

# Broomhaugh & Riding Parish Council

## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 15th May 2008 at 7.30 in the Parish hall.

Present: Councillors Tulip and Reid, District Councillor Latham, County Councillor Anne Dale (except for item1), 10 members of the public and in attendance, Nick Petty and Brian Atkinson from CE-Electric, and PC Iain Robertson.

**1. Apologies** were received from Cllrs Heslop, Mills, Williams, Nitsch and Dunhill and Jen Stephenson from Broomhaugh & Riding C of E First School. The new Chairman, Cllr Tulip welcomed all to the meeting.

**2. CE-Electric:** In response to a number of recent interruptions to the power supply in the village, Brian Atkinson, NEDL's restoration Manager, gave a very detailed presentation of the changes already made to improve the situation, why it was still happening, and the proposed solutions. Although the main power line from Wylam to Hexham has been rebuilt, the supply in Riding Mill is from one source only so that if a fault occurs, everything goes off. A new cable from Beauclerc at the western end of the village gives greater flexibility and there is new switch gear at Station Close. This does not improve the reliability of the system but the off times are shorter and fewer. The transformer which failed in Broomhaugh is to be rebuilt and the overhead lines are being refurbished, with a new larger conductor – some £300,000 worth of work. To date, £1.3 million pounds has been spent in recent improvements. All home owners will be notified when the new work begins in the summer. A number of questions from the floor were answered in more detail. In response to a query about the low voltages experienced by some residents, it was suggested that when this occurs again, NEDL be informed and if necessary they will monitor the situation for a period of time to see if there is a fault or if it is high usage as often occurs in the winter. Nick Petty from Customer Services explained that the recent spate of problems and complaints had raised Riding Mill to 'hot spot' status which means a high level of monitoring and awareness. Even with the improvements made, the area would still be monitored and he requested that any person who might be at risk during an interruption should be notified to them to go on a special register.

PC Robertson introduced himself to the meeting as the new neighbourhood beat manager. He reiterated what had been said by the speakers from CE-Electric about the theft of cable. He would be holding occasional surgeries in the village in the future and the Community Police van would also call. He has written a short piece to go in the Parish news with his contact details.

**3. Minutes of the 2007 APM** were agreed as a true record and there were no matters arising. It was noted that a member of the public had objected to them.

**4. Chairman's report:** The Chairman acknowledged the work of councillors who have resigned during the part of the year in which he had been involved – Alison Howey and Bob Horton. Both gave considerable time and energy to their duties as councillors. At the Parish Council meeting two days earlier, Cllr Tulip found himself voted in as Chairman. He then went on to note that for last year, there is now an even better web site, the village walks are included. Having gone through the last year's minutes, he decided not to list the dozens of small yet important items which have been raised and in the main resolved. He did however wish to update the public on the two major issues which have involved so much time and energy – Millfield Road and the Tennis Courts.

On the question of Millfield Road the two polls which were undertaken clearly showed that the village did not support the proposal to cover the cost of the adoption by borrowing money from Tynedale and repaying this via the local rates. All action in this regard ceased. A proposal document seeking a grant from Tynedale was formulated, largely by Ray Tully and Brian Young who are thanked for their efforts. This was submitted a few weeks ago by a small

delegation, including Councillors, at a meeting with the Finance Director of the authority. Their response is awaited.

The Tennis Club have informed the Parish Council that it is their wish to relocate to the Sports field at Broomhaugh sharing facilities with the Cricket Club. Plans have been drawn up. And they are actively seeking funding but confirm their proposals are in no way dependant upon financial support from the Parish Council. It is clear that such a scheme will take a considerable time to come to fruition. Until that time the tennis courts remain and no further action is required.

Finally the Council would like to congratulate all who have worked so hard to create the Mill Race Garden, an asset for us all.

The Chairman stated that he and his fellow councillors will endeavour in the coming year to serve the community to the best of their ability.

**5. Financial Statement:** this was prepared and handed out for members of the public to be aware of the movement of funds over the last 12 months. The Clerk drew the attention of members of the public to the fact that the previous year's accounts had not yet been signed off by the auditors, owing to a formal complaint by a member of the public. It was noted the cost to the Parish Council of the complaint was likely to be around £3000 which would have to be paid out of the precept. In answer to a question, the matter had not affected the payment of the current year's precept.

**6. Report of the Village Hall Trust:** The function of the Management Committee of Riding Mill Village Hall is to manage and maintain the two village halls so that activities can take place which will improve the quality of life for residents of Riding Mill and Broomhaugh. Consequently we try to offer the halls at reduced rates for affiliated societies and in the current year, the rates have been maintained despite rising costs. Improvements in the year include more comfortable chairs due largely to the Pritchard family, a commercial dishwasher thanks to the generosity of Liz Patterson, and a more welcoming fire in the Supper Room. Taking the welfare of staff to heart, a heat detector in the kitchen linked to an alarm in the caretaker's flat above has been installed. During the year to November 2007, a surplus of £1327 was made which added to the retained surplus gave a sound financial start to the year of £10190.

The organisations using the halls provide opportunities for education ( Pre-School, Sunday School and Cubs) ; for improving health and fitness through exercise and sport ( Badminton, Bowls, Table-tennis and Exercise Classes) ; for culture ( Art and Drama) and for socialising. That there have been even more social events of a varied nature is largely due to the hard work of the committee for the Development of the Parish Hall, who have been working assiduously to raise money towards the improvement of the Parish Hall (a craft fair, a Burns Night Ceilidh, a bridge evening, an evening of Northumberland song and music and the Flower Festival). Under the leadership of Dr David Harle, the group comprising Andy Pryor, David Kilner, Myra Dixon, Fred Tulip, Janet Proud, Eric Roseby, Linda Shepherd, Val Thompson, Bob Tully and Bobby Turner, has raised a total, after deducting professional fees, £59, 641 and have obtained pledges, including from the Parish Council of £3200 and from Northumberland County Council of £9000, amounting to £23700. In two and a half years, approximately £83000 has been raised, a remarkable achievement. The refusal of the National Lottery and the unlikelihood of funding from Northern Rock are setbacks but the committee persevered. Some pledges are dependent on gaining planning permission or starting work. The planning permission is in the pipeline and the result should be heard soon. The Chairman wholeheartedly thanks the Development Committee for their commitment to the Community.

This has not been the only project undertaken in the year. The restoration of the Mill Race Gardens has been undertaken to create a wildlife area which could be used as an outdoor classroom and a pleasant area for the community to enjoy. The driving force behind the project is Elaine Raeburn. Both she and her husband Martin have given much of their time and effort. Through Councillor Thompson a grant of £1600 was given to the project from

Northumberland County Council. Many others have volunteered their labour, clearing undergrowth, spreading chippings and the compost donated by Tynedale Council, planting etc. Special mention should go to Norman Heron, Derek Blair and David Niven who have tackled particular jobs – building walls and steps and seat and of Linda Shepherd who handled sponsorship of the plants. The Children donated bird boxes and feeders and all those who sponsored plants are thanked. The gardens will need to be maintained and the community are asked to support this.

The Chairman asked that everyone continue to support the Management Committee and in turn they will maintain and manage the halls to the best of their ability.

**7. Report from Broomhaugh & Riding C of E First School:** Head teacher, Jen Stephenson sent the following report which was read by the Chairman: Huge apologies to you all as I am not able to attend this meeting in person due to a Governors meeting in School. I hope this report gives you an idea of school life at the moment. Our numbers remain stable at 62. Although we do not have a full quota of children coming into Reception Class (mainly due to a couple of years of very low birth rates) our numbers will remain at 62 as some children are joining other year groups in September. We always try to make school an interesting learning environment and this year we have invested a great deal of money in improving school furnishings and the look of the school. Some of you may have noticed building work going on last summer as we changed the inside of the reception area. The Children have also been excited about our Wild Garden being turfed and tidied.

Some new introductions to our curriculum include Ukelele lessons for all of our Years 3 and 4, and a new Government initiative Let's get Cooking. We continue to strive to make the 'bread and butter' curriculum as interesting as possible for the children through the use of Drama, Artwork and Music in our Literacy and Numeracy lessons. We had an exciting week of Outdoor Maths where all year groups held their Maths lessons outside for an entire week. This proved to be very popular with both teachers and pupils, although the mathematical treasure hunt at the end of the week proved a challenge for some parents! The Children have greatly enjoyed being involved with different activities in the village, for instance reading in Church at Christmas Eve Service and contributing to the Mill Race Garden. They are also looking forward to creating our Scarecrow for the Scarecrow Festival this year, so we are grateful to the village people for asking us to join in with anything that will help develop our links with the community. You may well have seen our 'Walking Bus' on Friday morning – as a school we are very concerned at how difficult it is for children (and grown-ups) to cross the busy main road here. One task that I have is to construct a school Travel Plan for the LEA so this may lead to the school helping the village to gain some kind of safe crossing if the Parish Council and village people felt this would be beneficial.

We are continually grateful to the support and interest that the parents of our children, governors and villagers pay in the school and are always willing to listen to new suggestions.

**8. Minor Matters:** A member of the public raised the issue of digital television reception in the village being very poor currently with the change due in 2012. It was also agreed to circulate parts of the minutes for information to members of the public. PC Robertson agreed to write a brief article for the Parish News giving his contact details.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm