

The WEST PARK CHRONICLE

The Community Newspaper for West Park January 2011

www.westparkresidents.org.uk

Happy New Year!

This Chronicle will be going out in both email and paper form, so best wishes for the new year to all WPRA members.

2010—A Year of Uncertainty

Last year national elections followed by a change in government cast doubt on a number of projects and initiatives. In particular it's not known whether the NGT project is on hold, cancelled, or going ahead.

Also affected by political changes, this time in the Leeds City Council after the local elections last May, is the future of the West Park Centre.

This particular issue (see below) raises serious concerns about local democracy and the extent to which communities or even councillors can influence



the actions of unelected council officials.

It can be all too easy to let matters drift and not challenge plans and proposals that would affect the character and quality of our area, so it was encouraging to see so many residents turn up for the NGT meetings that we arranged after the AGM in March.

Input from the community is especially important at the start of a project because it can be difficult or even impossible to change plans at a later stage.

If the NGT does materialise, the clear views expressed by local residents at the meeting in early summer will have ensured that the plans are better matched to what we actually need and want.

West Park Centre

The Spring 2009 meeting of the Executive Board of the council asked Assets Management to consult with those using the Centre and then prepare a report on the possible options for the future of the Centre. To date there's been no consultation, and no sign of any report.



Meanwhile, the Northern Ballet Theatre moved out in the autumn, which was expected, but in addition the Attendance Strategy section of Education Leeds also relocated. These changes seriously reduced the Centre's income.

Furthermore, it appears that "council officials" have imposed an embargo on renting out any of the space released by these changes. Despite the support of the local councillors

across the political spectrum, one is left with the distinct impression that council officers are happy to let the Centre die from lack of action and neglect.

In contrast WPRA and the other local residents' associations (Spenn Hill and Moor Grange) feel strongly that the Centre could play a much greater role as a community resource than it has in the past.

Clearly there needs to be a thorough assessment of the Centre's running costs, and the role it plays in the life of the City, and especially in terms of the musical activities that it hosts. However it's impossible to develop a meaningful business plan for the Centre without the cooperation of council officers.

It would be nice to think that these and other actions by council officers took place within a coherent planning framework, but at present WPRA suspects this is not the case.

Residents' Parking Zone (RPZ)

Autumn 2010 saw the introduction of the RPZ, along with new lamp-posts. The scheme is by no means perfect and still leaves part of West Park as an overspill car park.



Local residents' associations have had a series of meetings with Leeds Metropolitan University to try to establish a forum for the discussion of University issues which might impact on local communities around the university campus. This is quite late in the day and unlikely to lead to significant reversals in the current situation.

The following information may prove useful to those in the newly active RPZ for the Helmsley, Harrowby, Ancaster Road areas.

- There are two-hour parking bays on Kepstorn Road and Welburn Avenue and free parking on Kepstorn and Ancaster Roads. (Useful for visiting the shops at West Park).
- If you live in the RPZ then you are enti-

led to a permit for each vehicle registered to your address, plus one visitor's permit. Permits must be displayed in the car.

- Remember to use your visitor permit during weekdays as wardens are actively issuing tickets.
- If you are expecting multiple visitors for specific events (weddings, builders, etc.) the official procedure is to contact Parking Services on 0113 3950023 or at parkingservices@leeds.gov.uk and specify "location, dates and times, type of vehicle and registration number, if known". The wardens should then not enforce the restrictions for your visitors. (WPRA understand that this procedure may require perseverance).
- If you feel you've been wrongly ticketed (perhaps for not displaying a permit when you have one) contact Parking Services on 0113 3950050.

The above and other information about the RPZ rules is available at <http://www.leeds.k/Business/Parking.aspx>.

Village Green Status for West Park Fields?

Last year over 80 residents sent in emails and letters in support of an application to give the West Park Fields village green status. The application, together with applications for Butcher Hill fields and the green area adjacent to Old farm Close, was submitted by the Kirkstall councillor Bernard Atha.

Village green status would make development almost impossible, whilst not affecting their use for sports and recreation. While it's true that already there are various covenants on the fields to restrict development, and the council claims that there are no plans for any development, covenants can be challenged and plans can change.

It now appears that a councillor has submitted an objection to Village Green status "on behalf

of the Council". Grounds cited include:

- The fields do not serve a locality.
- The public cannot use the sports pitches whilst these are in use by teams.
- The many footpaths across the fields cannot be used for lawful sports and pastimes.
- Parts of the fields comprise dense vegetation, shrubbery and trees which are inaccessible for lawful sports and pastimes.

WPRA and the other resident associations believe these objection to be weak and spurious and have asked for the "council objection" to be withdrawn.

Depending on what happens next, WPRA may have to ask residents for further action and support on this issue.



Annual General Meeting for 2011

At the suggestion of various residents, this year we plan to hold the AGM later in the year when the evenings are lighter. We'll circulate details later in the spring. In the meantime you can keep up-to-date with current issues by keeping an eye on the WPRA website at westparkresidents.org.uk.