

OXBOROUGH DOORSTEP GREEN ACTION GROUP (ODGAG)

Minutes of Meeting on Wednesday 19th March 2003, 7pm **Venue: Flint House**

Present: Charles Ashley, Chris Heatley, Susan Hernandez, Henry Lambert, Chris Mathews, Barbara Pritchard, John Voaden, Alastair Rhind, Rural Projects Officer Breckland Council. Alan McGee was unable to attend.

- 1) Henry apologized for not making the previous meetings due to work commitments. The Chairman, Charles, welcomed Alastair to the meeting.
- 2) Treasurer, Chris H. reports that Breckland Council has paid £500 grant straight into the building society account, so ODGAG is now solvent.
- 3) The report on the beech trees from Broadland Tree Services has been received, good news: *'These trees are mature and will be prone to gale damage in the future and increasing amounts of dead wood from die back. I recommend a crown cleaning, removing dead wood, crossing branches, snags etc at this stage.'* The invoice totals £141 including VAT. It was agreed that Ian should **not** be asked to carry out any necessary work to the trees, as he has already been busy planting on the green. It was suggested that ODGAG tender for 3 quotes from tree surgeons, only we must agree on just exactly what the quote should cover. Charles asked Susan to send a copy of the tree report to Colin Cooch, Breckland Council, requesting consent for any necessary work, although it is understood that repairs (which should preferably take place at the end of next Autumn) will not be made until the land has been bought.
- 4) Charles will contact Nick Moys, Breckland Council Planning Officer in due course.
- 5) Charles congratulated the Action Group on the production, distribution and analysis of the questionnaire. 59% of the village has responded (that's 61 households) and Giles Merritt from the Countryside Agency has commended the high response rate, which shows that there is good to strong support for the Doorstep Green:
 - The majority support for creating a green was noted as were the strong preferences for new hedges, fencing and gates, a conservation area, seating, litter bins and a children's recreation area.
 - With just 59% of the respondees supporting a pathway, the Group considered that maybe people had been considering a tarmac path, when in fact a natural walkway had been in mind: maybe hogging with shingle pressed down, which could be edged with wood? Alastair thought that the C.A. would expect any pathway to be accessible and finished to a good specification, which could be quite costly. Just where should the pathway lie? (a) from bus stop to village hall (b) from bus stop, along to the main road and then adjacent to the main road ending at the village hall (c) adjacent to the main road, providing a safe pathway for walkers –possibly a real benefit(d) from bus stop to seating points (e) from bus stop to pub and village hall. Obviously not everyone's needs would be met, but Henry suggested that a pathway bisecting the green would cause problems for car parking at annual events. Maybe the gates should be re-installed at the village hall end, which could be closed to indicate no parking. There was the additional worry that once the green is established, travellers might chose to camp there!
 - A lot of 'any other comments' were received: (a) Regarding the concerns of safety issues surrounding a children's play area, it was agreed that very high insurance costs would probably prohibit the inclusion of play equipment. However, this should not put off any villagers suggesting that Oxborough needs a playground: we need to hear everyone's opinion. Charles stressed that the principal use of a recreation area was a space to play in, which would be a worthwhile feature to promote. Maybe a simple mound could be constructed, but whatever the ideas, the play area should be fenced around. (b) The suggestion of a village sculpture, such as welded architectural shapes made by an artist in Hilborough, could be included in the proposed

plan. It was suggested that a mention of a landscape or sculpture feature in the proposed plan would give the villagers a chance to support or oppose such an idea.

(c) There are a couple of telegraph poles bordering the green, which detract from the rural setting; it could be aesthetically pleasing to have the lines removed and buried, which might improve the appearance of the green and might be feasible to build into the funding. Chris H. will contact B.T. and present our case, stressing the point that the land is being bought for the community of Oxborough to create a village green and that the continued presence of telegraph poles and lines will seriously undermine our intentions and detract from the 'green' effect.

(d) Many of the comments involved the words 'grass should be cut on a regular basis' – Chris M. informed the committee that County Property Services might be able to charge just £150 per annum for 7 cuts.

6) For the Open Day, Alastair kindly volunteered to reproduce the results of the questionnaire and print either an A1 or A0 site plan (or a couple, showing just what the village green will look like, according to the results of the questionnaire), all of which would be displayed in the village hall. Also, a quantity of A4-size plans, upon which villagers would be encouraged to design their own version of the green, using coloured pens. The villagers will be invited to chose their favourite plan (or/and design their own). A register of names will be made, as and when villagers attend throughout the day; the opportunity to take photos, especially should children attend, must not be missed! The villagers might be guided around the hall as follows: >sign in>>examine result>>>view site plans (water colours?)>>>>draw own design of village green>>>>>volunteer voluntary labour/maintenance work/fundraising/promotion/serving on the steering committee – leave name and telephone number? Susan will design a flyer to remind the village of the Open Day on March 22nd. Display around the village. The committee agreed the following stewarding times:

10am-11am: John and Chris H. 11am-12noon: Henry. 1pm-2pm: Barbara and Charles (possibly). 2pm-3pm: Chris Matthews. Alastair agreed to turn up early to help set up.

7) Treasurer Chris reported that Shanks & McEwan has turned down request for funding as Oxborough is not within 5 miles of a waste management site. However, WREN seems to be a more likely source, although the application form is quite tricky, involving securing a 3rd party funder to pay 11% of the total WREN grant. Alastair confirms that Breckland Council will most likely meet this 11%, although the actual figure must be known by May 1st (to reach 6 June deadline), and he stressed that the Breckland Council offer is subject to all the other funding being in place; meanwhile Chris should inform WREN that ODGAG intend to pursue the grant by their deadline. WREN will only require a business plan if we apply for more than £25K from them; Alastair has volunteered to help with this if necessary. Chris has also applied to Shell Better Britain, for a maximum of £2000, and he has been informed that this will most likely be granted. Charles thanked both Chris and Alastair for putting in so much time over this. Conclusion: the biggest difficulty will be determining the actual costs of the project.

8) The landscape architect recommended by the Countryside Agency, Rik Morrish, has submitted a very lengthy reply, detailing his proposition of just how the doorstep green should be developed and his fee (£1475 + VAT + stage 3 costs amounting to at least 10% of the capital costs of the project). This has come as quite a shock; the next landscape architect to visit will be Ivan Robinson (01284-830181) on Monday 24th March at 3.30pm and Chris H., Henry, Chris M. and Susan will attend at the green. Maybe a third should be engaged. It was suggested that Mr. Robinson should hold off giving his proposed fee, until after the Open Day, when we shall meet on Wednesday 26th March, 7pm at Chris H. home, in order to discuss the results. THEN prepare terms of reference detailing exactly what designs should be drawn and including a request as to how long it would take for each of them to prepare the design and costings. A quantity surveyor would be able to calculate material costs from a

well-designed plan. (villager Ruthe Gray could be approached re. drawing up a village green as she is a professional horticulturalist).

- 9) The results of the Open Day could be exhibited in the village (the Church nave, the pub!), illustrating just what the green could look like and inviting final comments.
- 10) The signed draft constitution has been passed to Chris H for copying (WREN require a yes or no on whether ODGAG has a constitution)
- 11) Details of the 'Doorstep Green-Let's Spring into Action' day at Carbrooke on 5/04/03, 9.30m-3pm., have been passed on to Henry, who may attend.
- 12) Chris H. requested the committee to record the number of hours spent working on ODGAG, including delivering and collecting the questionnaire, collating and analyzing the results, conferring with funding authorities etc.
- 13) The landscape architect suggested that ODGAG might acquire an ecological survey and Chris H. has emailed the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, still waiting for a reply. Barbara suggested that as Ian has had the green registered under ESA (DEFRA) that a report might be readily available for inspection.
- 14) Charles volunteered to bring Ian up to date with the progress and to ask him who holds the registered title for the land.
- 15) The next meeting will be next Wednesday 26th March at Chris. H., starting 7pm (see point 8.)
- 16) Write to landscape architects the next day, requesting proposed fees, timescale of response and costings.
- 17) The follow-on meeting will be Friday 4th April, by which time responses should have been received from landscape architects: decide which L.A. to engage, write to confirm appointment by April 7th, requesting a response by Wednesday 23rd April. This will give us just over a week to bring the total figures for the project together, in time for Breckland Council deadline May 1st.
- 18) Three quotes will be needed for conveyancing of the land at a price of £12,500. Henry will approach two solicitors and Charles one other.