

Skelmanthorpe Community Action Group.

Annual report 2008- 2009.

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 a committee.

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

Chair – Helen France

Treasurer- Carole Broadbent.

Committee members – Pat Oliver, Susan Mc Donagh, Wilfred Ryden, Elaine Knight, Ann Ward, Christopher Ward, Richard Graham, Howard Singleton and Jacob Haigh.

Philip Wheeler and Jean Richardson resigned during the course of the year.

Report covering the group's activities over the past year.

The following report summarises the key activities over the past twelve months.

1. Kirklees plans for meeting government house-building targets.

The 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.

In February Kirklees published a new consultation document setting out the core strategy for meeting the Local Development Framework targets. These again contained proposals to build an excessive number of houses in Skelmanthorpe, which would have more than doubled the size of the present village. Given that fighting such plans

is the principle objective for SCAG, much of the year to date has been taken up by mounting a campaign against the new proposals. We are pleased to record that our efforts have been successful.

SCAG ran a campaign to raise awareness of this threat by:

- Delivering a leaflet to every household calling on local people to voice their opposition.
- Raising the issue in a number of articles in the local press.
- Holding a public meeting on 6 May in conjunction with SOS, KORS and Denby Parish Community Action Group to discuss the issue. Some 200 people attended the meeting and overwhelmingly rejected all the options. Neither of our local MP's Mary Creagh or Shahid Malik attended the meeting or provided any support.
- Involving local councillors and requesting their support to oppose the plan. SCAG would like to thank the councillors who gave their support and raised their own objections to the proposals.
- Asking our local MP to support our objections. Sadly Mary Creagh did not actively support us.
- Forming an alliance with other action groups in Slaithwaite, Fixby, Linthwaite, Holmfirth, Honley and Golcar who also oppose the options put forward. These other groups particularly the group in Slaithwaite made a huge contribution to raising opposition to the LDF proposals.

As a result of the 2800 responses to the consultation document, received by Kirklees, being overwhelmingly negative, they announced the withdrawal of the plan for further consideration. It is not expected that any new proposals will be put forward before 2010.

2. The SCAG website.

The group maintains a web site to aid communication with the community and other interested parties about the groups' activities. The website contains details of key contacts and information about the groups objectives and the actions taken to achieve them. The website can be found at www.skelmanthorpeaction.org.uk

3. The Bovis Homes development.

SCAG has continued to monitor the Bovis Homes development and has been instrumental in pushing Kirklees to ensure the development complies with the planning consent. One of the main remaining issues is the lack of action on the road safety provisions in the planning decision. SCAG continues to press for all the specified safety measures to be implemented.

4. SCAG village survey.

SCAG continues to follow up the village survey, which highlighted several areas of major concern to local people, the two most significant being:

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

SCAG made a presentation about the speeding issue to Denby Dale Parish Council on 4 November, setting out a range of actions that could help to reduce the speeding problem. SCAG also involved the Police Liaison Committee in an attempt to get greater action taken about speeding in the village.

SCAG has continued to work with the local community police to try to get action taken about anti social behaviour.

Both these issues are part of on going campaigns for SCAG and we will continue to press for more action from both Kirklees and the police on both these subjects.

5.School crossing.

We are still waiting for Kirklees to install the long promised school crossing on Commercial Road. Kirklees promised to provide this crossing during 2009 but as yet it has not materialised. SCAG is pressing the responsible departments to keep their promises.

6.Flooding at Parkgate.

Following the floods in July 2007 SCAG has mounted a continuous campaign to persuade the Environment Agency and Kirklees Council to clear silt and debris at the Baildon Dike Bridge in Parkgate, which was the cause of the flooding.

SCAG succeeded in getting the bridge cleared in August 2008 but heavy winter rains have again caused silt to collect under the bridge. Attempts to get the bridge cleared again have been rejected by Kirklees who report that they have no budget available for flood prevention work this year. This is despite recent reports by the Environment Agency stating that spending on flood prevention needs to double.

SCAG will continue to actively pursue this issue.

7.Poor road surfaces. SCAG has campaigned actively for repairs to local roads, especially the repair of potholes following the winter. We succeeded in getting the council to repair a number of local roads. We are still campaigning for Station road and Park Lane to be resurfaced.

8. Wood Street Junction.

SCAG campaigned to make the junction of Wood Street and Huddersfield Road safer. A combination of parked vehicles and poor sight lines make the junction dangerous. Wood Street is used as a short cut by commuters, making it both busy and dangerous at peak times.

As a result of SCAG's campaign KMC are now investigating the possibility of putting double yellow lines at either side of the junction with Huddersfield Road. SCAG continues to progress this issue.

9. Liaison with the Neighbour hood Community Police Officers.

SCAG has worked closely with our two community police officers, holding routine monthly meetings, which have helped to reduce the levels of anti social behaviour, causing concern to residents.

The substantial increase of the neighbourhood police team, in 2009, and especially the allocation of two officers dedicated to Skelmanthorpe, has allowed a daily presence of officers 'on the beat'. This coupled with SCAG's liaison on specific problem hot spots and our encouragement to residents to speak directly to the officers has paid dividends.

10. Liaison with other action groups. As a result of the success of our campaign to fight the LDF proposals SCAG is working to form an alliance with all the other action groups in Kirklees. We believe this will place us in a much stronger position to fight any new proposals, which threaten our community.

11. Skelmanthorpe stones.

SCAG has been working to try to have boundary marker stones erected at the entrances to the village. The major obstacle of public liability insurance has now been overcome and we hope the stones will be erected by the end of 2009. Denby Dale Area Committee has worked hard on our behalf and has now taken over the contractual responsibility for the project and also any insurance liability.

12. Skate Park. SCAG has been in communication with Kirklees about the problems of anti social behaviour at the Skate Park. Kirklees has responded by proposing to move the Skate Park a short distance. SCAG believes this is a very expensive option, which will not solve the problem. We are now involved in further discussions to try to get a better solution to the problem.

13. Parking at Shelley College. SCAG has been in contact with the local police about the problems caused by students parking their cars in the road near the college. During term time this section of road is very dangerous, especially for the students. SCAG would like to see more provision of off road parking, and the parking on the road restricted to the side of the road away from the college.

14. Village notice board.

SCAG has successfully campaigned for a new village notice board and this has now been erected in the co-op car park. The notice board can be used by any local organisation, and SCAG is managing the board.

15. Help for the community.

SCAG continues to help local residents who are experiencing problems and are finding it difficult to get remedial action themselves. One of SCAG's founding aims is to act as a voice for the community where people acting alone may not be able to obtain a hearing or the action they seek.

16. Skelmanthorpe Youth & Community Association.

SCAG has been liaising with the association throughout the year in conjunction with our Neighbourhood Police Team and offering support. The centre is due to be operational during the autumn of 2009.

17. 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. We gratefully acknowledge the time and effort of members of the community in helping to make these events such a success.