

Minutes of Blo' Norton Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 23 August 2011 at 1930 hours in the Village Hall

Those Present: John Barnet-Lamb, John Olley, Mike Bristow, Ann Lambert and Reg from Little Ouse Headwater Project

1. Apologies – Caron Findley
2. Public Comment - None
3. To receive Declarations of interest in respect of items for consideration – John Barnet-Lamb declared an interest in item 12.
4. To approve the Minutes of Parish council meeting held on 28 June 2011 – Approved as circulated and signed by the Chairman.
5. To note Willows Power and Recycling Centre, Kings Lynn – the recently circulated correspondence was noted by the Parish Council.
6. To discuss future of village hall – this item was remitted to the next meeting.
7. To receive Village Hall Report – the bar roof had recently been repaired, after a leak caused by heavy rain. This work was being carried out under the insurance.
8. To note Temporary Road Closure Blo Norton from 30 August-1 September – road closure was noted and information on the road closure had been included in the latest newsletter.
9. To receive an update from Youth Committee following their meeting of 8 August - BNYG voted to donate the funds initially raised for the bus shelter project to the BN Village Hall and St Andrews Church. The Village Hall would receive £500 and the church £250 the appropriate parties have been advised.
10. To receive an update from the meeting held with RCC on 4 July re Parish Plan – following this meeting, it was agreed not to take forward this project.
11. War Memorial
  - (a) To receive an update on funding for maintenance - Received cheque from PCC; cleaning of the war memorial would commence week commencing 31 October
  - (b) To look at options of setting up of savings account to fund ongoing maintenance of War Memorial – It was agreed a committee should be formed to have form a charity with regard to funding for the War Memorial and therefore this item was put in abeyance – until after war memorial charity set up. It was agreed that the Parish Council would write to the PCC, History Group and to Blo' Norton Hall asking for nominees for the Board of Trustees. It was agreed that a short presentation would be given following the Village Hall AGM on 29 September, with the hope of setting up a meeting of the Board of Trustees in October.

Mr John Barnet-Lamb left the meeting room.

12. To consider the following proposal with regard to money awarded to Blo Norton to the village re recycling – following the award of £100 with regard to recycling, which was to be spent on something the whole village would benefit from the following proposal was considered:

“To consider using the money towards printing of the newsletter as this is something that benefits the whole community as they each receive a printed copy through their letterbox”

This was unanimously agreed.

Mr John Barnet-Lamb returned to the meeting room.

13. To receive an update on Parish Accounts: The Parish Council received an update on the accounts.

14 Planning

3PL/2011/0764/F – Willow Farm – Erection of Straw Barn – This received support from the Parish Council

Planning permission: 3PL/2011/0641/F in respect of continued standing of portacabin for use as home office was noted.

15. Such other business as the Chairperson may direct

Hedges within Blo Norton: It was noticed that quite a few hedges within the village overhung the road on bends, making driving more dangerous and it was agreed to write to those responsible in the first instance, asking for them to cut their hedges back.

Metal White Stakes: These had recently been placed in Fen Road? (James Flatman) and the Council would again approach the landowner to ask for these to be moved as it was thought they were too close to the road and could cause an accident.

Post Boxes – A reminder would be put in the next newsletter with regard to people emptying their post boxes, not only so more post could be put in, but for security purposes.

Wedding signs – Blo’ Norton Hall had been written to with regard to wedding signs being left up and they agreed to ensure that all those that used the hall in future were asked to take them down following the event – on this occasion the Chairman would take them down.

Little Ouse Headwater Project discussion around Environment Agency’s responsibility to clear out ditches: John Barnet-Lamb Introduced Reg from Little Ouse Headwater Project, who had accepted our invitation to attend to discuss water levels within Blo’ Norton, following the Parish meeting held in April, where this issue was raised by some parishioners.

The water level was rising in both Blo’ Norton and Thelnetham, where some of the problems were caused by septic tanks creating a spillage.

The Little Ouse Headwater Project (LOHP) is as concerned about this problem as local parishioners, whose land it affects; whilst the LOHP require sites along Little Ouse to create a corridor habitat which have public access, they do not want wet ground. LOHP cannot do any work along the river without permission from the Environmental Agency to lower the water level and it is not the function of LOHP to clear the river.

Like other parishioners who suffer this problem, they pay the Environment Agency to clear out the river and have written several letters to them to ask them to explain why they have not cleared the rivers in this area – they have received no response. Reg has also spoken to Thelnetham Parish Council who have also written to the Environment Agency and he encouraged Blo' Norton Parish Council and residents to do the same. Thought was also given to asking for help from local MPs.

LOHP, like other parishioners, have been left in a difficult position from the Ford up to the source, where there is more weed, as it is pretty obvious that up stream has been cleared out more regularly.

The LOHP together with Suffolk Wildlife Trust has spent a considerable amount of time liaising with Stephen Green of the Environment Agency about clearing the river and thought that this was going to be done. It was noted that Blo' Norton Fen is classified as a SSSI. It was noted that Thelnetham were considering putting a sluice in.

LOHP are as keen as some of the parishioners to hear what the intentions of the Environment Agency are and when work will commence.

It was reiterated that LOHP are not allowed to physically get into the river, without the permission of the Environment Agency and are aware that local people have a perception that they are responsible for some of the waterways. LOHP pay the same fees as local people for drainage to the Environment Agency, who are failing in their responsibility to clear the water ways.

LOHP are extremely disappointed in the lack of work by the Environment Agency, who say there are no properties at risk. If they do not fund the cleaning, then it will become the responsibility of the land owners.

It was agreed to arrange a meeting between Thelnetham Parish Council (Dan Haskin, Chair), LOHP and Suffolk Wildlife Trust. An invitation would also be extended to Natural England who had been involved in the issue. John Barnet-Lamb would contact Dan Haskins (Thelnetham Chair). It was also agreed to ensure the local media were aware of these problems.

It was noted that Thelnetham's situation was slightly different as there was a plan to put a sluice in, as the summer water level was not high enough and this would hold the water back just enough. Contractors had done some work on this and a meeting was held in Thelnetham. Then the Environment Agency decided that as the summer water was only low for 19% of the year they would not go ahead with the work, after spending lots of money going through this feasibility study. It was noted there was total inconsistency from the Environment Agency. Much support had been given by Natural England and at one point had contractors and equipment on site and work was held up by the Environment Agency.



It was noted that the Environment Agency was to clear out the weeds and put on the low land on the Blo Norton Side and then grade the banks so it would become water vole friendly, but none of this work had been carried out to date.

Legally the Environment Agency is obliged to do this work as they are being paid to maintain the river.

The next meeting will take place on 11 October 2011 at 7.30pm, in the village hall



11/10