



SKELMANTHORPE COMMUNITY ACTION GROUP

ANNUAL REPORT – 2006/2007

The Group's Objectives

Skelmanthorpe Community Action Group (SCAG) was established at a public meeting held on Wednesday 16 August 2006 at St Aidan's Parish Church, Radcliffe Street, Skelmanthorpe.

The group has two principal objectives:

1. To fight any building development proposals that would damage Skelmanthorpe's green spaces.
2. To act as a voice for the village on issues impacting on the quality of life within the village, in situations where individuals acting alone might not be heard

Election of Officers and Committee Members

The Group's officers and management committee were elected by an open vote at the meeting.

Chairman	Christopher Ward
Vice Chairman	Richard Graham
Treasurer	Carole Broadbent

Committee members	Pat Oliver	Susan McDonagh	Philip Wheeler
	Wilfred Ryden	Elaine Knight	Ruth Whitehead
	Ann Ward	John Eccles	Nadine Bond

The following committee members were co-opted during the year:

Howard Singleton
Jean Richardson

During the year Nadine Bond, and John Eccles had to tender their resignations

REPORT COVERING THE GROUP'S ACTIVITIES OVER THE PAST YEAR

SCAG has established a regular newsletter which is distributed to all members, to keep them abreast of the Group's activities. The following report summarises the key activities over the past twelve months.

1. Response to the consultative document put forward by Kirklees for meeting Central Government House building targets

The catalyst for the founding of **SCAG** was the publishing of the Kirklees consultative document setting out five options for meeting the Central Government house building targets. Option E in this document proposed that 13,500 houses should be built on green land within the Skelmanthorpe- Denby Dale area.

SCAG mounted a successful campaign against this option, which was eventually rejected. The report produced by Kirklees Planning Department which detailed the responses received to their proposals clearly showed that Skelmanthorpe had by far the largest response per head of population in the Kirklees area. The responses were almost all critical of the proposals. There is no doubt that the **SCAG** initiative was instrumental in turning real concern in the community into positive action by encouraging people to make their views known and providing an easy means to do so.

In addition to encouraging people to write to the Council **SCAG** conducted a strong publicity campaign through the local newspapers to draw attention to the strong levels of opposition to any encroachment on the green belt by the people of Skelmanthorpe.

However, the recent decision by Central Government to increase the house-building target for Kirklees to 40,000 poses an even greater threat to the green belt and to other green spaces. SCAG has developed plans in preparation for a campaign to fight any new initiatives that threaten the green spaces around the village.

2. The SCAG website

The group has established a web site to aid communication with the community and other interested parties about the Group's activities. The website contains details of key contacts and information about the Group's objectives and the actions taken to achieve them.

3. The Bovis Homes development

SCAG was formed after the planning process for the old allotments site had begun, and was therefore able to do little to prevent the development. **SCAG** did, however, help local people to protest to some aspects of the development and had two committee members present at the

planning meeting. As a result some changes to the original plans were made, including a reduction in the number of houses to be built and in the positioning of the three story houses. Since then **SCAG** has been responsible for working with Bovis Homes to remove the parking problems posed by workmen on the site and to improve access to the footpaths during construction.

4. SCAG conducted a village survey

The survey's objective was to establish the main causes or sources of concern for Skelmanthorpe residents. The two most important findings were:

Concerns about the increasing levels of traffic in the village. This was linked to concerns about speeding in the 30 mph zones and parking problems.

Concerns about the lack of visible policing. This was linked to rising levels of anti-social behaviour especially among young people.

SCAG brought all the issues revealed by the village survey to the attention of the relevant departments and publicised the issues with articles in the local newspapers.

5. School Crossing Protest.

We are particularly proud of our involvement in a campaign to win a school crossing for pupils crossing Commercial Road. Parents at the school sought our help to overturn a decision by Kirklees that a crossing was not justified. **SCAG** supported a protest rally on 22nd January and mounted a publicity campaign in the local newspapers.

These initial efforts failed to win over the Council but after further pressure it was agreed that a new traffic survey would be conducted to assess the need for a crossing. Following this survey the Council has agreed to install both a crossing and a crossing warden. However, funds won't be available until 2009/10 so **SCAG** is still campaigning for this to be brought forward.

Our thanks to our local councillors Elaine Ward and Jim Dodds for all their support with this issue.

6. Safety issues at the Junctions of Commercial Road, Station Road and Cumberworth Road

SCAG campaigned with our local KMC Councillors to get safety improvements carried out at this busy junction. Sight lines were hindered by vehicles using the parking bays near the junction. In addition large numbers of heavy goods vehicles using Station Road were causing a problem both at the junction and where the road narrows to go over Park Gate Bridge.

As a result the offending parking bays have been closed and signs erected warning drivers that Station Road is not suitable for heavy vehicles.

7. Improvements to the Skelmanthorpe to Park Gate footpath

The **SCAG** campaign for this footpath to be cleared and re surfaced was successful and the work was completed in the New Year.

8. Flooding Risk

In the New Year **SCAG** brought the attention of both Kirklees and the Environment Agency to the flood risk posed by Park Gate Bridge, which had become silted up, and of the increased flow of surface water into the Baildon Dyke from the Jones Homes development on Station Road.

Our warnings about flooding proved accurate in July when the Baildon Dyke burst its banks flooding several homes in Park Gate. Since then **SCAG** has continued to campaign on behalf of Park Gate residents for the bridge to be dredged to improve the flow of water at times of heavy rain. **SCAG** has received strong support from our local councillors.

While our campaign has not yet resulted in improvements to the bridge we have succeeded in getting additional drainage on the bridge to prevent the frequent incidents of flooding to the road at times of heavy rain.

9. Strike Lane Development

Local residents concerned about a proposed housing development at the Piggeries on Strike Lane approached **SCAG** seeking help in their efforts to stop the development. **SCAG** supported the residents in their objections to the development and the planning application was overturned.

10. Liaison with the Community Police Officers

SCAG worked closely with Sgt Ian Hardy who coordinated the community police team, in trying to help reduce some of the anti social behaviour causing concern to residents. Increased levels of policing did improve the situation. Sadly, changes within the police force have resulted in Sgt Ian being posted elsewhere. It will take some time before the replacement officer gets to know the area and the main trouble spots.

11. Social events

SCAG has held regular social events as both a means of keeping members up to date about the Group's activities and as a means of raising funds to pay for the web site and printing documents. These events have proven to be both very popular and a good source of funds to enable **SCAG** to continue its work..

