

Otterburn Parish Council
Parish Clerk's Report
4 March, 2009 to 4 April, 2009

Item 1: Presentation by Andrew Shone, Chair of the Rede, Tyne and Coquet Sports Centre: Mr. Shone will attend the meeting to give a short presentation on the current work of the Centre and describe the financial needs of the Centre in the coming twelve months.

Item 4a: Otterburn Hall Marquee: The Chair wrote to Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA) Development Control Committee (DCC) on 20 March, expressing the Parish Council's concern that the marquee had not been taken down in keeping with the conditions of the planning agreement. The letter was copied to the NNPA Development Control Manager and the planning department at Tynedale Council. The letter follows:

Planning Application 08NP0013: Proposed construction of marquee and change of use of former kitchen block to provide function suite, together with car parking on former caravan site and associated landscaping in the Walled Garden at Otterburn Hall, Otterburn, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE19 1HE

Otterburn Parish Council wrote to all members of NNPA Development Control Committee on 18 November, 2008. At that time, the operators of Otterburn Hall Hotel had not removed the marquee as required in section 6 of the conditions applied to the granting of planning permission. We wish to remind you that Section 6 clearly states:

The marquee structure hereby permitted shall not be present on site other than between 1st April and 31st October and between Christmas Eve and New Years Day each year. Reason: The building is of impermanent materials that are not appropriate for year round use, in accordance with Policy C D1 of the Northumberland National Park Local Plan.

Further, Otterburn Parish Council also wishes to remind you that the summary of reasons for granting planning consent stated that despite the fact that the marquee could be considered *as the expansion of an existing tourism business* and that it *would be acceptable in principle in accordance with Local Plan Policies* this was still subject to the conditions *limiting the siting of the marquee to seasonal use only.*

You should be aware that none of the proposed ornamental paving appears to have been installed and the proposed formal car parking area adjacent to the marquee has not been constructed. Otterburn Parish Council believes this is in contravention of section 3 of the planning conditions which states:

The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in complete accordance with the plans and specifications approved by the Local Planning Authority.

You will recall that the marquee base was already well under construction when members of the Development Control committee visited the site in July, 2008. You may not know that the marquee was constructed within a week of the approval being granted. The Parish Council is not aware that any acoustic survey was undertaken prior to the development commencing, as required in section 4 of the planning conditions.

The Parish Council now understands that Messrs Douglas Wallace, who are retained by the operators of Otterburn Hall Hotel as architectural and brand development consultants, intend to submit a planning application on 23 March, 2009, seeking a variation to the planning condition restricting the time the marquee is allowed to be on site.

This follows on the fact that the marquee was not removed in the period leading up to the Christmas and New Year holidays, that is between 31 October and 24 December, 2008, and has not been removed since 2 January, 2009. As a result, the Parish Council can only conclude that the operators of Otterburn Hall Hotel never had any intention of complying with section 6 of the planning conditions.

Equally, during the four months that have passed since Otterburn Parish Council brought this matter to your attention and despite complaints being made about this blatant breach of the planning conditions, neither the NNPA Development Control Committee nor its Manager has issued a Planning Contravention Notice. This leads the Parish Council to conclude that the NNPA Development Control Committee and its Manager are either powerless or unwilling to enforce their own planning conditions. The Parish Council can not understand why this should be the case because, on either count, the NNPA, as the planning authority, occupies the high ground both legally and morally.

Finally, in view of the failure on the part of the operators of Otterburn Hall Hotel to comply with the planning conditions laid down by the Development Control Committee and given that there appears to be no sound reason for their lack of compliance, Otterburn Parish Council will certainly object to any application from them

which seeks to vary the planning condition restricting the time the marquee is allowed to be on site. *Signed by John Hartsborne, Chair, Otterburn Parish Council*

During the weekend of 21/22 March, the Chair of NNPA DCC responded by email expressing his concern and promising to investigate the matter. I also had a long telephone conversation with another member of the DCC following his receipt of our letter. On 26 March, the Development Control Manager replied to the Parish Council as follows:

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Otterburn Hall

Thank you for your letter dated 20th March 2009 on behalf of the Parish Council. The Authority has on Tuesday 24th March served a Planning Contravention Notice on the owner of Otterburn Hall because of the breaches of condition numbers 4, 6 and 8 of planning permission reference 08NP0013 for the marquee type structure. The breaches comprise the retention of the marquee outside of stipulated dates, the requirement for an acoustic survey and agreement of surface materials for the car park. To date no application to vary condition no.6, regarding the seasonal nature of the permission, has been submitted, though the agent has previously stated that an application would be forthcoming. I will keep you informed of developments.

The process of enforcement is complicated and time-taking and while this response is encouraging, it by no means resolves the matter.

Item 4b: Construction of Mill Path: A revision to the fencing estimate has been received to cover the cost of different posts to those originally specified. 3"x4" posts will add 60p per metre to the original estimate (£66 plus VAT (£75.90)). A revised estimate for the path construction will be tabled.

Item 4c: The Green at Willowgreen: I have no progress to report.

Item 4d: Donations: A letter of thanks has been received from the Trustees of the Rede, Tyne and Coquet Sports Centre as follows:

I refer to your letter of 13 March 2009. On behalf of the trustees, please pass on my sincere thanks to the Otterburn Parish Council for taking the time to consider our request. We are extremely grateful for your valued grant of £200. As you recognize, such grants are vital to enable the sports centre to offer a wide and growing range of facilities for the local community.

We also note the council's willingness to consider further support in the coming financial year and thank you for advising us of this offer. As a parish councillor myself, I am aware that all councils will need strict control of their budgets and that some only consider grant applications at specific meetings during the year. I would appreciate it if you could advise when would be the most appropriate time of year to make any further request for assistance.

As we mentioned in our last letter, the trustees are keen to expand our range of activities so that more people within the area can benefit from our facilities. As an example of our commitment, we have recently been awarded a grant from Awards for All which has enabled us to place an order for two competition standard trampolines and plan to run a series of training courses after Easter.

We would like to gain a better understanding of what leisure facilities the local community would wish to see in the area. To this end, the trustees are developing a short questionnaire which we would like to distribute to as many local residents as possible. I enclose a draft copy as an example. I would be grateful if the parish council could offer some assistance or guidance on the best way to distribute and subsequently collect completed questionnaires within your parish. I also believe that Mr. Martin Chilvers has already contacted you regarding this matter.

We are mindful of the fact that our centre is poorly advertised and realise that many of your parishioners may be unaware of the excellent facilities already on offer. I therefore include a copy of our most recent advertising brochure and wonder if there is somewhere prominent in the parish where this may be displayed. More copies can be made available if you feel they will be of use.

We are delighted to accept your invitation to take the opportunity to discuss our plans for the Rede Tyne and Coquet Sports Centre. Unfortunately, I am unavailable on the evening of your next Parish Council Meeting on the 7 April. However, Mr. Andrew Shone, the Chairman of the Rede Tyne and Coquet Society, is planning to attend.

Community Action Northumberland (CAN) has also written to thank the Parish Council for its donation, enabling CAN to continue its work with and on behalf of communities in Northumberland.

Item 5b: Invoice received from Otterburn Memorial Hall: An invoice totalling £27 for room rental has been received.

Item 5c: Donation request from Tynedale Sports Council: The following letter has been received from Neil Pont, Chair of Tynedale Sports Council:

Tynedale Sports Council is a voluntary body that seeks to support and champion sporting activity throughout the Tynedale district and works for people of all ages and abilities.

It gives financial assistance to athletes, both adult and of school age, who are achieving excellence and gaining representative honours; it also helps pay the fees of coaches who are seeking new qualifications. It hosts its annual Awards Evening where, in 2008, over 100 clubs, teams and individuals were recognised for the contribution they make to the sporting life of Tynedale.

The Sports Council receives no direct funding and relies solely on subscriptions from clubs and schools and grants from local councils. The Awards Evening can only take place because of the generous sponsorship of Tyne Valley Insurance. So far this year Tynedale Sports Council has paid out £3,302 to Sportsmen and women.

To date we have received grants from 2 parish councils and 2 town councils - all 4 grants totalling £190. In addition a grant of £2,000 has been received from Tynedale Council.

I am requesting that your Council makes a financial contribution to Tynedale Sports Council. I can guarantee that someone from your locality has been assisted or recognised by the Council in recent years because sportspeople and organisations from the whole length and breadth of the district have been involved. I am sure you support the work we do - please help us to do it better.

Item 7a: Sewage at Otterburn Hall: The Parish Council has continued to monitor this issue in recent months, liaising with and receiving updates from the Environment Agency.

Item 7b: Correspondence:

- 1. Boundary Committee Electoral Review:** In February, the Boundary Committee for England commenced the first stage of an electoral review of the new unitary authority in Northumberland. The review aims to make sure that every councillor in each division of the new authority represents the same number of electors. The review will also take into account the identities and interests of local communities. The Boundary Committee seeks comments on the electoral arrangements in these new divisions before 11 May, 2009. I have the correspondence should members wish to participate in this review.
- 2. NNPA (Parish Council Representatives):** NNPA has written to advise that two people have been elected as additional Parish Council representatives on the Authority. These are Cllr. Sue Bolam (Harbottle Parish Council, representing the North Area) and Cllr. Brian Walters (Bardon Mill Parish Council, representing the West Area). These two names have been submitted to the Secretary of State (DEFRA), who makes the final decision.
- 3. NHS North of Tyne Report (Building a Caring Future):** Northumbria Healthcare NHS Trust has proposed a £200m package of proposals to improve emergency care for people living in Northumberland and North Tyneside. These include a new specialist emergency care hospital at Cramlington and improvements to district hospitals. I have two copies of this report if members wish to study it.
- 4. Flood Protection:** Advice for protecting homes and businesses from flooding has been received and is available should members wish to study it.
- 5. CPRE Spring Newsletter:** This newsletter is available should members wish to study it.
- 6. Committee Papers:** Tynedale Council and NCC (Tynedale Area Committee) papers are available should members wish to study them.

Emma Anderson
4 April, 2009