

# BELPER CIVIC FORUM ACTIVITIES 2012-2013

## WORKING WITH GROUPS + ORGANISATIONS

### **Belper Totally Locally**

We have had initial contact with this new grouping of local traders and businesses.

### **Coppice Brook Group (BCF group)**

This group is leading a series of walks for the full length of the Brook. We supported the second leg of the walk upstream from Walker Bottom Rec in May 2012. The final leg will be part of the Walking Festival Fri 31 May *see below*.

### **PSICA Committee**

*Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas*

BCF is represented on this committee which gives grants in the Conservation Area.

### **Belper Channels group (BCF group)**

This is a new initiative looking at the history, condition and future of the pathways which criss-cross the town; locating them; mapping them; recording them; facilitating improvements; proposing new ones; maybe producing a walking map of the town.

### **Belper and District Road Safety Committee**

A BCF rep attends regularly.

### **Belper + Milford Community Group**

We maintain our links through their rep on the BCF Exec.

### **Local Listing group (BCF group)**

This is a long-running attempt to collect a strong list of new 'Local List' of buildings, structures and open spaces of local importance which are currently unprotected by national listing status. We are looking for more people to get involved to ensure that all the properties which should rightfully be included have been.

### **Civic Voice**

We maintain our membership of Civic Voice which took over from the Civic Trust.

### **Strutt Centre**

We have continued to maintain links with the now-independent community building – a project which BCF initiated. Generally the Centre is where we have members and public meetings.

### **SAVE Britain's Heritage**

BCF is a member of this important national campaigning body.

### **A6 traffic group**

BCF members attended a very useful meeting convened by local residents on Bridge Street with the Highways Department and the County Councillor for Highways to demonstrate the problems and kick start the process of overcoming them.

### **Belper Transition Town**

BCF maintains strong links with this very active force in the town, occasionally running joint activities. They are a partner in BCF's Neighbourhood Plan initiative.

## EVENTS

Adrian Farmer showed some wonderful old photos at a members meeting. Each photo was matched with the contemporary scene so that you could see how it had changed. On another occasion, Pat Morriss of the Friends of Cromford Canal gave an insight into that very successful organisation (membership 880!)

## MATLOCK + WIRKSWORTH DAY OUT

The 2012 visit, hosted by a local Civic Society, was made to two local towns to find out more about their history and how their Civic Society works to preserve the heritage and influence new development. Both gave very generously of their time. In contrast, this year's trip (29 June) is to the much more distant, but fascinating, Frome in Somerset.

## FOOD FESTIVAL + 'LOCAL LIST'

Our 2012 was entirely filled by the just-completed Meadows Edge model. People were asked to identify marked buildings and a prize was won at the end of the day. We continued gathering candidates for the buildings and structures we plan to nominate to AVBC for a adoption on a new 'Local List' of properties of local importance which are unprotected by national listing status.

## BUILDINGS AT RISK

### **Old Grammar School, Chapel Street**

This rescue of an important building from dereliction by a local business has been recognised this year by the Civic Forum's first annual award.

### **Ex-Tomes shop, Bridge Street**

We responded to concerns expressed by members about the condition of this building by making a formal request for action to AVBC. We understand that work is finally underway.

### **Swiss Tea Rooms, River Gardens**

AVBC are maintaining backing for the scheme which they chose as a result of the architectural competition last year. Unfortunately this was not the 'people's' choice, nor was it the choice of the Friends of the River Gardens or the Civic Forum. It is understood that a planning application is imminent. BCF continues to press for either refurbishment of the existing building or failing that, the Latham Architect's new build scheme which we believed was far superior.

## RESPONSE TO CONSULTATIONS

### Amber Valley long-term planning policy

We continue to consult our members and the public and provide detailed feedback to AVBC on their Core Strategy (government have now reverted to calling this the 'Local Plan' again!). We provided a detailed response to the draft Housing Growth Strategy and wait to hear the result of the consultation.

### Central government relaxation of planning laws

We responded to the consultation on this which will allow, among other things, 8 metre extensions without planning permission in non-Conservation Areas.

### Proposed new Field Lane Leisure Centre

Planning consent was granted some time ago. We continue to raise awareness of the considerable issues this development presents. We made a detailed formal objection to the application. We hope that the question of a new leisure centre will be a major component of discussions on a Belper Neighbourhood Plan.

### Closure of public toilets in the town

BCF weighed in with its views on this issue. It looks as if AVBC may bow to public opinion and re-open the Strutt Street WCs – to everyone's relief!

## PLANNING

### 62 King Street (currently sweet shop)

BCF objected to change of use which would have allowed this attractive, strategically-placed, shop to become a bank or similar business, rather than a retail shop. We were pleased when permission to change was refused.

### Replacement windows on non-listed buildings

A debate is ongoing about the potential for hard and fast guidelines on replacement windows in the conservation area following the approval by AVBC of UPVC windows in some instances. BCF would like to do some detailed work on this but time has as yet not allowed!

### Other planning issues

We monitor all Belper & Milford applications and some have been responded to. Issues such as the New Look shopfront and Milford Weir fish pass ensure we always have a varied agenda at the BCF executive!

### Planning Workshop

Successful workshop for learning about the planning system through playing the different roles in real Belper proposed developments (Mill Lane and Nailers Way). It is planned to re-run this workshop (especially as the planning system has just been greatly altered).

## NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (TOWN MASTERPLAN)

This is a government initiative to devolve local planning issues down to 'parish' level. A NP would give Belper the opportunity to develop the town masterplan for which BCF has fought for so long. The NP would have to be led by the Town Council and they have responded positively, but wish BCF to get the ball rolling. A successful open meeting in October elicited a lot of interest and a good deal of work

has been put into getting to the next stage of delivering a detailed proposal to the Town Council prior to asking AVBC to apply for the necessary funding from government.

We are collecting details of individuals and organisations interested in joining a steering group to progress this vitally important project.

## MEADOWS EDGE

### the site between the A6 and the meadows largely owned by Tesco

#### We continue our very active involvement in the future of this site – so important for the town as a whole.

Our alternative vision for the Meadows Edge site *Belper at the Crossroads 2* is still in print. This and *Belper at the Crossroads 1* (which set out the main issues and planning context for the site) can be viewed on our website.

**Development Brief** This year we put a good deal of resources into supporting the excellent consultancy employed by AVBC to start anew the Development Brief SPD (Supplementary Planning Document) – 'a completely fresh start'. Whilst you never win every point, we were generally delighted with the outcome which, in rejecting the need for a large new superstore, fully endorsed the recent AVBC-commissioned Retail Study into shopping requirements in the town.

**Meadows Edge model** 2012 saw the completion of the Lottery and Rotary Club-funded Meadows Edge model, built by local firm Poco Design – this was ready for the final stages of the SPD public consultation and was very well received. Since then BCF members have taken the model to schools and had a stall at Strutts during Discovery Days. Next we are due to take it on a 'thank-you' visit to the Rotary Club who were the first to put their faith in the idea. The model is available to any group, business, school or public authority who wishes to borrow it.

## SOME DIARY DATES FOR 2013

- 31 May COPPICE BROOK WALK meet 6.30pm Whitemoor Medical Centre
- 29 June Annual fact-finding DAY OUT: to Frome, Somerset
- 10 July MEMBERS MEETING history walk around area of railway/brook adjacent Strutts
- 14 July FOOD FESTIVAL BCF will again have a stall – looking for volunteers to help staff it!
- 14+15 Sept MARKET PLACE EXHIBITION for Heritage Open Days at No 28 Market Place
- w/c 26 Oct WORLD HERITAGE SITE DISCOVERY DAYS Civic Forum event to be confirmed

