

FOXTON PARISH COUNCIL

Note of a Meeting between the Parish Council and Representatives of the Canal and River Trust/SEWP at the Robert Monk Hall 2pm 23rd January 2015

Present: Cllr M Wright (PC Chairman), Cllr M Ward, Cllr K Farnsworth, Cllr D Chambers, Mr John Best (SEWP Chairman), Ms Kathryn Dodington, (SEWP), Mr Neil Owen (CRT), Angela Hall (Clerk)

1. Apologies

Cllr M Hadley

2. Mr Best explained the structure of the CRT, which is now a charity and has all the duties and responsibilities formerly held by British Waterways (BW). There are also twelve regional partnerships and partnership boards. An important part of the role involves connections with and accountability to local neighbourhoods. Any ideas for development of the canal network or associated sites have to go before the Board of Trustees for discussion and approval.

3. Councillor Wright explained about the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), stressing that any plans for development at Foxton Locks need to be included. She also described concerns of Foxton residents about issues such as traffic and parking, some of which is due to people visiting the locks. Mr Best stated that the Foxton Locks Masterplan would probably not go ahead in its current form due to funding problems, the Inclined Plane would not be rebuilt but a digital version is a likely development. Development of the locks as a tourist destination is likely and businesses based at the locks would like a broader and longer season rather than an increase in visitor numbers. Councillor Wright raised further concerns of the Parish Council and local residents which include noise pollution, light pollution and cyclists on the towpath. A good neighbour policy would be useful. The Parish Council is concerned about protecting the peace and quiet of the area, local wildlife etc. Foxton village does not benefit commercially from visitors to the Locks.

4. Councillor Chambers suggested abolishing car park charges and Mr Owen agreed to take this issue back for further consideration. However this policy would affect the CRT's available income for maintenance etc. Councillor Wright said that Foxton parish needs to be an integral part of any plans for the Locks and that local residents feel that their way of life is under threat. It was emphasised that the Parish Council would like the CRT to be involved in the Neighbourhood Plan process but that no representative had attended the recent exhibition.

5. Mr Best pointed out that there needs to be a balance between local and non-local issues as Foxton Locks has national significance. There is a need for the CRT/SEWP to maintain regular contact with the Parish Council. Input from the Parish Council has to be regarded as positive and useful but it is unrealistic to expect that all proposals put forward by the Council will be taken on board.

6. Mr Owen said that one of the CRT's objectives is to increase the number of visitors which currently stands at 300,000 per year. Councillor Wright queried whether the focus had shifted from promoting visits to industrial heritage to getting as many visitors as possible spending as much money as possible. Mr Best said this was not the case but that the reality of not being able to restore the Inclined Plane has affected plans and that there is a need to find other ways for visitors to enjoy the Locks. The Heritage Lottery Fund has indicated that a much better visitor centre is needed which should include a good museum experience promoting education and bringing the past to life.

7. Councillor Wright mentioned how frustrated local residents feel as Foxton is in a pincer movement between two major developments i.e. Airfield Farm and the Locks. The feeling locally is that Foxton is being ignored and this could seriously affect the NDP which needs to be completed within 18 months. Mr Best stated that the Destination Plan for the Locks should be completed in 2015 and that a wider range of stakeholders, including the Parish Council needs to be involved. The Parish Council is shortly to publish a Statement of Consultation about the NDP and this can be sent to the SEWP. Mr Best said he would write officially to the Parish Council

describing the current situation concerning plans for the Locks. Further exhibitions about the NDP are to be held concerning new sites that have been registered and analysing the project conclusions.

8. The issue of dog bins on the towpath was raised and it was pointed out that better signage directing dog walkers to the nearest bin were needed.