

Skelmanthorpe Community Action Group.

Annual report 2007- 2008.

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.

Chairman – Christopher Ward

Vice Chairman- Howard.

Treasurer- Carole Broadbent.

Committee members – Pat Oliver, Susan Mc Donagh, Philip Wheeler, Wilfred Ryden, Elaine Knight, Ruth Whitehead, Ann Ward, Jean Richardson, Helen France and Richard Graham.

Ruth Whitehead resigned during the course of the year.

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 targets for affordable housing.

SCAG responded to the consultative document published by Kirklees covering targets and proposals for the construction of affordable housing. SCAG considered the

proposals to be flawed and produced a response raising concerns and putting forward alternative proposals. SCAG is still awaiting the publication of the final proposals on this issue.

2. 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. SCAG has developed plans in preparation for a campaign to fight any new initiatives that threaten the green spaces around the village. SCAG is still awaiting the publication of the definitive plans to meet these targets, which have been delayed several times over the past year.

The recent collapse of the housing market means that it is unlikely any further large developments will be proposed in the near future. However, the area will be a prime target for development when the economy revives and SCAG is determined to be ready to fight any unwanted developments when they arise.

3. 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

4. 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. In the process SCAG discovered that large construction companies routinely neglect to pay necessary fees to the council amounting to many thousands of pounds each year. Kirklees Council is now taking action to remedy the situation.

In addition SCAG has pressed the developers to clean the roads, keep construction workers vehicles off the main road and repair damage to the main road caused by construction work.

5. SCAG village survey.

SCAG continues to follow up last year's 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 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. Since then SCAG has worked with the local Community Police to try to reduce anti social behaviour. The main difficulty has been changes within the police force resulting in periods of the year when no Community Police Officer has been in place.

SCAG is currently working with all the relevant departments to seek ways of reducing the numbers of drivers speeding within the 30 mph limit.

6.School crossing.

We are particularly proud of our involvement in a campaign to win a school crossing for pupils crossing Station 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 22 January 2007 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 agreed to install both a crossing and a crossing warden. However, funds won't be available until 2009 .Our thanks to our local councillors Elaine Ward and Jim Dodds for all their support with this issue.

SCAG will press Kirklees to install this crossing at the earliest opportunity in 2009.

7. Flooding at Parkgate.

Following the floods in July 2007 SCAG has mounted a yearlong 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 last years flooding.

At first all departments involved refused to take any action on the grounds that removing the debris would not increase the flow of water under the bridge and that the work would not be cost effective. Following SCAG's persistence in contacting all the agencies involved plus local councillors and members of Parliament, Kirklees finally agreed to clear the bridge of obstructions.

The work was completed in early August and the newly cleared bridge coped with the heavy flow of water during the heavy rainstorms in early September. However, further debris collected under the bridge during this storm as a section of an old concrete ford was acting as a barrier and allowing debris to collect. Further action by SCAG resulted in this concrete being removed in September. It is hoped that this will now solve the problem.

The action at Parkgate is a perfect example of why there is a need for SCAG. Without the long-term efforts of SCAG it is unlikely any action would have been taken to prevent future flooding.

8. Strike Lane Development.

Following last year's successful objections to the proposed development on Strike Lane, new planning applications were submitted over the past twelve months. SCAG continued

to support local residents in their fight against this development and the latest planning application was withdrawn.

A major concern with any development on Strike Lane is the disposal of surface water. The flooding at Parkgate is partly caused by surface water from the Jones Homes development flowing into Baildon Dike, upstream of the bridge at Parkgate. Further developments would add even more water to the Dike and increase the risk of flooding.

In addition to the Strike Lane development SCAG helped local residents to successfully object to a proposed development on Huddersfield Road.

9. Liaison with the Community Police Officer.

SCAG worked closely with the community police officer 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 the community policeman being posted elsewhere. It will take some time before the replacement officer gets to know the area and the main trouble spots.

10. Skelmanthorpe stones.

SCAG has been working to try to have boundary marker stones erected at the entrances to the village. Good progress had been made with the project but there is now a major problem in arranging public liability cover for the project.

11. 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, please contact Mrs Jean Richardson, telephone 01484 864595.

12. 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.

13. 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.

