



ITPAS NEWSLETTER

Volume 21, Issue 1 - May 2018



Threat to GreenBelt

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Little has been achieved but much has changed since the ITPAS 'Special Newsletter' of December 2017, "**Is Our Green Belt at Risk?**"

The short answer remains, "**YES**", but not through any controversial measures within a new 'Draft Local Plan' but instead through the continued failure of Wirral Borough Council (WBC) to progress sufficiently with the production of one, a situation which plays into the hands of those who see an easy opportunity for development within our precious Green Belt, whilst dilapidated areas of particularly Wallasey and Birkenhead decline still further.

Disappointedly, if not disgracefully, Wirral now faces the very real prospect of having organisations from outside the Borough determine Wirral's own future Planning Policy, what may be built and where, and impose a Policy for our Green Belt and its boundaries.



This awful situation, termed '**Local Plan Intervention**', is a direct consequence of "a consistent failure to produce a Local Plan since the last one was adopted in 2000." 'Local Plans', which determine what can and cannot be developed in locations across Wirral, should be achieved through working cooperatively with neighbouring authorities, cover a 15-year projection with **5-yearly up-dates!!** Hence, the Plan is 15 years late and "The Council has failed to meet milestones in published Local Development Schemes at least six times since 2004."

We are advised that WBC has made so little progress in comparison with other councils that it has been placed in the worse 3 (in terms of progress) out of more than 300 authorities in England - quite some (lack of) achievement. The reasons WBC had given to explain its poor position have been dismissed as not constituting 'exceptional circumstances' and are not unique to Wirral as other councils with similar circumstances have achieved much more.

Following policy set out in the November 2017 Written Statement and Housing White Paper, which covered all authorities across England, 'Intervention' is now to follow with a team of experts, led by the (national) Chief Planner, examining the details and advising on next steps. Meanwhile, "officials will also begin formal discussions on the options of inviting the Combined Authority for the Liverpool City Region (of 5 Boroughs, who have already produced their own Draft Plan) to prepare a Local Plan for Wirral." This is shameful and may mean that the residents of Wirral lose their say over the future of their Peninsula and its Green Belt.

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Neat Seat Project

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Meanwhile, WBC continues with its assessment of Green Belt land, having extended greatly the sites under consideration by its consultants. ITPAS, having commented at length and in specific depth on the Council's Consultation over a proposed 'Brownfield Register of Sites' ('Brownfield' being vacant sites and buildings, formerly developed and suitable for redevelopment, including for housing), was disappointed although not surprised at what it considers a flawed and considerably understated list of available sites, which deficiency must add weight to their consultant's expressed view that Wirral's 'Housing Needs' can only be satisfied through the release of some Green Belt land.

As argued elsewhere and earlier, Wirral's 'Housing Needs' has been overstated in the opinion of most reviewing organisations and the potential of 'Brownfield Sites' and other opportunities, including many hundreds of extant but unprogressed Planning Consents, underestimated. The combined effect has led to the threat to Green Belt. ITPAS and others consider that the available extent of Brownfield and other opportunities mean that a review of Green Belt at this time is both unnecessary and concerning to local residents.



As an example, 'Wirral Waters' in dockland has Outline Approval for 16,500 dwellings and yet the Council proposes to include just 1,500 units within its Plan, arguing that it doesn't know precisely where they would be located. Our argument includes the contention that 'Planning' by its very nature relates to zones rather than exact locations and involves projections and proposals.

John Heath

MEMBERSHIP

New members are vital to the future of ITPAS. When you have read this Newsletter please pass it to a friend or neighbour to read mentioning, of course, that the cost of membership is just £5 per household per year. If you manage to stir any interest please let me know and I will take it from there.

Latimah Sinclair Membership Secretary 648 2444

As you may know from our previous Newsletters, ITPAS applied for funding from Wirral Borough Councils "Small Grant Big Difference" scheme.

We are always looking for worthy causes for which we might gain funding and had noticed the poor condition of



benches in Irby, Thurstaston and Pensby. This gave us the idea for 'Neat Seat' as the title for our project. I T P A S ' s application was successful and we have now received two separate grants from the

fund, this has enabled the refurbishment of 14 benches stretching from Landican Cemetery to Quarry Road East.

Local handyman Neil Roberts carried out the program of works, which involved cleaning, sanding down and staining the wooden seats.

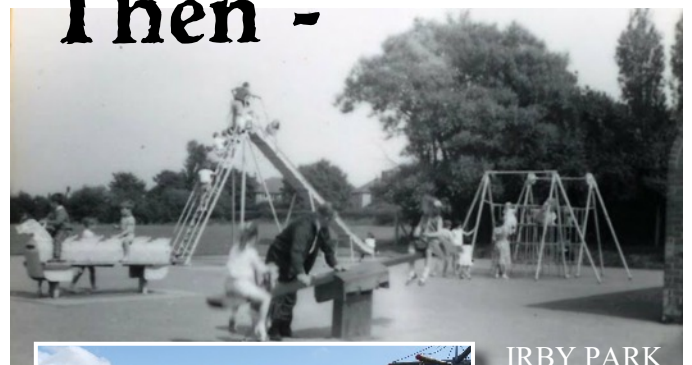


We hope to be successful in the next round of funding, as this would enable us to complete refurbishment of the last three remaining benches.

The bench opposite Backford Road is in such poor condition that we hope to have it replaced.



Then -



IRBY PARK



- and now.

ITPAS Needs You!

Friends of Irby Park?

It is over twelve months since Ian Chalmers retired as secretary with our heartfelt thanks.

I am sad to report that the Committee is still lacking a replacement.

Do you know anyone with competent computer skills, that would be willing to publish our agenda, take minutes at the monthly committee meeting and generally keep the committee members connected via emails?

The role is not onerous and involves only a few hours each month.

As you know, the ITPAS committee comprises volunteers who take a keen interest in local matters relating to the three villages. It is 44 years since ITPAS was founded and during that time committee members have come and gone, each making their own special contribution to the ongoing function of the society. It is thanks to volunteers who have filled those vital roles that the society survives today.

Without a committee the society cannot survive and if that happens the community grant funding that helps to enhance our villages will be lost.

More importantly, you, our ITPAS members, who have supported our work so loyally and who share our passion for the environment will lose a voice and a say in local matters. That would be a tragedy.

ITPAS welcomes enquiries for the role of secretary and also general committee members.

Melanie 0151 648 6780 or 07990523488

AGM

**Wednesday June 13th at 7.30 pm
in Irby Library
Election of ITPAS committee
Other Committee posts**

All of the remaining committee members are willing to serve for a further year. Under the terms of the constitution, at the Annual General Meeting, the ITPAS membership will be asked, by a show of hands vote, to re-appoint the members of the committee en bloc:

The committee meets once a month. Any ITPAS member wishing to be considered for the committee may make an informal approach to the ITPAS Chairman, Melanie Walker who will provide further information. There is an invitation to potential committee members to attend a meeting as an observer in order to form a view as to whether "it is for them", or not.



Our Park is precious. If we don't use it, we lose it!

ITPAS had highlighted the error in WBC's consultant's assessment that the Irby Playing Pitches in Irby Park are of a good standard (as they are unplayable owing to poor drainage for much of the season) and pointed out that, having been burned out, the Changing and Storage facilities there are no longer "satisfactory" but require to be replaced.



The only action forthcoming is an Application to demolish the Building and grass over the site, with no re-provision or drainage works.

We need teams and sports groups to make representations to use the pitches and the changing rooms for future activities and fixtures. Only this way can we get improvements made to the grassed areas but also a stay of execution on the changing facilities and have them replaced.

Local Councillors have suggested that there could be benefit in setting up a 'Friends of Irby Park' type of group, a move which has proved successful elsewhere. In order for this to happen we need a small group of active campaigners to get together and set up a 'Friends of Irby Park' group.



A pooling of ideas could come up with many projects to improve the facilities and environment in the park. This could be sponsored, with fund-raising or via grant applications. There could be better paths,



floral areas, community garden, sensory garden - all of which would not only make it more pleasant and popular with the community but as a result make it less attractive for the small amount of unruly behaviour occasionally seen in the park.

ITPAS is willing to co-ordinate initial efforts to set up a group which would eventually be self-administering group similar to others which have been successful across Wirral.

PLANNING OFFICER UPDATE

Whilst ITPAS has expended much energy and continues to do so over assessment and comment upon major policy and future matters, it still continues its month-by-month review of all Planning Applications of all scales within the ITPAS area, and objects, supports or suggests things as deemed appropriate.

Most domestic applications are resolved in discussion with and between the Planning Department, Applicants, Neighbours and ourselves, especially where development within Green Belt is proposed. Regarding the latter, once more we are pleased to report that all applications since our last Newsletter have been determined along generally acceptable lines. There are, however, some applications which demand continued attention and we up-date further on a few:

Greenheys Nursery, Thurstaston Road: The Applicants sought a 'Lawful Use Certificate', to establish that it was (and by implication still is) a commercial market garden. ITPAS objected as the wording of the Application included several terms which were deemed inappropriate but could be helpful to any application for housing on this Green Belt site down the line. The Application has now been withdrawn without a lawful use being confirmed.

Heatherlands: Whilst some preparatory work has progressed around the Site, an application to increase the density of development on the Site was opposed and Refused. No Appeal has been lodged. ITPAS has urged that work starts in earnest to improve the appearance of this significant Green Belt corner plot.

Hillbark Hotel: A High Court Judgement involving Thornton Manor and Thornton Hall Hotels and the persistence of large marquees allegedly without appropriate permissions was also critical of Wirral Borough Council which may have led to the late and undetermined Applications for renewed Consents of the large marquee at Hillbark Hotel being refused and Enforcement Action taken for the removal of the marquee and some storage containers.



At this time there do not appear to have been any Appeals, fresh Applications or resolution of the Enforcement Order. ITPAS's intention in its long-running dealings with this Site is not aimed at damaging a business but instead (i) to have all development within Green Belt be in line with Planning Consents and all divergences, additions and omissions be approved; (ii) where legal agreements are entered into as part of any Consent, that they are complied with (allegedly profits from the enterprise have not been put to restoring the historic Building to the appropriate extent); and (iii) to have this part of Green Belt restored to an appropriate and attractive state by addressing the unsightly and possibly unhealthy storage containers and 'tip' of accumulated, defunct equipment removed from the Grounds.

Townshend Avenue: There do not appear to be any fresh applications for housing development of this section of Green Belt since the last Appeal was dismissed.

Harrock Wood Surrounding Land: The Green Belt land around Harrock Wood has reportedly been the subject of discussion between the Council, the National Trust and developers. It is not known whether this is limited to being part of the Council's on-going 'Green Belt Review' but ITPAS is advised that there have been no applications lodged.

ITPAS has also been making representations to the Council in respect of (i) damage to grass verges from resident and visitor car parking; (ii) encroachment by residents' fencing onto Council-owned land; and (iii) potholes in roads. These problems have been acknowledged and in some cases owners have been sent letters but ITPAS is unaware of any successful follow-up action.

BT Blues

The phone box at the top of Hillview Road is soon to be taken out of commission due to lack of use and general pruning of facilities by BT. There is an Adopt-a-Phonebox Scheme but the application to do so must be by a group with Charity status.

The ITPAS committee discussed this and decided that we didn't have the man-power to caretake a phonebox in another guise, whatever that ended up being. Many ideas have been bandied around including an art gallery, a free library, a greenhouse, a Visitor Guide Centre, a Defibrillator Base etc etc. With our Charity status we were in a position to safeguard the future of the box however.

We have been approached by Ken Burnley who has saved the day with this message:

The redundant red phone-box at the corner of Hillview Road and Mill Hill Road has been saved. The kiosk, which had been earmarked by the GPO for removal, was happily saved by the prompt actions of members of ITPAS, and its retention is now secured under the GPO 'Adopt-a-Kiosk' scheme.

It will soon be disconnected, the phone parts removed, and repainted ready for future use by the local community.

We are looking for a small team of folk who can join us in formulating ideas for its use, and generally looking after it in the future. If any members in that area of Irby are interested, please contact Ken & Gill Burnley (648 2789 or kburnley@btinternet.com).

So the future use and upkeep of the box is in your and Ken and Gill's hands.



Roadside Advertising

Have you noticed the advertising signs at either side of Thurstaston roundabout?

These signs and others dotted across the borough provide a lucrative income for Wirral Borough Council.

As you may be aware, Thurstaston is a conservation area. ITPAS organised the installation of a stone in the wall at the top of Station Road in celebration of the fact.

Given the status of the area I am disappointed that the signs appeared without public consultation.

In addition, the extensive daffodil planting scheme ITPAS volunteers carried out on verges appears to have been hijacked by commercial enterprise.

I have contacted the conservation officer who holds the view that the signs would have gained approval in any event, does not believe they cause significant harm and would only be concerned if the number of adverts were to increase.

At the time plans to create the roundabout were discussed Wirral Borough Council allayed residents concerns by stating that advertising would not be allowed on the roundabout.

Had the signs been placed just a few metres further along telegraph Road they would have been outside the conservation area.

I would be interested to hear your views on the subject.

Melanie Walker - Chairman

In addition the habit for putting large banner type advertising on the Cheshire railings at this (and other locations) roundabout is illegal and definitely unsightly. Offenders are contacted about this and it is reported to WBC who organise removal and litigation if necessary. Tell us if you see any illegal roadside advertising.

Grant Funding Update

Host of Golden Daffodils Grant

2015 saw ITPAS make the first application to the West Wirral Community Fund for daffodil bulbs.

Ian Chalmers came up with the catchy “Host of Golden Daffodils” title, which has certainly struck a chord, as we have been fortunate to receive funding from Wirral Borough Council every year since.

The program involves planting daffodils in prominent positions with the aim of improving the visual amenity.



We had not entirely envisaged the scale of work involved and number of volunteers required to plant over 20,000 thousand daffodils each year.

Last winter the weather was particularly inclement and saw us chiseling away at frozen soil almost up to Christmas.

However, the frozen fingers and stiff backs are soon forgotten in the spring when the many positive and heartening comments we receive make the result well worth the effort.

We are thankful to Wirral Borough Council for the funding opportunities and particularly grateful to Helen Gallagher our Constituency Engagement Officer and her team for their advice and guidance in negotiating the application process.



Do you have an area you would like to nominate for planting? Would you like to volunteer to help us plant the bulbs?

Wildflower Meadow



As you will all be aware over the last couple of years there has been the Western Link Project to lay part of the high voltage cable link from Scotland to North Wales. This necessitated laying a cable under a route along the Wirral part of which was in our area. The Project had a Community Support scheme which funded local projects in the aftermath of the disruption as a sort of peace-offering to communities.



Western Link in conjunction with Prysmian (one of their contractors), Wirral Borough Council and ITPAS have funded the installation of a Wildflower Meadow in the corner of Arrowe Park opposite Thingwall Avenue.

As you can see from the photograph it is a cleared area which has been fenced off and has three access gates. Paths have been laid across the area and it promises to become a well-loved feature of the park.

Seeding and planting have already been done and the area is now in the process of becoming established. The public has denied access to the meadow whilst the planting starts to take root and flourish. It will be opened as soon as it is deemed wise to do so.



As an extra, Western Link have instructed Prysmian to install lectern-style information boards. The information and illustrations will be provided by ITPAS.



Western Link are also funding the installation of various types of bird-boxes and bat-boxes in order to encourage the establishment of a variety of species in the area.



**ACCOUNTS YEAR ENDED 31
DECEMBER 2017**

	2017	2016
INCOME		
Subs	1302.5	1081
Talk/Raffle	256.7	616.2
Peace Conference	50	
Labour Party (Notice Bd)	45	
Grants	830	861.6
Tree Inauguration	25	
Town Hall visit	14	
Lottery Grant - lights		2962
Visit to Waste Management		168
	2523.2	5688.8
Capital Costs		
Gardening Tools	444.13	
Daffodil Bulbs	594	405
High Visual vests	84	
	1122.13	405
Expenses		
Speakers	85	95
Wall Repair	950	
Hall hire	113.1	145.05
Land Registry Fee	9	
Benches refurb	200	
Public Liability	84	82.5
Heswall Magazine	150	
Notice Board Repairs	20	
Misc	20	117.92
Lottery Grant - to Lights Committee		2962
Visit Waste Mgt		200
	1631.1	3602.47
Office expenses		
Stationery	60.36	78.05
Ink Cartridges	257.74	248.91
Computer mot	115.14	
	433.24	326.96
Total Costs/Expenses	3186.47	4334.43
Surplus/Deficit	-663.27	1354.37
From Bank Statement		
Opening Balance	7567.87	
Closing Balance	6904.6	
	-663.27	

Our Treasurer, Latimah Sinclair, has prepared our accounts for the year ended 2017 alongside figures for the 2016 year. These are posted in advance of the Annual General Meeting so they can be discussed and passed as per our Constitution.



Rather than invading each others homes every month the ITPAS Committee have decided to take up an offer from Irby Library and hold the committee meetings there instead. This allows us to be more central, access the facilities of the library and also add to the list of community usage of this facility - this would help in any possible discussions re future closure - a Win-Win situation.

For a long time now ITPAS has had a Flowerbed Rota whereby Committee members and other volunteers have done a monthly weed and tidy-up of the library's flowerbeds and gardens. If anyone would like to help out on this rota then please contact us as this would mean that we would only need to do one session per year.



What the deuce?

It has been brought to our attention that on several occasions dog-walkers have been spotted taking their pooches for their regular constitutional **IN THE TENNIS COURTS** of Irby Park!! Now it may be that they are training for Wimbledon but even if their mess is collected and disposed of, there is bound to be some unhygienic residue. And of course a fluffy tennis ball is bound to land on it!



'You cannot be serious'.

It has been reported to WBC but if you see or know someone who does this, tell them to pack it in.

ITPAS Committee 2017-18



Chairman

Melanie Walker – 648-6780

Vice Chairman / Newsletter / Web

Roy Fisher - 648-7671
webmaster@itpas.org

Secretary

Patricia Kinsey - 648-6716

Treasurer & Membership

Latimah Sinclair - 648-2444

Planning & Footpaths

John Heath- 648-6015
johnheath@barnstables233.co.uk

Charity Commission Liaison

Lukman Sinclair - 648-2444

Committee / Village Hall Rep

Patricia Kinsey - 648-6716

Beach/Conservation Officer

Jim McCormac - 604-0376

Committee Members

Carole Penrose - 648-4116
Iris Stubbs - 648-7260

Members should check their subscription payments to see if they owe for the coming year. Please talk to our Membership Secretary for details of how best to pay.

Can members ensure that their contact details are up-to-date please. Contact the Membership Secretary to inform of changes to address, telephone or email.

We are hoping that our new members become involved in shaping future policy and events by coming up with ideas and suggestions and maybe by offering to serve on our committee for a time. New blood and new contributions are always welcome. Please contact us if you feel you would like to be more involved.

DIARY DIARY



All meetings are at 19:30 in Irby Village Hall unless otherwise stated. Free for members.

Wednesday June 13th at 19:30

Annual General Meeting

Check our accounts, Election of Officers,
Issues, Questions, Quiz
Free tea and cake on arrival
In IRBY LIBRARY

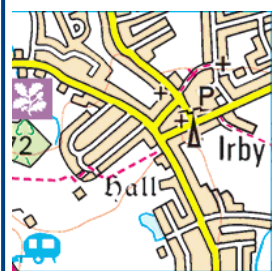
Thursday July 5th, 19.30



LIVERPOOL'S WELSH CONNECTIONS



By Richard Baker
Ex-Countryside Ranger



September Walk

A daytime walk of interest finishing at Barking Mad in Royden Park

Led by John Heath

Date/Start to be confirmed

Please pass this Newsletter on to a friend or neighbour to encourage interest in our society. We need more people to join ITPAS at £5.00 per household. In this way we can keep the subscription costs at this rate and continue to do the work we do for the community. The £5.00 is excellent value giving you two Newsletters each year plus four free talks in addition to obtaining grants, monitoring planning and organising actions on your behalf in our area. If every household got one other to join it would make a huge difference.

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