

Newsletter January 2022

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to our first Newsletter of 2022. On behalf of all at BW, may I wish you a belated Happy New Year!

It's pleasing to see that infections of the Omicron variant are on the decline, so let's hope we are starting to see the end of the pandemic and can look forward to a much better year ahead.

Unfortunately 2022 has not started off too well for BW. We are looking for a Treasurer again. I am grateful to our former Treasurer, Mike McKinley, who has stepped up on a temporary basis, but we do need to fill this position as soon as possible. I encourage people to consider volunteering for this role.



We really could do with more members to help our efforts, even if you have a narrow speciality where we can use knowledge and then move on. As they say 'You never know what you've got 'til it's gone'. Skill and knowledge is always appreciated. If you think or believe you can assist in any way, please get in touch. To find out more, please contact me on 07973 805055 or by email at roger.owen.3@btopenworld.com

It was a pleasure to meet a great number of people at the BW display at the Dickensian Christmas Market – see further details later in the newsletter. However, I found it surprising that so many locals seemed unaware of the sheer scale of the 800 house (and likely to become 1100 house) Racecourse Approach development and the effect it will have on all aspects of the Town.

In relation to this huge Taylor Wimpey (TW) development, I recently had the opportunity to have a productive 'one-to-one' meeting with the whole of the Leeds City Council Planning team, organised by Ward Councillor Alan Lamb. The purpose was to understand at first hand where the current TW planning process is in relation to the Design Workshop process. The Workshops have been paused now for several months, so our discussion was particularly useful in respect of the developer's work to satisfy the near 50 Conditions imposed on their Outline Planning Consent. Although it is likely to be several months before building work actually starts on the site, some interesting archaeological excavations have been taking place – further details below.

Have a good start to your year whatever it has in store. Thanks for reading.

Roger Owen
Chair: **Better Wetherby Partnership**

SPOFFORTH PARK TO HARLAND WAY BRIDLEWAY PROBLEMS CONTINUE

The easy access to the countryside and green spaces we have in Wetherby and District was particularly appreciated by local people during the COVID 19 lockdown. BW continues to work, along with others, to protect our local environment. In this respect, it is pleasing therefore that the long awaited and delayed tree belt is finally planted and hopefully growing successfully.

Working to ensure that the physical character of Wetherby and District is protected and developed for the benefit of the community of both current and future generations.

However, it is very disappointing that the surface finish of the bridleway provided by Bellway's contractor, is not satisfactory. The failure to put crushed limestone on top of the large gravel base has left the bridleway particularly difficult to negotiate by wheelchair users, whilst also proving to be an unfriendly surface for walkers and cyclists.

A further problem relates to a new drainage system alongside the bridleway path, installed by Bellway barely three months ago. It had been hoped that the new system would solve serious storm water run-off problems into Harland Way. However, this too has failed and the problems remain. It is not acceptable to expect the public purse to try and solve this problem within Harland Way, which is jointly owned at this point by Leeds City Council and Harrogate Borough Council.

Leeds Parks Department are ready to install a solution and BW have now obtained an overall costed estimate to address both the bridleway finish and the drainage problem. BW expect Bellway, as a major national housebuilder, to measure up to their responsibilities and take appropriate action to find solutions to these problems, or provide the funding to allow outside contractors to do it. Our efforts are continuing to ensure a satisfactory solution.

RACECOURSE APPROACH – SWINNOW HALL ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

In August 2020, despite the efforts of BW and many individual objectors, Leeds City Council gave the house builders Taylor Wimpey planning permission to build 800 new homes on this site. This huge housing scheme now has outline planning consent, subject to some 50 planning conditions. These relate to such matters as Layout, Scale, Appearance and Landscaping of the development. All will require planning approval from LCC Planning Department.

Over the past 15 months, BW has been in regular dialogue with TW and the LCC Planners in efforts to promote measures with the aim of ensuring that the outcome will be an attractive and indeed, an exemplar development. These efforts will continue through 2022. Information, documents and plans regarding the development can be viewed on the [Leeds City Council Planning portal](#) reference number **17/02594/OT**.

Although it is likely to be some months before the first foundations are laid, there is currently activity on the site with work being undertaken by the West Yorkshire Archaeological Service (WYAS).



Over 100 people applied to visit the archaeological excavations by WYAS on Saturday, 15 January, and were guided around the site in several groups. The Open Day was arranged in conjunction with and publicised by Wetherby Civic Society, a member of Better Wetherby. The excavations were taking place on the land off Racecourse Approach on sites which had been previously examined during a survey undertaken for Taylor Wimpey as part of the requirements to build 800 houses on the wider site.

On one part of the dig, a Romano-British enclosure had been identified. The perimeter of this enclosure consisted of a rectangular ditch with an earth bank supported by boulders.

Initially, the archaeologists were unsure as to whether this was just an enclosure for keeping cattle overnight or a farmstead. The finding of a broken quern, used for grinding corn, (see picture) in the ditch confirmed that people must have lived at the site. Post holes for an entrance into the enclosure were found as were fragments of everyday Roman period pottery.



The other excavation revealed the foundations of Swinnow Hall, a significant building which is shown on maps before 1770, but appears to have been destroyed in the 1890s, by which time it had been bought by the owners of Ingmanthorpe Hall. The ha-ha, a ditch to keep animals out, surrounding its garden had been uncovered in an earlier excavation. The work revealed extensive remains including a cellar. Finds included the painted plasterwork from the rooms above, which had fallen into the cellar during the demolition. The reasons for its destruction are at present unknown, but may have been to allow the extension of the drive from the York Road to be extended to provide an entrance to Ingmanthorpe Hall. Plans are in hand for Wetherby Civic Society to work with the Archaeological Service to research the archives to find out more about this little known mansion.

Taylor Wimpey plan to build houses over both of these sites, but the Civic Society is asking that a proposed adjoining grassed area be extended to cover the Hall, and its footprint be displayed by paths of gravel and a suitable display board. Photographs of the excavations, finds and the recent visit can be seen on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/aswyas>, and also [on our website](#).

BW AT THE WETHERBY DICKENSIAN CHRISTMAS MARKET AND CRAFT FAYRE



This charity event, brilliantly organised by [Wetherby Lions](#), took place in Wetherby town centre on Sunday, 12th December. There were many festive attractions with entertainment for all ages provided by the Wetherby Silver Band, Collingham Wind Band, the Wetherby Musical Theatre Group and local choirs. Alongside various charity stalls were around 30 commercial artisan stalls.

Proceeds from the event will be used to fund various charity events. Unfortunately the Wetherby Lions 'Senior Citizens Christmas Party' which had been arranged for 29th January 2022 had to be postponed due to Omicron concerns.

After a damp start, the weather improved. Sunny and pleasantly mild conditions helped in attracting hundreds of people. [The BW display](#) in the colonnade of the Shambles highlighted our work and efforts to protect the local environment.

Working to ensure that the physical character of Wetherby and District is protected and developed for the benefit of the community of both current and future generations.

Roger Owen, Chair of BW who manned the display for several hours said ***“We had a successful day with many people visiting our display and showing great interest in our efforts. From the conversations we had, I believe Better Wetherby will have gained some new supporters. My congratulations to Tim Ritson, President of Wetherby Lions, and all those involved in organising and staging such a super event.”***

GREENING THE HEART OF WETHERBY ST. JAMES’ CHURCH PROJECT

The urgent need for action to prevent an already serious problem of climate change becoming even worse was emphasised during the United Nations Climate Change Conference ([COP 26](#)) held in November 2021.

An excellent local response to help in tackling climate change is the Wetherby St. James Church ‘Greening’ initiative. With the aim of reaching the Church of England target of achieving net zero emissions by 2030 the first phase of the project, conducted in 2021, included a Feasibility Study looking at how St. James’ Church and other church owned buildings could make energy efficiency savings and seek ways to reduce carbon emissions.

The Study resulted in a number of recommendations, including a proposal to establish a local carbon reduction group. As a consequence, an energy efficiency sub-group has been created within the Boston Spa, Wetherby and Villages Community [Green Group](#) with the aim of assisting businesses and householders to improve insulation, minimise heat loss, become more energy efficient and reduce carbon emissions.

Given steeply rising energy costs, with the prospect of even higher bills to come, it is essential that we become more energy efficient. In this respect the ‘Greening’ initiative is particularly timely and has the potential to be of real practical help to local businesses and householders.

CONTACT US

We welcome further volunteers and supporters to assist our efforts. Please contact us with any comments and queries. If you wish to be included on our mailing list please send a request by email to betterwetherby@gmail.com.

Please feel free to share this newsletter - the more people that are aware of these important issues, the better.