
Service Director - Local Services  
Community Regeneration Manager  
Tourism Development Officer  
Head of Cultural Services

#### **ALSO IN ATTENDANCE**

N. Ayers - Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI)  
G. Campbell - Culture Creative  
R. Farr - RNLI  
R. Lowrie - Northumberland Coast and Lowlands LEADER Local Action Group  
M. Lowe - Maritime and Coastguard Agency

Seven members of the public and one member of the press were in attendance.

#### **35. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bridgett, Castle, Clark, Lawrie, Moore and Seymour.

Ch.'s Initials.....

## 36. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of North Northumberland Local Area Council held on Thursday, 20 June 2019, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

## 37. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

A number of non-prejudicial, non-pecuniary interests were declared:

- Councillor Renner-Thompson declared that he was the county council appointed member on the Northumberland Coast and Lowlands LEADER Local Action Group
- Councillor Roughead declared that the Tour of Britain was a North of Tyne project, for which he served as scrutiny chair
- Councillor Murray declared that he was a member of the Northumberland Uplands LEADER local action group.

## 38. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

This item was to reply to any questions received from members of the public, which could either be received in writing in advance of the meeting or asked at the meeting. Questions could be asked about issues for which the Council had a responsibility. The Vice-chair (Planning) explained that as the meeting was taking place during purdah, no questions could be allowed about any matters regarding the forthcoming Police and Crime Commissioner by-election.

**Brian Darling, local resident**, raised three issues:

1. he expressed concern that Berwick had been overlooked for the inaugural Borderlands meeting, especially given its proud heritage
2. could any television coverage of the Tour of Britain possibly capture any recent footage of dolphins in Berwick bay?
3. he was disappointed that the Berwick lifeboat fete had been cancelled this year.

The Vice-chair (Planning) reassured Mr Darling that local members were working hard to raise Berwick's profile.

## 39. PETITIONS

No new petitions or any reports or updates on petitions previously considered were available.

## 40. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

Ch.'s Initials.....

Members received a verbal update from the Area Managers from Technical Services and Neighbourhood Services in attendance about any key recent, ongoing and/or future planned Local Services work for the attention of members.

#### **Neighbourhood Services Update:**

- **grass cutting:** cuts number seven and eight were currently being delivered. The warm and wet conditions meant the grass continued to grow quickly and there was no sign of this slowing. The new machines purchased in 2018 continued to perform well with improved efficiency through lack of down time due to any breakdowns
- **weed control:** the in house approach was working well and return visits were organised to any areas reported. As the spray only worked on visible weeds, after completing some areas further weeds could sprout up after further good weather, and delays could be caused by either rain or wind
- **verge cutting:** work began in June 2019. The county had 6.8 million square metres of verge to cut, and officers were 264,394 metres ahead of where they were at the same time in 2018. This indicated that work was due to be completed earlier than in 2018 - the first week in August
- **In Bloom:** judging was taking place in Alnwick on 16 July and in Berwick on 19 July. Judging had taken place in Lesbury the previous week. The results would be announced in September
- **cleansing:** all summer routes were working to plan and going as well as expected, but it was an ongoing challenge as ever
- **waste services:** residual and recycling waste collection services continued to perform well.

#### **Technical Services Update:**

Members were advised of resurfacing, surface dressing and other work to a variety of locations, including Carterside Road, Rothbury; A1068 Percy Drive, Amble, the Hipsburn to Alnmouth footpath; Embleton footpath; Beach Estate; Market Street in Alnwick; Swinhoe Road at Beadnell; Newton on the Moor to Swarland; Biddlestone village; Church Street in Amble; Ravensdowne Road in Berwick; Goldstone Estate; and Blakelaw Road in Alnwick.

Members then raised a number of issues of which the key points were:

- officers were congratulated on the excellent grass cutting service delivered
- residents in rural areas could see the Council's investment in roads. Short term inconveniences caused by detours/diversions were worth the result
- officers were thanked for their work at Beech Estate in Shilbottle and road resurfacing from Newton on the Moor to Swarland
- thanks expressed for work done to Longframlington closed cemetery.

Members also asked for a number of issues to be followed up, of which the key points, including any responses from officers, were as follows:

- Hazon needed some resurfacing; members were advised that this was due to a drainage issue which was being discussed with the landowner
- Lee Avenue in Shilbottle needed maintenance to remove soil, pebbles and weeds covering kerbs
- the farm road to The Hope at Brinkburn and road to Overgrass Farm at Newton on the Moor both needed attention

- regarding any possible complications arising from the use of plastic materials in road resurfacing, members were advised that this had been trialled in some areas. The issue concerned whether the plastic element would bond into the material and cope with any wear and tear pressures; the granules had to be heated to a sufficient temperature to melt in
- a spike of complaints had been received about the condition of Eastcliffe Estate in Spittal; could a walkabout be organised? Members were advised that a meeting had taken place with Bernicia about the numbers of flagstones missing; they would be programming updating of the drying areas
- concerns were expressed about vandalism and breach of the barrier at Spittal Point; the Director of Local Services would follow up the position regarding the expected repair cost
- complaints had been received about the tidiness of cemeteries in Berwick; members were advised that a programme of work was being organised; there had been an issue with power supplies to chapels. The use of the Total Mobile app made it easier to track where work had been undertaken and cemeteries would be tidied more frequently in future. Strategic Estate officers were undertaking a full condition survey of chapels in the area. The property stewardship fund would be used to bring them up to the required standard.

Officers were thanked for their work and updates and it was:

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted and issues raised by members needing resolution be followed up after the meeting.

## DISCUSSION ITEMS

### 41. TOUR OF BRITAIN

Members received an overview of Stage 3 of the 2019 Tour of Britain, including the route and opportunities for communities and schools to be involved. A presentation was provided (copy attached to the official minutes of the meeting)

Key details from the presentation, introduced jointly by Nigel Walsh, Gary Campbell and Ruth Tweedie, were:

- stage 3 of the event would visit Northumberland on 9 September 2019
- Northumberland County Council was working jointly with British Cycling, Sweetspot and the North of Tyne Combined Authority
- previous visits to Northumberland in 2015 and 2017 were estimated to have brought in £3.9 million to the local economy. 100,000 people watched the race and 70% came from outside the county
- the event would be shown live on ITV4 and Eurosport with a TV audience covering 190 territories
- the media value was estimated at £1 million. It was important to get communities behind the event
- the route would begin in Berwick at 11am with the finish at 3.30pm on Grey Street in Newcastle. The route was highlighted in the presentation and would take in many Northumberland towns and villages including Wooler, Bamburgh, Warkworth, Morpeth, Choppington and then pass through North Tyneside via

the Priory before ending in Newcastle. Full details were provided at the meetings of the timings through the north Northumberland area

- road closures would be necessary but would be restricted to a maximum of 45 minutes to minimise inconvenience to residents
- it was hoped to involve communities that the race passed through as much as possible and they were being encouraged to decorate the roadside
- businesses were being encouraged to welcome visitors and to be as cycle friendly as possible
- a design a jersey competition for school children had been launched and it was planned to have the winning designs made up for the day.
- 160 schools had expressed an interest in viewing the event.

Discussion followed during which the key points raised by members and responses from officers were:

- the previous tours had been excellent events
- regarding what benefits were expected to come to Berwick businesses from the tour, many visitors were expected who might perhaps stay overnight locally and use local shops and restaurants. It was estimated that around 10,000 people might watch the beginning of the stage in Berwick, who would all need food and drink. Sweet Spot had contacted all local businesses near the route. All chambers of trade and commerce on the route were being contacted. A meeting would take place with the Berwick Chamber of Trade on 17 July about how Berwick businesses could engage
- whether sufficient notification had been sent to schools, especially as the stage through the County in 2017 had been on a Saturday and the summer holidays were coming up, members were advised that the Director of Education had directly contacted all schools to advise them. Equivalent officers had also done so in Newcastle and North Tyneside
- work was taking place with schools; 65 children and adults were going to lead the teams out
- road closures of 90 minutes was required based on an estimate of whether the race was proceeding from a slow to a fast pace. The race was expected to travel through within a 45 minute window, and time was required either side. The police, ambulance service and public transport companies were all involved. The Council's communications team would be issuing regular updates about the timing of the race
- councillors were encouraged to spread the word about the event and encourage people to be involved.

The Vice-chair (Planning) thanked officers for their presentation and hoped that all communities would be interested in the race.

**RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

#### **42. HOLY ISLAND CAUSEWAY**

This item was being presented to address concerns about recent cases of vehicles stranded by the tide on the causeway and discuss current arrangements in place and any possible further actions. The Director of Local Services, Martin Lowe the north Northumberland Coastguard from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and

Nick Ayers and Rachel Farr from the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) were all in attendance for this item.

Mr Ayers introduced the item by referring to how Holy Island was a big tourist attraction and the RNLI had developed a media campaign to help reduce the number of prevent vehicles stranded on the causeway. Ms Farr, the RNLI's media marketing manager provided a display of the various designs of posters and publicity developed. The artwork would be used in a number of formats that could be used on hot drink wraps, bags and other materials, which would be shared with relevant partners including the tourist board. The posters included a QR code that people could scan to take them straight to the tide timetable webpage, and a GIF had also been produced. A range of ideas had been developed and the campaign would target local businesses, holiday companies and other relevant organisations plus also aim to raise general awareness.

Mr Lowe explained the arrangements for responding to emergencies on the causeway. 999 calls went to the coastguard operations centre at Bridlington from where contact was made with either the Berwick or Seahouses offices, who would then assess and take action. Statistics for vehicle strandings in recent years were as follows: 2015: four incidents (three tidal / one stuck in mud/sand); 2016: 13 (10 tidal, three mud/sand); 2017: 14 (10 tidal / four in mud/sand); 2018: 16 (14 tidal / two in mud/sand); 2019 to date: 12 (10 tidal / two in mud/sand).

Questions/discussion then followed of which the key details were:

Regarding how any similar situations elsewhere had been addressed, members were advised that the Sunny Island causeway in Florida used a traffic light system. Holy Island residents did not however support either a physical barrier or traffic light system. Feedback received from a walkabout on the island included concerns that there were no easy links in place to the tide timetables. This publicity campaign, with its use of a QR code, addressed that.

Members stressed that it was important to circulate information from this campaign to all local tourist providers, inns/bed and breakfasts etc to educate visitors about the tide times and not risking journeys when the tide was coming in. Members were advised that information was included in welcome packs for holiday companies.

A member enquired about any advertising advice received and whether more graphic images of stranded vehicles had been considered to raise awareness and shock people into not risking the tide. Members were informed that such images had been used previously, but this campaign tried a different approach, was very clear that the problem was tidal, and the animation was suitable for demonstrating how water came across the causeway.

Other key points in response to questions included:

- it was always holiday makers who got stranded; 90% of cases were people coming off the island trying to avoid getting stuck there
- the message needed to be clear - if there was any water on the causeway, do not cross

- it was difficult to make any physical changes to the causeway as a result of the high level heritage and ecological protections in place. It had taken two years to get approval for cutting grips in the salt marsh
- local residents knew the timetables; on occasions visitors might follow thinking that they had time
- 700,000 people were estimated to visit Holy Island each year
- the Council was the highways authority and had responsibility for the causeway, supported the work with the RNLi and its communications team could also assist with getting the campaign's message out further. Consideration was also being given to how to upgrade the existing digital signage
- the Council had no powers to remove the blocks in the car park on the mainland as this was privately owned land
- further consideration would be given to any link between the changes to the electronic signage in 2016 and any change in the numbers of vehicles being stranded since then
- the yearly cost of lifeboat rescues for the whole country was £2m per year.

Members fully welcomed the proposals, welcome packs and posters, and agreed that all networks should be used to publicise and pass on these messages.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted, the proposed campaign supported and details circulated as widely as possible.

#### **43. NORTHUMBERLAND COAST & LOWLANDS LEADER PROGRAMME**

Members received a presentation which aims to give an overview of the 2014 - 2020 LEADER programme, a community-led, rural development fund designed and delivered to support rural communities and businesses in the Northumberland Coast and Lowlands area. (Briefing note filed with the official minutes as Appendix A.)

The presentation was delivered by Ross Lowrie, Chair of Northumberland Coast and Lowlands LEADER Local Action Group attending and Ivan Hewitt, Northumberland Coast and Lowlands LEADER Programme Officer. (Copy of presentation filed with the official minutes of the meeting.)

Mr Hewitt provided an overview which detailed the three LEADER areas, its funding arrangements; how applications for fund had now closed; its six key themes of micro and small enterprises and farm diversification/ support for rural tourism/increasing forestry productivity/ increasing farm productivity/provision of local services/culture and heritage activities, a history of LEADER to date beginning with LEADER II from 1994 onwards; principles of the LEADER approach; the role, remit and memberships of Local Action Groups; details of LEADER delivery and programme expenditure; how applications were received and processed; headline figures for each priority theme, how LEADER was about "real people in real places having a real impact on their communities and businesses", and learning taken from the LEADER approach.

Mr Lowrie added that as LEADER was now ending, choices were needed about the future of rural support, and he had written to local MPs and DEFRA about the issue. He referred to copies of a brochure that had been circulated to members at the

meeting (copy attached to official minutes of the meeting) and emphasised the learning gained from the LEADER approach. He expressed concern that opportunities had been missed about incorporating a LEADER element into either the Borderlands of North of Tyne remits and possible future regret if the approach was discontinued. He asked members to highlight the issue where possible, and stressed the benefits of continuing a community led rural development initiative within Northumberland.

Discussion followed in which a member referred to how the Local Action Groups included a committee of committed local people who knew what they wanted and what a scheme could produce and agreed that more could have been done to include it within the Borderlands proposals. Another member added that LEADER was a fantastic way to support local businesses and projects and referred to responses at the Borderlands meeting at Dumfries that it would focus instead on big projects rather than LEADER's small projects approach.

Mr Lowrie also added that businesses had been able to apply for 40% funding and community projects up to 100% funding.

Members agreed that it was important for members and other interested parties to keep lobbying where appropriate to continue some type of LEADER approach in future and thanked Mr Lowrie and Mr Hewitt for their excellent presentation.

**RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

## **INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **44. MEMBERS' LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES 2017/19 - PROGRESS REPORT**

Members received a progress update on Members' Local Improvement Schemes for 2017/19 as at 1 July 2019. (Copy of report enclosed with the official minutes as Appendix B.)

Reference was made to progress on new bins for Seahouses and Bamburgh, and the sleeping policeman design for the Morwick Road to Gillan Road at Warkworth.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

### **45. BERWICK REGENERATION COMMISSION**

This was a standing item on the agenda for verbal updates. Members were advised that a public consultation event about the new leisure centre had recently taken place. Feedback had been wholly positive about the design. The proposal would now proceed through the planning application process.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

### **46. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME**

This item was to note the latest version of agreed items for future Local Area Council



meetings. (Copy of report enclosed with the official minutes as Appendix C.)

Members were advised that August's meeting would not be planning only as a report responding to a petition would be considered also. Reference was also made to a proposed presentation about the Northumberland Lottery at September's round of meetings.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

**47. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME RESPONSES**

Details about questions asked at a previous North Northumberland Local Area Council meeting about Berwick Hospital and the responses subsequently provided were presented (copy enclosed with the official minutes as Appendix D).

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

**48. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Thursday, 22 August 2019 at St James' Church Centre, Alnwick.

**CHAIR**.....

**DATE**.....