

HOLME-NEXT-THE-SEA PARISH COUNCIL

Notes of the Presentation to the Parish Council in the Village Hall, Kirkgate, on Tuesday 8th December 2015 at 7 pm

Present: Derek Young (Chairman) Kevin Felgate (Vice Chairman)
 Gillian Morley Geoff Needham
 Robert Burton Lynn Devereux
In Attendance: Christina Jones (Clerk) Apologies: Margaret Easton

There were 15 members of the public present.

The Chairman welcomed Tim Venes, Manager of Norfolk Coast Partnership (NCP) and Estelle Hook, the Policy and Partnership Officer with NCP who had agreed to give a presentation and answer questions prior to the Parish Council meeting. He also welcomed members of the public and thanked them for their attendance.

Tim Venes thanked the Councillors for the invitation and explained that the NCP is a partnership of Local Authorities, Conservation Groups (Norfolk Wildlife Trust [NWT], National Trust [NT] and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds [RSPB]) and five National Farmers Union (NFU) local representatives, to represent interests and roles in the area. The NCP Management Plan Strategy 2014-2019 sets out the proposed management of the long coastal strip from Bacton to Old Hunstanton, plus 'outliers' near King's Lynn and Winterton-on-sea, covering 450 sq. km excluding built up areas, which was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1968. AONBs have the same landscape status as National Parks and their purpose is conservation and enhancement of natural beauty. (In addition, National Parks have a recreational element.)

Most of the funding for the NCP is Government funding through DEFRA (approximately 75%) and the remainder is from Local Authorities. There is also additional funding available from other sources for specific projects.

Tim Venes then answered the specific questions Councillors had raised in advance.

Question 1:

What is the strategy for the AONB and how does this relate to Holme-next-the-Sea?

The Management Plan runs for a period of five years and there is a statutory duty to keep it updated. (A copy of the full Management Plan and a Summary were given to the Clerk.) It is a broad plan with five main themes namely:

- Landscape, biodiversity and geodiversity.
- Built and historic environment.
- Forestry, farming and fishing.
- Sustainable communities.
- Access and recreation.

It consists of broad policies and objectives and does not focus specifically on Holme-next-the-Sea. Relevant organisations are consulted regarding the different themes. There is not great detail in the Management Plan but it is used to inform (support / object) to planning decisions.

There are 16 different landscape types and Holme-next-the-Sea comes under Coastal Slopes. There is guidance available for each type. (A copy of the one relating to Coastal Slopes was given to the Clerk.)

A question was raised as to the input from villages at community conferences in the past. Tim Venes said that these are still held annually as Partnership Forum conferences to which representatives from parishes in the AONB were invited. He undertook to check and ensure that Holme PC was included in these invitations. There are five Community Representatives to cover the whole area and he reminded everyone that nominations for those Representatives are being sought now. (Information is on all three Notice Boards and the Village Website.) The NCP is not a statutory consultee for Planning but are consulted when the Borough Council considers it appropriate and usually sends NCP the Applications of most relevance. The NCP resources are

limited so are unable to consider all Applications although the larger AONBs often have their own Planning Officer. However, the Parish Council can ask the Borough Council to consult the NCP when putting in comments on an Application.

Question 2:

Has there been any collaboration between the NCP and other parishes in the production of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP)? Would the NCP have any views on boundary recommendations if Holme-next-the-Sea decide to proceed with an NDP?

Tim Venes explained that collaboration would be too strong a description of the NCP input into NDPs but there had been cooperation with both South Wootton (capable of taking development) and Brancaster (a key Rural Service Centre) where NDPs had recently been passed. He thought one of the Councillors at Brancaster would be happy to talk to the Parish Council about the process. A NDP cannot be used to prevent development but can be used to help to control it.

Tim Venes said that as Holme-next-the-Sea is categorised as a 'Small Village or Hamlet' in the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk's (BCKLWN) Site Allocations and Development Management Policies 2015 (SADMP), it is not seen by BCKLWN as a target for development particularly as the whole parish is in the AONB (though he noted that this view was not necessarily shared by developers). The Parish Council would need to clarify exactly what producing a NDP hoped to achieve but a successful NDP is incorporated in the Borough Council's overall strategy for development through the statutory Local Development Framework (LDF). Concerns were raised that although this is the case, the Parish is very close to Hunstanton and might be affected by the Borough Council's lack of a five year land supply. It is suspected that a developer is already assembling parcels of land around the village.

Question 3:

Are there any plans for monitoring impacts / collecting survey information on visitor numbers to the area as there seems to have been a very significant increase in visitors to the NWT in the last 12 months?

Tim Venes said that the NCP are not collecting visitor data. He thought there would be figures available for individual attractions eg the NWT and RSPB reserves. He said that overall numbers were very difficult to estimate but measures such as National Trail surveys and traffic counts on the A149 by the County Council had been used to provide a picture of trends in numbers in the AONB management plan. There had been some work done on the impact of visitors trying to understand where they travelled from and what activities were undertaken when in the area.

He agreed the new facilities at the NWT will have had an impact and parishioners had noticed an increase in numbers at Holme Dunes and an increase in traffic. It is difficult to establish a base line and there would also need to be a comparison between summer and winter.

Tim Venes explained that European Designated Sites have a strong protection in law and if development is proposed then the impact has to be assessed. A study of these areas by the Norfolk Biodiversity partnership is currently underway. The Parish Council can always ask for a Traffic Impact Assessment to be carried out on any Application if it is not provided.

Question 4:

What is the NCP approach to assessing cumulative and indirect / secondary impacts of planning decisions on the AONB? These are increasingly important to the village, particularly in relation to A149 traffic. How can the Parish Council respond to planning applications / issues that have an indirect impact on the village for example, the proposed housing allocations in Hunstanton?

Tim Venes explained the NCP do not carry out cumulative assessments as there are just not the resources available and a large part of the village is away from the A149. The Parish Council would need to be confident it was making a good case and the problem is measurement. If there are concerns then contact should be made with the Borough Council for Planning and the County Council for Highways via Elected Members (the recommendation is to use them).

Question 5:

In general, are there any suggestions as to how the village can be protected from poor planning decisions?

The recommendation is to be involved from the outset. Sometimes communities get involved too late and therefore lose the opportunity to change things. Objecting to a Planning Application might be too late in the process and Parish Councils need to get involved in policy development if possible and understand the Planning system. 'Sustainability' is important but there are other things to consider. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a key document to provide policy guidance. Numbers of individual letters raising objections are more effective than a campaign as the weight of multiple objections has an impact on Planning decisions. If the Parish Council can be positive about any Applications, that is also helpful. The Parish Council was reminded that it can arrange to attend Planning Meetings when an allotted time is given to put forward a case. The NCP likes to be aware of local concerns and will work with communities if possible.

Tim Venes made the following general suggestions:

- Get involved in Local Plan development from the outset (generally little input to policy development from local communities - think about what draft policies and allocations mean for your village).
- Respond to Local Plan and Planning Application consultations (could form a small group to do this and advise the Parish Council as there is not generally time to do this effectively in the limited time available in meetings).
- Understand the planning system (National Planning Policy Framework, Local Plan)
- Use the AONB! (strong protection in the NPPF equal to national parks) - Paragraphs 113, 114, 115, 116 and potential counter to paragraph 14 on 'sustainable development' - see footnote 9.
- Make concerns known to local councillors and ask for support (they need your vote!)
- Run a campaign - get people in the village to object to poor applications. Several individual letters are better than a petition.
- Be careful and considered - if object to everything, especially for flimsy reasons, it is unlikely to carry weight.
- May want to be positive - suggest ways of improving rather than just objecting.
- Make comments / objections based on planning reasons primarily (but local sentiment is also important).
- Can arrange to attend planning meetings and have time limit to state case (possibly more than one person to give perspective).

Estelle Hook then explained her role in raising funds for external projects. The most recent had been £1.9m for the Nine Chalk Rivers covering from the Gaywood to the Mun. Most of the funding had been used on the Stiffkey, Glaven and Babingly but the other rivers had a Catchment Plan with community involvement. Currently the NCP are looking at grazing, eels and fishing.

She is now looking at a potential project on the River Hun with an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund and wanted to know local feelings about it. The Hun is only 6 km long, comes up in Old Hunstanton Park where it is unchanged which is unusual. It has been modified after it comes under the road bridge. The project would be to improve public access and improve diversity in the channel form and habitats. It is very overgrown although it would not necessarily be dredged but the aim would be to improve biodiversity and natural processes. The project is in its early stages and there will need to be discussion with landowners and the Golf Club.

Parishioners said that the river had changed enormously over the last 30 years and Footpath 3, alongside the river, had only been reopened through the efforts of the villagers. Estelle Hook had spoken to Old Hunstanton Parish Council which was in favour of the project and there was a clear indication of support at the current meeting. She will report back to the two villages as the project progresses.

The Chairman thanked both Tim Venes and Estelle Hook for taking the time to come and give such detailed and helpful information. Seven members of the public left the meeting prior to the commencement of the Parish Council meeting.

C.M.J.

18.12.15. (Amended 30.03.16.)