

## MARLDON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a PUBLIC MEETING to discuss proposed RECREATIONAL FACILITIES in MARLDON organised by Marldon Parish Council and held on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2010 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall

### **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Cllrs: Pennington, Benney, Palk, Mrs Cox, Mrs Clarke, Veasey, Danby, Webber

APOLOGIES: Cllr Thorp, Joinson and three members of the public.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Mr Ross Kennerley, SHDC; Ms Robyn Brown, National Trust; Ms Jackie Francis, Ground Work Trust S.W.; Clerk to the Council: David Eeles; and 35 members of the public

1. The Chairman of the meeting, Parish Council Chairman Cllr Pennington, began by recounting the background to the recreational project, which has been under consideration for 7-8 months and was mentioned at the Annual Parish Meeting in April.
2. Cllr Max Danby, Chairman of the Recreation sub- committee of the Parish Council, then outlined the proposals. These were for two items of recreational equipment in Tor meadow, beside the existing play area, and a "mini-plaza" facility for skateboards primarily at the North end of Jubilee Meadow. He was at pains to emphasise that the latter was nothing like the facilities in Victoria Park in Paignton, and would be designed to minimize sound levels with a pre-formed concrete bowl below ground level, landscaped and with earth banks as well as re-positioned huts and newly planted tree/shrub perimeter to reduce noise to the Butterlake housing area. Other sites had been examined but none had been found to be satisfactory. He was hoping that when complainants understood the true nature of the features proposed they would find their fears allayed.
3. In Tor Field there would be play equipment for 2-6 yr. olds, and an adventure trail for 6-17 year olds, and it was envisaged to replace the existing fence around the play facilities with one across the recess which would have enough room to contain the facilities in a dog-free area. No changes were envisaged to the surrounding green perimeter although there may need to be some excavation to provide level areas. There would be a rubber-based play-safe surface.
4. In response to questions Cllr Danby stated:
  - The existing play facilities in Tor field had a life expectancy up to between 2015 and 2018.
  - Cllr Cox stated that the existing benches were being refurbished by the MEG group at present
  - These proposals had been formulated with 4 members from the Youth Club with Mrs Bailey as co-opted members of the committee, who said that the Youth Club

was still in existence but had been forced to suspend operations because of a lack of volunteer adults to help

- He said the idea was to create an area that far from being an eyesore, would be an attractive area, and with the support of the National Trust and at their suggestion, to include seating, pic-nic tables and a barbeque area nearby.
- A footpath made of scalping would be necessary to overcome mud problems caused by the boggy nature of some of the meadow
- Funding for the project would come from the £10,000 available from SHDC for play area improvements, together with matched funding with the help of organisations such as the Ground Work Trust and Council itself had about £20,000 set aside for recreational improvements, with the Chairman offering to find funds from his discretionary locality budget. The total cost was expected to be in the region of £77,000

Ms Robyn Brown, representing the National Trust, who hold covenants over the land in question which could be used to veto these proposals, said although she had initially been fearful that the proposals would be too noisy she had been very impressed by what Cllr Danby has done, she could see the facilities were needed and have been very sympathetically designed so that as community venue it could be very attractive. She wouldn't give permission if there was considerable village feeling against the proposals, but feels they deserve to be considered. In response to a question from the Chairman about moving the fence to enlarge the area, she said that she felt that area was best used for what it was technically earmarked - as allotments, if there was a need for more of these.

Mr Wolgar, who had also been co-opted onto the committee as a member of the public, said he envisaged the area being used for competitions during the Apple Pie Fair as an additional and much needed attraction featuring the areas' youth.

Mr Julian Carnell, of 5, Butterlake, said this was the first he had heard of a proposal that would be 100 ft from his house, and he felt there would be more noise than at present, although he supported the idea of allotments, he didn't think this was the right place for the skateboard facility. Later he asked if other sites had been considered and was assured they had been, there were covenants over Tor Field and Peters Field that would prevent their development, and the area behind the scout hut in Furzegood was on a slope and had a storm drain running through it which would be expensive to deal with.

Various members of the public suggested that the Council- owned field at Broomhill Meadow would be a more suitable location, but members reminded the meeting that there had been extensive discussions about this when the future of that piece of land was debated a year or two ago, including a public meeting which over 100 people attended which voted overwhelmingly that this site should be an environmental area for quiet recreational enjoyment. Cllr Cox pointed out that it would be undemocratic for a subsequent public meeting to overturn a clearly expressed wish of the majority as expressed at that meeting.

Moreover questions of space, isolation and the possible need for parking which would not be allowed, were cited at the time as against more active recreational development.

Ms Francis, of Groundwork Trust, said in her opinion Broomhill Meadow was a more appropriate site, with better access obviating the need for youngsters to use roads with no pavements to get to the facility as was the case at Jubilee Meadow. There was already a large amount of background noise, and she felt the parking issue was a red herring as skateboarders do not use cars. Some of the youngsters present also said they would prefer Broomhill.

Members of the public who lived near to the proposed development in the Meadow said they were still concerned about noise levels. Mr Kennerley from SHDC said that the proposals would need to be investigated by the Environmental Health Dept. of SHDC who would measure existing noise levels and prospective levels from the facility; if this was above 36 decibels it may recommend against the development. Cllr Danby said a similar facility at Ilfracombe had been recorded at only 32 decibels, which was less than the sound of ordinary conversation. Mr Kennerley said it was likely that planning permission would also be needed so there were safeguards for the local residents.

Mr Egan noted that it would be difficult to have a cricket match at the same time as the facility was being used and it was agreed play on the facility would have to stop on such occasions. Cllr Danby said he hoped the local youngsters would be self-policing to keep down noise at night for example, and emphasised that the young people he had been involved with, several of whom were at the meeting and contributed, were responsible and should be trusted.

Other members of the public spoke in favour of the proposals and felt they would greatly add to the sense of community in the village, and urged others to remember when they were young. The point was made that this end of the village was already relatively noisy with church bells, a pub and the Village Hall comings and goings. A young person made the point that similar facilities had been opposed when suggested for the Decoy area at Newton Abbot but were now regarded favourably. There were at least 30-40 youngsters from the village who would use this facility, which would reduce the currently dangerous use of roads and cul-de-sacs in the village. Such points were met with general applause from the audience. Mr Harrington congratulated the Council on the progress made, although he could see modifications may have to be made.

Mr Carnell said he didn't wish to oppose these developments but he felt he would suffer because of them and urged further consideration of other areas. He declined an offer to join the sub-committee.

In conclusion Cllr Danby proposed that the skateboard proposals be put to one side pending further investigations and consultations with the residents of adjoining houses, but that the Council should move ahead with the proposals for Tor Field, in particular because of the funding deadline for the £10,000 from SHDC. This was seconded by Mr Wolgar and AGREED unanimously by those present.

Mr Wolgar proposed a vote of thanks to the Council for the efforts they had made, and there was general applause

Ms Brown concluded by praising Cllr Danby and his sub- committee, saying that it had been a good meeting at which there had been a lot of support for the new facilities but perhaps more research on sound levels was needed, and she hoped to work together to that end.

Cllr Danby thanked the three experts for giving up their time to come along, and the Chairman thanked Cllr Danby for his efforts and the public for their participation.