

SADBERGE PARISH COUNCIL

Sadberge Parish Council Chair's Report to the Sadberge Parish Meeting held on Thursday 10th May 2007

1. Property and Land

1.1 Trees

- A self-seeded sycamore tree, which was damaging an adjacent cherry tree near the Buck Inn, has been removed. Unfortunately it was not possible to save the cherry tree, but it has been replaced by a cherry tree donated by a local resident.
- Another cherry tree, which was donated in memory of Jennifer Wildsmith, has been planted on the village green at the bottom of the slope in front of the Post Office.
- Necessary pruning work has been carried out on the central oak tree, the trees along Hill House Lane and the bushes opposite the Buck Inn. Darlington Borough Council has also agreed to prune the sycamore tree at the end of Laurel Terrace, which now has a tree preservation order on it.
- Self-seeded saplings beside the garages opposite pleasant View have been dealt with and an insurance settlement has been made with the owner in respect of the damage that had been claimed to have been caused by them.
- A dead tree has been removed from the verge beside Hill House Lane.

1.2 Repairs

- Repairs have been made to the railings outside the village hall and on Church Lane.
- Darlington Borough Council has agreed to repair the kerb and install bollards on the verge opposite the entrance to Goodwood Close.
- A 'one off' repair by Darlington Borough Council resolved a long search as to the ownership and subsequent responsibility for the footpath outside the Three Tuns.

1.3 Signage

- A replacement "No Parking" sign has been erected on the village green
- Darlington Borough Council has agreed to install additional signs at Church Lane and Middleton Road to make it easier to identify these roads.
- New street signs have been installed on the village green to complement the new railings.

1.4 Wheelchair access

- Modifications have been requested be made to kerbs to further facilitate wheelchair access around the village.

1.5 Environment

The following issues were passed on to Darlington Borough Council's 'Street Scene' Team.

- The use of weed killer on the edges of the grass verges.
- Grass cuttings which were left causing an unsightly mess.

- Dog fouling. The Community Warden has provided support in the form of letters, notices and monitoring. No one has yet been reported officially.
- Overgrown footpaths

These situations have improved and continue to be monitored.

1.6 Planters

The Council was very grateful to Councillor Mrs. Cuthbertson MBE for her kind donation of planters, which are now installed on the edge of the village green beside Hill House Lane.

1.7 Christmas Tree

The Council put up a Christmas tree on the village green for the festive season. Unfortunately, the planned Christingle Service of carols had to be re-located in the church because of very inclement weather.

1.8 Former Sadberge School Site (Darlington Borough Council land)

Darlington Borough Council held a session to consult local residents about the development proposed for the footprint of the school. This opportunity was taken up by 13 residents. We await the outcome now that a developer has been selected. Darlington Borough Council has agreed the old school playing field should be maintained as an informal playing area.

2. Planning

The Council has considered a number of Planning Applications. Key issues have arisen around two in particular, which are familiar to us all.

2.1 Caravan North of Lea Close, Middleton Road

With much press coverage, Mr Walker-Coates, residing in his caravan off Middleton Road, continues to survive adverse decisions, including an unsuccessful appeal, and is currently awaiting a High Court decision regarding an eviction order. (A detailed summary is on the Sadberge web site in the minutes of the Council meeting on 26th April 2007.) The situation remains highly frustrating, despite the best efforts of the Council – and Darlington Borough Council's Planning Department – to resolve the matter. The site is outside the village envelope and contravenes planning regulations and the Council feels it sets a dangerous precedent.

2.2 Proposed Vocational Training Centre at Beacon Hill

A second Planning Application has been given an unprecedented amount of council time and has generated an unprecedented level of expressions of concern from local residents. From an early stage planning regulations were contravened by a site cabin being used for residential purpose.

The current planning application is for an extensive Training Centre for young people who are disengaged from mainstream education. The Council responded to residents' concerns by holding an open session before its meeting in March. Taking account of the views expressed during the open session, the Council has strongly objected to this venture, identifying various deep concerns. These are listed on the Sadberge web site. Darlington Borough Council is awaiting an independent report on the application, and the application has not yet been considered by its Planning Committee.

2.3 Other planning Applications

The proposed Tesco development in Darlington was rejected.

Sadberge Parish Council has lodged an objection to a proposal to build a large distribution centre

on Dean and Chapter land at Morton Park on the A66 bypass, on the grounds that the surrounding road infrastructure is inadequate and the proposed development would worsen the existing traffic difficulties in Sadberge.

3. Traffic and Travel

Concerns regarding the flow and speed of traffic through the village continue to be voiced, and the Council continues to lobby Darlington Borough Council to take effective action. The current situation is that we await the implementation of a 40mph buffer zone on Middleton Road to attempt to encourage cars to slow down while travelling through the village. Requests for physical traffic calming measures – such as chicanes – have been rejected by Darlington Borough Council and Durham Constabulary for various reasons. At a recent meeting with Dave Winstanley (Highways Officer in Darlington Borough Council), the Chair and Ward Councillor Brian Jones were given Darlington Borough accident statistics which show that Sadberge is a relatively safe area.

We continue to negotiate improvements to a poor bus service. Residents' concerns, including bus tokens for the elderly, were discussed at one of the Parish Plan Open Meetings.

The Council has made a formal request to Darlington Borough Council to implement a 7.5 tonne weight restriction covering the whole of the village. We await a response.

4. Celebrations

4.1 Sadberge Midsummer Morris Festival

Following a very successful event in 2006, Sadberge Parish Council is organising a similar Midsummer Morris Festival on Saturday 23rd June 2007, and preparations are well under way. St. Andrew's Church, Locos in Motion and Sadberge Village Hall Association are providing activities and hoping to benefit from the support of visitors and residents. Representatives from these groups and the Council have formed a Festival Committee. This year's theme is 'Celebration' as the current village hall celebrates its 30th birthday and the Locos in Motion Morris Dancers celebrate their 10th birthday.

4.2 Calor Village of the Year competition

Sadberge was awarded Runner Up in the in the category of Building Communities. The work of the Parish Plan development was an important contribution to this entry.

4.3 Sadberge Web Site

The Council recognises the efforts and skill of Alastair Mackenzie, our Clerk who has successfully developed a Sadberge web site, which provides up-to-date information about the village and its activities. The web site can be found at www.sadberge.org.uk.

We were also able to send a Christmas Newsletter to all residents.

4.4 Councillor Beatrice Cuthbertson MBE

This Council – and indeed the whole village – was very pleased to celebrate Councillor Beatrice Cuthbertson's award of the MBE. Beatrice's 25 years of public service was also recognised by The Darlington Association of Parish Councils this year.

5. Acknowledgements

Councillors Beatrice Cuthbertson MBE and Arthur Sanders have chosen not to stand for re-election this year, which marks the end of very valuable and loyal service from both. Their knowledge and experience in the running of village affairs will be sadly missed. I record in this report our grateful thanks for their time, common sense approach and support.

I also thank Alastair Mackenzie for all the hours he has given to this Council and especially in the development of the Sadberge Parish Plan. The plan itself will be published later this year, but it is already clear that the Parish Plan consultation process has done much to raise awareness of issues affecting this village and has provided valuable opportunities for the community to share their views.

Finally, I thank councillors for their time and the conscientious and good-spirited way in which they carry out Council business.

Millie Scaife
Chair of Sadberge Parish Council