



Around **Ashton Hayes**



Safeguarding our village's future

Newsletter from Ashton Hayes Parish Council

November 2008

INTRODUCTION

Despite the pervading gloom of today's economic climate, there are plenty of folk in Ashton still finding their way to work on various projects, some of which have a Parish Council input, all of which are intended for the overall benefit of those who live in our parish. In the newsletter I will try to bring you up to date and provide a little background in some instances. Unfortunately there's a shortage of space for the noticeboard.

COMMUNITY SHOP

A public meeting was held during the summer, after which a questionnaire was sent to residents of Ashton Hayes and Mouldsworth about their thoughts on what they wanted from our village store. The survey results showed that people still want a shop in the village, and support was shown for running the store as a community project. A further meeting in the village was attended by residents who had expressed their support, and who met members of a similar project set up in another Cheshire Village, Antrobus.

Following this meeting a steering committee was formed to assess the viability of such a project in Ashton Hayes and Mouldsworth, and its members are working in partnership with The Village Retail Services Association, Virsa (www.virsa.org) who can advise on how to fund, set up and manage community stores. The committee has recently been invited to take part in a pilot project, which is Lottery funded, to promote the sale of local produce in the store.

The steering committee is made up of seven members, who are each taking responsibility for different aspects of the enterprise i.e. finance and fundraising, publicity, legal framework, volunteer resourcing and retailing. To help us in these areas we are looking for assistance from anyone who feels they have skills or knowledge that could be of benefit to the subgroups. In particular, we are looking for members with fundraising, accountancy and legal skills to join the committee.

If you feel you can offer help and support to any of these working groups, or would like put forward any suggestions, please get in touch with the committee Chair - Lisa Allman on:

Tel. 01829 751043 or email to ljallman@btinternet.com

The setting up of a Community Store will require some initial investment. The committee is currently investigating sources of grant funding, and will be contacting the residents of Ashton Hayes and Mouldsworth shortly for their pledges of support.

RECREATIONAL FIELD

Historical notes

As far back as 1989 a survey found that residents of Ashton had requested a recreational field be provided for the village. Since then successive Parish Councils have been trying to acquire a suitable plot, and in October 2006 the field in Kelsall Rd was purchased. There was a potential drawback in the form of an existing covenant, but informal advice, taken prior to the purchase of the field from what was considered to be a reliable source led the Parish Council to believe that this covenant would not pose a serious problem, and, with the best of intentions, and the full backing of Chester City Council, the land was bought. But the covenant problem proved to be too great and, reluctantly, the Parish Council had to sell the field. There were numerous out goings including legal and other fees for buying and selling, seeding

RECREATIONAL FIELD (Continued)

and cutting grass, legal fees in connection with the covenant and interest on the loan, but we have still been left with a profit of around £16000 to take forward.

Towards a new field

Chester District's Local Plan, adopted in May 2006, states that *'the rural open spaces assessment identified a number of large and medium sized villages with particular needs for deficiencies in formal and informal sport and recreation. It was suggested that there was a particular need in Ashton for an area of casual/informal open space.'*

When the recent Parish Plan questionnaire was compiled it didn't ask about a recreational field because we believed we already had one. But the related question about 'Open green spaces' found that 83% said this was either very or extremely important to them, which supports current policy.

The Parish Council is working in partnership with the Ashton Hayes Sports and Recreation Association to acquire 4.7 acres of land - most of the second field on the right as you leave the village to the south - for development as a community open space for all ages. The Parish Council's decision, taken in July, is dependent on planning permission being granted and is subject to further funding sources being identified. The intention is that the open space should be financed without having to find funds from Ashton Hayes residents via the parish precept on the Council Tax. With the profit from the Kelsall Rd sale, plus the original deposit and grants available to it at present, the Parish Council has been able to offer up to £31000 towards another field.

The field has been deemed fit for purpose by council officers; meeting criteria for road safety, visibility, nearness to the village centre, drainage and other factors. A planning application has been submitted and can be viewed at the Town Hall or online, using planning reference 08/01876/FUL. Written comments must be received at the planning office by November 20th. Comments can also be made on line. The web site address for viewing and comment is:

www.chester.gov.uk/council_services/planning_and_building_control/planning/planning_applications_online.aspx

The vision

A quality recreation ground has been a dream of children and parents of our village for generations. Such a ground is not just for kids, it's a place for all residents to relax in and enjoy. It's a social centre, a place to include on your Sunday walk, a place for random encounters and meeting friends. The concept is still evolving. Currently what is envisaged is a play area, facilities for football, a general open space and seating where you can enjoy the views of the Welsh Hills. Further facilities will only happen following extensive consultation.

We want your views! A project like this can only succeed if the village is informed and involved. There have been good reasons why it has not always been possible to give full details until now – it is difficult to negotiate land purchase in public. But that phase is largely over. Now the partnership would like to invite you to attend one of two drop-in sessions, the first on Saturday 29th November, from 10am until noon, and the second on Monday 1st December from 6pm until 8pm. Both sessions will be in the Parish Rooms. Please come along, find out more and give us your comments.

There is also a very detailed Recreation Ground Proposal document which will soon be on the Web site, and a copy may be obtained via the Parish Council or the AHS&RA.

PARISH PLAN UPDATE

Since the last update the results of the consultation process have been published, the working groups have been writing the objectives for the action plan and the new community website has gone live.

On 12th July the steering group published the results of the consultation in the Parish Council marquee at the Hey Day. It was good to meet a number of residents and to have the opportunity to discuss the results. If you have not managed to see a copy yet you can download one from www.ashtonhayes.net or contact any steering group member. The writing of the objectives for the action plan based on the results of the consultation is progressing well.

The new community website at www.ashtonhayes.net went live about 2 weeks ago. It does not have much content at present, and we are looking for a volunteer to manage the site. If you feel you have the necessary skills, or if you know someone who does, we would love to hear from you. Likewise, if you are a local society, group or organisation we would be happy to offer you a free web page to publicise your activities. If you are interested in this, please contact any steering group member. Finally, if you are a local business and would like to have a page on the website, please do get in touch. There will be an annual fee for businesses, but as we are not running this to make a profit, the fee will be very low.

As always, comments or communications about the parish plan can be directed at any steering group member. My email is paul@varey.demon.co.uk or you can ring me on 759472.

MICROGRID FEASIBILITY STUDY

A microgrid enables small communities to reduce their carbon footprint by using renewable energy, generated locally on a small scale and connected to the main power distribution network. This study, over 12 months, will assess a range of alternatives to conventional power generation, and aims to produce a model for a microgrid that could transform the way power is generated by any rural area in the UK. The model will then be presented to the Parish Council, but any development of a real microgrid would only proceed after full consultation with the residents of Ashton Hayes. There exist no plans or funding to install any renewable generation equipment in or near the village.

Funding and Management

The study is being funded through a grant of £86,558 from Carbon Connections UK, an investment body based at the University of East Anglia, and is a collaboration between the University of Chester and EA Technology, which has expertise in power generation, supply and metering. It also has the support of the Parish Council. Project manager is Prof. Roy Alexander of the University of Chester, a village resident.

Project details

For the feasibility study to be applied elsewhere, as many sources of renewable energy as possible must be considered. Planning permission has been granted to erect weather stations at two sites one in Ashton Hayes (near the school) and one in Kelsall (at Longley Lane). Wind speed will be measured at both for a period of 12 months. Solar energy will be measured at the school site. Wind speed is measured by anemometers mounted on 10m high masts. So as to relate wind energy measurements to potential power generation, a range of wind turbines will be examined and those considered most appropriate for Ashton Hayes will be recommended. This process will be followed for other renewable sources.

Information

Three bulletins have been sent to households across the village starting May 2008. These included contact details for those involved in the project, which were also given out at the public meeting held on July 16th at the school, and are on the notice board at Village Farm. At the meeting we recruited volunteers - all are village residents - for two focus groups to help guide the project team's thinking and provide feedback as it develops proposals for a microgrid. The first meetings, advertised via a leaflet to all householders, were held on Oct 2nd at the Parish Room in West End.

Go to 'www.goingcarbonneutral.co.uk' to view notes from the meetings.

For other information please contact Roy Alexander on 01244 513171 or via r.alexander@chester.ac.uk

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

It is understood that, about 12 months ago, Muir Group Housing Association was approached by the owners of the field adjacent to the Chapel in Ashton Lane to see if it would be interested in it for affordable housing. Muir Group is a not for profit association that exists to provide such housing. It has subsequently reviewed the land and concluded that there was merit in further consideration, and so has talked to the Rural Housing Enabler and the City Council Housing and Planning Officers, from whom, Muir has said, the feedback was positive.

At the Parish Council meeting in October Mr Andrews of Muir Group gave members an overview of how Muir Housing and Affordable housing schemes work. It was intended to discuss the concept for housing

AFFORDABLE HOUSING (Continued)

at the November meeting but it had to be deferred and should be on the agenda in December. Muir Group aims to work closely with local communities and Parish Councils to ensure that it provides exactly the right kind of housing in each community.

The subject will form part of the Parish Plan which is currently being written, so we won't speculate on what it will recommend. However, we can report on some of the figures from the questionnaire which were published at the Hey day in July this year, when it was found that just over 57% of respondents said that, in principle, they would support a small new development if it is affordable housing for local people and there is a proven need. Just under 22% would not support it. Also, there were 54 individuals who anticipated a requirement for affordable accommodation in the parish now, or within the next 5 years?

In an information sheet Muir Group has stated that it has not yet put together details for a proposed scheme because it wanted to wait for some feedback from the Parish Council. A key factor in any decision on this is to be able to show proven need, so it could help the case if people in the parish who are currently looking for affordable housing were to write to the clerk of the Parish Council, or come to a Council meeting, so there will be more data available. As mentioned earlier, the Parish Council does not have much to pass on yet, but if you would like to find out more about the Muir Group itself, see below.

Web site www.muir.org.uk Tel. 01928 728000

W.I. HALL

Ashton Hayes W.I. Hall has recently had a new kitchen fitted thanks partly to a grant of £1000 from the Gowey Area Committee. A new hot water supply is also being installed and several residents have kindly made donations. The W.I. members are sincerely grateful for the help towards these costs.

GARDENING CLUB

I am sure that all the residents of Ashton Hayes have enjoyed the colourful displays through out the summer and autumn, which members of the gardening club have provided for us with the flower beds by the signs at the north and south entrances to the village. The plots have now been cleared and winter bedding plants have been put in. Our thanks to the gardening club, and also the parish council for funding.

To find out more about this friendly and thriving club please contact Trevor Scadeng on 751770.

ASHTON SCHOOL

The school is holding its Christmas Fair on Friday 28th November from 5:00 to 7:00 pm.

List of Parish Councillors

Garry Charnock	01829 752714	GCharnock@rsk.co.uk
Hugo Deynem	01829 751830	hugodey@yahoo.co.uk
Richard Holland	01829 751761	edutec98@btinternet.com
Dave Lee	01829 752642	dave@leezzz.freemove.co.uk
Trevor Scadeng	01829 751770	alright_trev@hotmail.com
Lucinda Strudwick	01829 751389	lustrudwick@btinternet.com
Diane Stubbs	01829 751718	stubbsfamily13@tiscali.co.uk
Pauline Tilley (Chair)	01829 751524	pauline@pftilley.plus.com
Julian Auckland-Lewis(Vice)	07980 916935	julian.auckland-lewis@bch.nhs.uk
Andrea Thwaite (Clerk)	01244 336662	ashtonhayespc@hotmail.com

Meetings are held at 8:00pm in the Parish Room, usually the first Monday of the month (except Aug)