



Pickering & District Civic Society

Reg. Charity 502630

Newsletter

Issue No.36
March 2015

Flooding Bund Update

Last October, work unfortunately ground to a halt on the flood prevention bund construction. After a spell of persistent rain, the contractors decided that it was no longer possible to effectively continue safely working on site, as there was little hope of it drying out. Having visited the site on a number of occasions, I can confirm it was the right decision as it remains nigh on impossible to walk around the site without becoming bogged down and losing at least one wellington boot. The control structure (a very expensive and robust concrete culvert) is complete and working effectively, but the reinforced bund (dam wall) has a short section incomplete. Although there are only about 4-6 weeks needed for completion, this is regrettable but it is still providing flood protection to about a 1:10 year level. I suspect it will be April-May before the sun gets high enough and days sufficiently long to dry the site out enough for work to recommence. I have been assured that funding cuts and elections should not stop play. Let us hope so.

The Scheme continues to attract great interest from the academic world and has really put Pickering firmly on the map. I miss no opportunity to promote the Slowing The Flow measures as a viable alternative to hugely expensive schemes with massive concrete walls, although whether the 'powers that be' in DEFRA/EA listen, or just pay lip service, remains to be seen. Severely limited budgets may yet focus minds. In December, I spent several days working with a researcher from Lausanne University, which culminated in a workshop attended by several top academics. Oxford University also produced an excellent short video about our scheme.

I recently attended a very good talk at York University by senior EA manager Innes Thomson about Flood Risk Management. It was very much at the strategic level, covering coastal, river and surface water flooding, climate change and potential raised sea levels and the plans to combat all these. One particularly welcome piece of news was that future planning is now to cover a rolling six year period, rather than the currently inadequate couple of years - often influenced by party political terms of office. However, the talk was about strategic plans and capital spending. The very real issue of 'getting stuff done' under revenue budgets (ie essential maintenance of what's already there) is an entirely different matter with possible 30% budget cuts looming. There's a world of difference between the senior managers desk and the harsh reality of the riverside. **MP**

Fracking

Hydraulic fracturing (Fracking) is poised to become a reality in Ryedale as Third Energy (TE) will be submitting a formal application around March. Some people see this as the acceptable face of keeping gas in our central heating boilers and electricity at the flick of a switch. It appears to be remarkably easy to disregard the very real consequences to air and water quality and health issues in the US/Aus/Canada, where the process has been used for several years now. We have a government and gas companies that insist the process is safe and will be well regulated, when it has quite clearly been neither in those countries. After about 6 years of fracking, New York State has just decided to ban all operations. Among other reasons, the associated report references about 100 peer reviewed studies into worrying health trends since fracking began. Our own government issued a report on the likely impact on roads, communities, house prices etc. There were 63 redactions (paragraphs blacked out) in 13 pages. All efforts to have the full report published - including from our current MP Anne McIntosh (AM) - have been rejected. Form your own opinion why content should be hidden.

Since the last newsletter, AM chaired an EFRA committee session about the safety of fracking. Several questions went unanswered and most other answers were vague or imprecise. I had the dubious pleasure of ploughing through the online video in great detail, and had a whole A4 sheet of follow-on questions that I sent to Anne in December. The response was a predictable and total silence, which rather mirrors most of my investigations into fracking since beginning about 18 months ago. It fills me with neither confidence nor trust.

PDCS were invited to a meeting with TE, along with several landowners and parish councillors. Stuart Harrison attended, but was not overly impressed with their presentations or answers to questions. It was all rather too slick. On the other hand, Third Energy met with Pickering Town Council (PTC) recently and were apparently very plausible and convincing. Just as they were at the aforementioned consultation of carefully selected members of the local community. It must be remembered that they have employed a professional PR team and that the government is providing £5m of taxpayer's money to fund such activity.

The reason they want to try and find shale gas is that the sour gas that fuels the Kirby Misperton Generating Plant is running out. They intend to make multiple test fracks from the single well recently drilled. This is to see if it will flow in commercial quantities and if so will be used in the existing

plant. If successful more fracking will be done on existing sour gas well sites, drilling new wells to a deeper level. Assurances were given on noise levels, the chemicals used, chances of pollution, well integrity, the impossibility of contaminating the water table etc. All a bit rather too well presented and clearly designed to allay any fears local people may have. One then smells a big rat...all a bit too slick.

I was also invited to a meeting with AM in Dec where a whole host of valid concerns were raised. Although Anne McIntosh is understandably keeping an open mind and claiming to be neither pro or anti, she is certainly very concerned about many factors. She was also openly critical of being 'lied to' by TE when they had assured her they had neither the expertise nor intention to frack in Ryedale. This 'lying to her' was denied by Third Energy at their so-called Public Consultation- 'she got confused by what we said'. Ermm.. Anne is a lawyer, MP, Chair of a powerful Commons Select Committee, speaks five languages fluently... nuff said...The smell of that dead rat just grows stronger...

The crash in the world price of oil, short term, will have now rendered any such speculative exploration uneconomic, so it will be interesting to see what progress will be made and who will be prepared to fund it. One final note: A UK company trying to develop tidal energy (clean, carbon free, absolutely guaranteed, on cue, twice a day) has just gone bankrupt after being unable to attract investment. Yet £36m has just been invested in fracking by HM government. **MP/SH**

Planning

About 5 years ago, we were inspecting and commenting on the map of potential development sites associated with Ryedale's Local Plan Strategy (LPS), adopted in 2013. At long last, we see some action. Some sites have been rejected as unsuitable for various reasons, leaving a few preferred options. This selection of preferred sites resolves into one west of Littledale, another larger site off Manor Drive which is currently the subject of an initial planning application for 52 houses when overall the site could accommodate nearer 300. A large site south of the swimming pool bordering Malton Road. On that one we said if the Methodist Homes application was granted permission then this site would surely also have to be allowed and we were right. Two sites off Ruffa Lane are included, one of which is above the Tay Homes development and links through to Whitby Road. The other to the east of it. Finally a site expanding eastwards from the present edge of development on the east side of Whitfield Avenue. Unfortunately two planning policies of the previous Local Plan have been abandoned. One was not to build on the approach roads to the town and the other not to build any more houses on the high ground above the town. In fact the two sites above Ruffa Lane were previously the subject of a refused planning application by Tay Homes which they lost at appeal. It seems incredible that this site has now become acceptable to Ryedale District Council. Yet of course the officers involved at that time have now all retired or moved on and the planning history has been forgotten. We have always taken the view that future housing development should be in the south-west sector of

Pickering which would be less visible. It would of course mean building a link road between Vivis Lane and Recreation Road, to ease local traffic flows and congestion but the present piecemeal development means it will never happen. It seems there is never any strategic long term planning.

Like it or not, there is a formal requirement for another 550 new houses in Pickering by 2028. Naturally, that also needs proportionate increases in school, medical and pharmacy provision. Three of our committee were present at the January PTC meeting, where Ryedale staff attended to explain the current position. Of particular interest to me was an explanation of the '5 year land supply' rule as demanded by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). I use 'explanation' loosely as apparently the NPPF doesn't actually define '5 year land supply', which is why predatory developers like Gladman and their top lawyers are so successful.

Planning authorities (RDC in our case) are obliged to have enough developments approved to fulfil their necessary quota for at least 5 years. Otherwise, the likes of Gladman can force through plans, even if they are contrary to the LPS - exactly as they have in Kirkbymoorside, making a mockery of sensible **planned** development. However, if planning permission is legitimately granted, but the developer doesn't actually build any or all the houses, they cease to count towards the 5 year supply, thus leaving the local authority vulnerable to the same old predators, quite likely on unsuitable sites. It strikes me that planning authorities countrywide are pulling their hair out over this 'developers charter' due to poorly drafted - or perhaps deliberately drafted - legislation.

A planning application, 14/01369/MFUL, has been submitted by the O'Donnell family to fill in the fishing lake off Undercliffe and turn it into car parking, with camping facilities, a shop, service building and accommodation. While we accept there is a need for additional car parking to service the NYMR, which the site has already been fulfilling, we are concerned that this should not create a precedent in Newtondale, with any chance of spreading to the redundant trout farm. With Newbridge Woods, various footpaths and the Newbridge Park cycle facility, it is an area justifiably classed as being of 'high landscape value'. Just as importantly, it is a high risk flood zone. As such, I have submitted comments to RDC planners that further development is wholly inappropriate. You can read our comments at-

<http://www.pickeringcivicsociety.btik.com/Planning>

Alex O'Donnell, who submitted this planning application, has been trying to ensure that all aspects of the application are clear and understood. He responded to some enquiries from PDCS with detailed answers. Despite his efforts several neighbours made strident protests at a recent Town Council meeting, one protestor in particular left in a huff because she wasn't allowed to continue to interrupt the council proceedings. Several aspects of the proposal continue the current use of the site such as a shop, service building and accommodation. Alex and his family will be occupying the accommodation and moving back from Hovingham to run the business. This projected new business, besides continuing the current use as a cafe will partially

replace the recent closure of the model and toy shop on Park Street by supplying model kits, paints, glue etc and also act as a venue for meetings of the local International Plastic Modellers Society. There is also some car parking on the present site. Additional car parking will help reduce the current situation in which visitors to the railway find the relatively small railway car park full and then set off cruising looking for somewhere else to park.

Though we have concerns regarding possible future redevelopment of the greater site of the Trout Farm, Alex, told us there are no current plans in that respect and a proposal by the railway for new railway buildings on the Trout Farm site had been rejected. In the case of this particular application there was little to object to on planning grounds and for that reason we just made comments. **MP/SH**

Planning Application Objections

Following on from the above comment and account of the Fishing Lake application it is probably worth rehearsing the reasons why we did not object to this particular application but just made some comments and also make some observations on the local reaction to it. Firstly legitimate objections have to be made on good planning grounds, such as traffic matters, the effects on the local environment, listed buildings, flooding issues, conformity to the Local Plan Strategy in use etc. This particular application was for an existing retail outlet and residence and therefore a Brownfield Site. Such sites are always given precedence for redevelopment in planning terms. The proposed use of the site is little different from that in current use and the provision of substantial numbers of new car parking spaces will actually reduce the movement of visitors seeking car parking in the area. That will in turn benefit the railway which is the main tourist attraction in Pickering and from which many other businesses in the town derive income benefits from those tourists. The railway has for years been trying to enlarge the current car parking facility but has constantly failed in various planning schemes.

The recent small protest group, though very vocal, at the Town Council meeting had hardly considered any of these issues. Instead it became clear that some of them just didn't like the idea of this redevelopment of an existing retail site. This type of reaction has unfortunately become typified nationally as NIMBYism, Not In My Back Yard. This syndrome is far too easily ignited and often becomes overheated by the local grapevine or gossip that often exaggerates the impact of the actual development. Yet we can observe that such opposition sometimes has effects on local councillors and can sway their decisions. These are then usually but not always mitigated by the informed advice of the planning officers in their recommendations to the planning committee. As consultees to the local planning authority we always object or support any application only on strict planning grounds. **SH**

The Future of the Library

At the same Town Council meeting that heard the application for the Fishing Lake redevelopment we also heard the new NYCC plans for the Town Library. The subject of the closure of public libraries nationally has often been a feature in the pages of Private Eye, in recent years, and has come home to roost finally in Pickering.

This was presented by two officers from NYCC Library Services. They told how various libraries will be closed down and others reduced in the type of service they offer. It boils down to three basic types, core libraries which will maintain full services, hybrid libraries and also those run solely by volunteers. Ours will be a hybrid service run by one full time librarian and volunteers. The success of our library will depend on the recruitment of around 70 volunteers to help run it. Our Town Councillors immediately homed in on the Achilles heel of this whole idea and that is the number of volunteers required. It was observed that initially they might get such numbers but long term could it be sustained? It was pointed out in this respect how many other volunteer organisations, and note here that the Civic Society was mentioned amongst several others, have trouble **recruiting active members**. This is too true and we are always looking for new members but particularly those who are prepared to join our committee and do a little bit of work on the towns behalf. In this respect we have developed an expertise in planning and other issues which is hard for the layman to understand and we need to keep passing this on to future generations for the benefit of the town overall. **SH**

Changes to English Heritage

The recent announcements on the proposed changes to English Heritage are about to become reality in April. For those who are out of the loop or do not understand the current changes we can give some enlightenment. Currently the organisation is the statutory body that advises the government on heritage issues that include Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings, the Historic Environment Record and conservation issues on the built environment. It also includes those historic monuments that have been transferred into the Public Guardianship of the State. The new arrangement will see these monuments transferred to a new charitable body called English Heritage with an initial eight-year mandate to keep them in good repair, raise funds and ensure their long-term survival. The statutory advisory elements of the current arrangement will be devolved to a new body called Historic England that will be absorbed back into the Civil Service as part of the Department of Culture Media and Sport. A new head of English Heritage, Kate Mavor, has just been appointed and will take up her new post in April. She comes to it from the National Trust for Scotland where she has been CEO since 2009 and reputedly has transformed its financial status and given it a new direction. The current CEO of English Heritage since 2002, Simon Thurley, will then step down to take up a position as a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Historical Research. The new head of Historic England has yet to be announced. **SH**

Judy Dixon

Judy Dixon, former PDCS chairman and a mainstay of our committee and numerous other organisations around Pickering suffered a stroke in early December. Although she has recovered well, she quickly tires, and she and Harold have now decided to relocate from Pickering to Chester to be nearer to their son and family. The society owes her a huge debt of gratitude for the work she has put in over the years to make it a successful organisation. We wish her and Harold all the best in their move and hope that all goes well for them in their future new life. **SH**

Committee

The committee was already struggling with a barely sufficient number of people, all performing multiple roles in various organisations. The loss of Judy Dixon means that this problem will be exacerbated. We would very much welcome anyone willing to get more involved with the valuable work we do. **MP**

Moorsbus

Friends of Moorsbus managed a tiny step towards getting public transport back to the Moors in 2014. For just a few summer Sundays and Bank Holidays two bus services proved that we might just be able to pick up some of the pieces after the North York Moors National Park Authority killed off the Moorsbus in 2013. East Yorkshire Motor Services listened to us, took a big risk, and ran the Moors Explorer up from Hull, via Pickering to Danby. The North Yorkshire Moors Association shared a bequest with us; a lovely gesture that enabled us to run our own Moors Rambler bus here from Darlington and Middlesbrough. Both buses have been well used, so both will run again in 2015. A first in 2014 was to provide organised Moorsbus walks: they were a great success, and will be repeated this year. We're now planning this year's service: our own bus, the Rambler, will be matched by a second, running from Darlington *via* Northallerton and Thirsk. This will happen because of the generosity of the NYMA, of our own supporters and of some councils, including Pickering, who have each very kindly donated a day's running costs in recognition of the benefits that Moorsbus brings to local people and businesses. Many from this area felt that Moorsbus didn't allow them enough time on the Moors, so we're making the morning timing to Danby a bit earlier. It still won't give as much time as some local walkers would like, but we want to eventually run an early morning Pickering to Danby bus *via* Rosedale, giving a lot more walking opportunities for both Pickering people and holidaymakers. Funds are tight, though, and this may have to wait until next year.... **EB**

Mike Potter**Chair/Flooding 477113**mjpotte@gmail.com**Stuart Harrison****474979****Vice Chair/Treasurer and Newsletter**sa_harrison@yahoo.co.uk**John Addyman****473594****Committee**jaddypick@btinternet.com**Judy Dixon****Committee****473488**Jhd102@pcxinternet.com**Hilda Sissons****475784****Membership Secretary****Eden Blyth****477216**eden.blyth@phonecoop.coop**Website****www.pickeringcivicsociety.btck.co.uk****Forthcoming Events****Sunday 24th May 2015****PDCS Annual General Meeting****Memorial Hall 2pm****Sunday 17th May 2015 - Sunday 13th September 2015.**

"Framing the View: Francis Nicholson, The Killerton Drawing Master" Venue: The National Trust, Killerton, Broadclyst, Exeter, Devon, EX5 3LE. Tel: 01392 881345.

This is the latest in exhibitions of Nicholson's works. A long way to go but for Nicholson fans no doubt a must see.

Further events will be notified by email as and when we have arranged the programme etc.

*Any opinions, beliefs or views
expressed in this newsletter are
not necessarily those of the Civic
Society*