

Newsletter October 2021

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Welcome to the latest edition of the Better Wetherby (BW) Newsletter. As hinted in our last edition, things at BW have continued to move forward, helped to a degree by more freedom to meet in groups and face-to-face at long last. As I see things for BW the leaves may be turning into the brown of autumn, but for us as an organisation there are some green shoots of our own spring.

Later in this edition you will read of our various actions and activities which I hope will give a flavour of what we have been up to and continue to be involved with. I specifically want to say

how pleased we were to be represented at the Wetherby Arts Festival and the Eco Fair over recent weeks. I enjoyed meeting the many visitors to the displays and it was pleasing to see the interest shown in our efforts on behalf of the community. We look forward to future involvement.

Many of you will know we have been looking to fill the positions of Secretary and Treasurer for some time and, at last, I'm pleased to say we are 'there'. Barbara Harris has joined as Secretary and is proving a very good 'signing' with her high level experience in a massive organisation. Over the last week I have had an undertaking from our soon to be Treasurer, again someone with experience in her field, detail to be unveiled in our next edition.

Please read on to learn of our specific activities and enjoy the lingering days of hopefully fine weather.

Roger Owen

Chair: **Better Wetherby Partnership**

RACECOURSE APPROACH

As our readers are aware, BW has played a significant role in various Design Workshops hosted by developers, Taylor Wimpey over the last year in the lead up to Leeds City Council determining the Outline Planning Application for some 800 houses (a further 300 houses will be the subject of a future application). In the last few weeks Taylor Wimpey have been granted Outline Planning Consent subject to a Section 106 Agreement which specifies a number of binding conditions that need to be satisfied before detailed consent is granted and work can start on site.

BW Chair Roger Owen said *“Myself and colleagues have been heavily involved in many Design Workshop meetings covering key aspects of a scheme which is the biggest thing to hit Wetherby in generations. The development will change the landscape of our town but the time for fighting the application itself is gone. We have tried, and will continue to try, to get the best outcome for Wetherby in terms of an exemplar development. There is still a long way to go with almost 50 conditions to be satisfied in respect of the first 800 dwellings alone. BW is currently pushing for the resumption of the Design Workshops. Hopefully these detailed discussions will lead to a development which should contribute to, rather than detract from, our town”.*

See the BW website (www.betterwetherby.com/racecourse-approach.html) for further details.

BETTER WETHERBY STRATEGY MEETING

In [earlier newsletters](#), we reported on the Covid delayed attempts to hold our own Workshop to look at the BW structure and the way we should be going forward to meet the challenges ahead. The Workshop was eventually held in July 2021. Following this Chair, Roger Owen, commented: ***“Covid and the inability to meet face-to-face delayed this very important process. However, since the Workshop, the findings were discussed by the BW Steering Group and actions are now being taken to remedy the gaps and weaknesses we have identified. Over the next period we will be analysing the various skills sets we already possess and looking at strengthening where we can. This will involve bringing on board people in the community who may have specific talents they feel they can contribute to one-off projects, rather than be tied to regular commitments which they may not have the time to fulfil. Whilst BW is gaining both recognition and respect in some areas, the simple fact is that we are a volunteer group and the existing team cannot do everything and needs help. Over the next few weeks we will be finalising the areas where we need fresh blood and early in the New Year will be looking to bring those people on board. Watch this space and [website](#)”.***

BELLWAY - SPOFFORTH PARK

It is frustrating that, despite the efforts of BW, the [pathway construction and landscape works](#) to the site boundaries of this large housing scheme has yet to be properly completed by the developers, Bellway. BW is continuing efforts with the developers and the planning authorities in Harrogate and Leeds to ensure that this work is carried out. An update will be provided in the next newsletter.

WETHERBY HIGH SCHOOL REBUILDING PLANS

Over the last few weeks, Leeds City Council committed to a [rebuilding of the High School](#) on the present site on Hallfield Lane. The new school will replace a facility which is well past its sell-by date and the decision by LCC follows a lot of hard work by the Wetherby Ward Councillors and School Governors. BW has been invited, along with Wetherby Civic Society, to play an active role in the new development which will cater for students from age 11 to 16.

BW Chair Roger Owen is one of the group playing a part and said ***“Thanks to the efforts of Councillor Alan Lamb and others, this much needed development will go ahead. Some 20 years ago I was involved with the last major works at the school in the provision of the all-weather play areas, parking and bus access. Since then all at the school have had to operate a ‘make do and mend’ regime. With the planned increase of housing, already experienced on Spofforth Hill and Sandbeck, plus the new developments at Thorp Arch and the Racecourse, the time is right for better and much needed, educational facilities”.***

Regular meetings over the coming weeks are scheduled with the various partners in the scheme. Mr. Owen added, ***“BW is pleased to have been invited to play a part in the planning of this new facility for the Town which I believe is reward for the active part BW is playing with such as the Racecourse Approach site where we have demonstrated a pragmatic approach rather than head in the sand Nimbyism”.***

BETTER WETHERBY AT THE WETHERBY ARTS FESTIVAL AND ECO FAIR

During the successful Wetherby Arts Festival held outdoors in early September, BW mounted a display to highlight our efforts to protect the local environment. [The display](#) was well received and generated a lot of interest.

Following this, BW participated in an Eco Fair, in Wetherby on Saturday, 2nd October, which was the main event of a 'Going Green Weekend' held in the town. With the event taking place in the run-up to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 26) starting in Glasgow in November, the timing was particularly appropriate. The initiative highlighted the dangers of climate change and provided practical advice on steps that people can take to reduce their carbon footprint and contribute to helping combat climate change.

Several Better Wetherby Steering Group members were involved in the planning and organisation of the Eco Fair, along with representatives of the Boston Spa, Wetherby and Villages Community Green Group, Churches Together, Wetherby Town Council, Wetherby Methodist Church and U3A.

The [display from BW](#), one of 30 displays in the Wetherby Methodist Church and Town Hall, attracted considerable interest from the large number of visitors. Apart from the displays, presentations included underwater film maker, Mark Barrow, who earlier this year featured in a BBC [Panorama special report](#) on the state of British rivers, warning of how littering and pollution is affecting the water in the River Wharfe. Adrian Balcombe outlined some practical and easy changes that can be made to reduce the family household carbon footprint. Visitors also heard from Alan Bell about how climate change is affecting poorer nations and how the organisation, Tearfund, is working to help turn the tide on the climate crisis. A raffle, with prizes generously donated by local shops and businesses in Wetherby, was drawn by Leeds City Councillor Helen Hayden, Lead Officer for the climate emergency in the city.

Event organiser, Ingrid McLaughlin, a Steering Group member of Better Wetherby said, ***'We are now faced with the immense challenge of climate change. It affects us all, so it is pleasing that we had such a good turnout for the Eco Fair. Hopefully people will have gone away with some new ideas about how we can all play our part in helping to make a positive difference.'***

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY:

BW at the Dickensian Christmas Market and Craft Fayre – Sunday 12th December

All profits towards funding of Wetherby Lions complimentary 'Elderly Persons Party' held in January 2022. Please come along and see us to learn more about BW and what we do.

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.