

WYKE BECK WAY COMMUNITY FORUM

Centre Manager's Report to Aug.09 Trustees and Forum

'How Green is Our Valley' Conference – June 09

- 1** Our key work to report on since we last met in April 09 is the organisation of and the outcome from the Valley Conference. Some 73 delegates attended the event which measured by several other factors other than attendance, was judged by David and I to have been satisfactorily successful. The programme for the day albeit intensive, worked well and several delegates specifically said how much they enjoyed the dialogue and speakers' contributions. Roger did an outstanding job chairing the meeting and maintaining adherence to the programme. The presentation by the seven Forum members which kick started the Conference worked very well and again from feedback I received was very much appreciated by delegates. I think this one aspect of the day's programme alone has helped considerably to demonstrate that we are establishing an effective and informed community perspective for the Wyke Beck Valley.
- 2** We were relieved to have all 11 speakers turn up and give a good account of themselves. Both Cllrs Andrew Carter and Stewart Golton went out of their way to demonstrate their willingness to support our efforts and to have an open door to hearing about any future concerns. We have already taken Cllr Carter up on this offer as you will see from para. 11 below.
- 3** We had some very good and highly relevant issues on display covering in particular the revised EASEL Action Plan and new proposals for the Wyke Beck Way cycleway and footpath routes from the City Council. Along with displays from Viv Gibbons covering our joint work with schools, there was our work with Groundwork Leeds plus a small display showing the origins of the Forum. This all added positively towards creating a vibrant atmosphere in the Conference room and much discussion during the breaks. Our thanks to all those who contributed to this work. We shall be looking to devote a separate site to the Conference on our web site.
- 4** The work we are getting off the ground with young people through school contacts was well expressed at the Conference with an excellent presentation by Nick O'Keefe from The David Young Academy, and the attendance of Angela Diskin, Art Teacher. and five pupils from Corpus Christi High School.
- 5** We had excellent involvement both as speakers and delegates from all strands of Leeds City Council's officers. Their attendance and contribution on the day was much appreciated and I think this bodes well for our future partnership work with LCC. I know from personal feedback that the officers felt they had very much benefitted from the day's dialogue with us and the depth of the conference content. I believe that the Conference has enabled us to convince key Council officers that we do represent a legitimate informed community perspective on key Valley issues and that our views and concerns matter.
- 6** I hope that members noted that we have updated our leaflet and that they liked the launch of our 'Valley Pride' banner and logo which I believe can be taken forward to help us promote a number of other projects and events in the future.
- 7** We did have some relative disappointments, due in part to the small scale, voluntary, nature of our organisation and the simple fact that there was just not enough time at our disposal to follow up and chase an even better attendance. We were convinced that with more time and help we could have topped the 100 mark; we know of several people who said they would like to have attended but learned of the event too late to make arrangements. Offsetting this aspect of the day, was the fact that with only limited publicity in the local press we were contacted by a number of people who, whilst not able to attend the Conference, are interested in joining up with us. And we were pleased to be joined in the morning by Jonathon Lindh for East

Leeds FM Radio who recorded interviews with a number of people including the students. These can now be heard on ELFM web site, 'Wyke Beck Community Forum' (sic).

- 8 Our thanks must go to Leeds Community Foundation who grant aided the cost of running the Conference and to Corpus Christi Social Club who very positively helped us arrange the Conference in their premises so successfully. Again many people attending expressed their surprise to find such an excellent conference facility right bang in the middle of the Valley. Finally David and I place on record the help we received from those of you who spoke and represented the Forum at the Conference, plus a big thank you to Jo Timbs who printed out the delegate lists from the ever-changing information we kept emailing to her and then came along on the day to run the lap top presentations for us; and to Helen Taylor whose IT expertise was invaluable to us in putting the above 'powerpoint' presentations together.

EASEL Area Action Plan

- 9 Those of you who attended the Conference may have seen the City Council's display showing the revised Action Area proposals for EASEL. This revised version follows consideration of observations and objections which were submitted by the public following extensive consultation during 2007. The Forum had then submitted a range of objections and we have invited Lora Hughes of the Planning Dept. to the August Forum meeting to talk us through the changes they have made, hopefully picking up on the points we submitted.

Skelton /Aire Valley Action Area

- 10 Intensive activity at a relatively advanced planning stage is now underway in this part of the Valley. Arising from the Conference. Richard Askham of the Planning Dept. who is leading on this work has invited the Forum to discuss with them what they are up to and to hopefully convince us that they are taking on board the key ecological and green open space issues which the Forum has specific views on. Despite difficulties in getting this meeting off the ground this is now due to take place before the August Forum meeting to which a full verbal report will be given. My thanks to Anne German for arranging this.

Skelton Lake area Cycle/Foot Bridge

- 11 Anne German was keen to pursue with Councillor Carter the issue of the long delay in getting this scheme implemented and was determined to put this to Cllr Carter following the positive support he expressed for our aims at the Conference. I persuaded Anne to link up with Peter Dyson and arrange to meet Cllr Carter in their capacity as representing the Forum. Anne, Rodney and Peter met up with Councillor Carter in early July and they will report back to the Forum on the outcome of this discussion.

Cycleway Proposals for the Wyke Beck Way

- 12 Again those of you at the Conference may have seen the proposals on display which the City Council was consulting on. They raise important issues for the Forum to consider and as a result we have invited Tim Parry LCC Cycling Officer to the August meeting to discuss them. We were unable to address the consultation as quickly as LCC officers would have liked but David obtained larger scale drawings for local areas and circulated to member groups. We lodged a formal holding objection and have put on the agenda for discussion at the August Forum meeting, hopefully giving everyone time to consider and to ensure we are fully on board with the Councils proposals.
- 13 Our main concern are likely to be the detailed design and specification of the new routes i.e. are the alignments of the routes sympathetically designed for the landscape they pass through and is there any alternative surfacing to tarmac possible especially through the more attractive and wooded parts of the routes chosen. I also fear that the proposals to show large parts of the Valley accessed via on road routes

running along the Valley has a cost cutting objective and not a holistic one which should aim to maximise the potential to take cycle and footpath users along an exclusive green corridor route.

[I hope those of you who belong to organisations in membership of the Forum, take the opportunity to see and to consider these proposals *before* the August Forum meeting and come prepared to advise us of how your groups feel about them].

Task Group progress

- 14 One of the inevitable casualties of spending much of our available time on the Conference has meant that we have not progressed some Task group matters as much as we would have liked so I will try and arrange to give a verbal update at the Forum on this. This particularly relates to the open space /recreation Task Group and how we are aiming to involve a range of community contacts and groups to make our own assessment of what local people think about the Valley from an open space angle. Our aim, with Helen Taylor's assistance, is to utilise her recent training with CABE Space using an assessment exercise called Space Shaper, to help local people express their views on local space close to where they live in the Valley. I would still like to try and bring this work to some conclusion this year perhaps with a community day workshop at Corpus Christi Social Club. Leeds Community Foundation has agreed in principal to fund this initiative if we can agree more precisely what we aim to do and achieve. In October we intend taking members along to meet with John Thorp, LCC Civic Architect, to have a workshop session to explore his vision for Leeds future urban form relative to east and south east Leeds and his proposals for 'Wyke Beck Valley Park' in particular.

Administration etc.

- 15 Some of you will know that East Leeds Family Learning Centre where we have had a small office for the past 4 years is in the process of being closed down. We have therefore moved to The Henry Barran Centre where at the time of writing this report a pile of furniture, files and equipment is stored awaiting conversion into something resembling an office. By the time we all meet up at the August Forum I hope to confirm that we do in fact have a functioning office, together with the contact details.

Eric Cowin

July 09