

# Kirkstall Neighbourhood Forum Board

## Meetings 23 March – 25 May 2016

### Secretary's Report

#### Attendance at Board Meetings:

Board Member	23 March	27 April	25 May
Graham Bellamy	yes	yes	yes
Andrew Bradley	non-member	-	-
Tom Brannigan	yes	yes	apologies
Fiona Butler	non-member	apologies	yes
Wendi Carson	yes	yes	yes
Keith Collridge	yes	apologies	-
James Corah	yes	yes	yes
Steve Gradys	non-member	-	yes
Steve Harris	yes	yes	apologies
John Illingworth	yes	yes	yes
Daniel Lipzith	yes	-	yes
John Liversedge	yes	yes	yes
Amy McAbendroth	-	yes	yes
Michael Park	non-member	yes	apologies
Andrea Purdy	non-member	yes	yes
Adele Rae	yes	yes	yes
Katherine Smith	yes	yes	yes

**Officers:** (elected by the Board) Chair – John Liversedge, Vice Chair – Daniel Lipzith; Secretary – John Illingworth; Treasurer – James Corah

The Board currently meets in the QTARA office at Queenswood Heights at 7pm on the fourth Wednesday each month throughout the year.

The Board is carrying out the essential steps to establish the new organisation: a bank account has been opened, and we have been granted £500 start-up funding from the Council's well-being fund. An application to DCLG for £15,000 is being prepared. This could include consultants' advice, given in kind, but the Board has decided to maximise our income and to commission specialist technical advice as and when this is needed.

We have established a website at [kirkstallforum.org](http://kirkstallforum.org) which includes email and is linked to Twitter and Facebook accounts. This allows documents to be easily shared with forum members, but it is not yet fully compliant with modern HTML5 standards. Full compliance will be achieved this summer. The site is currently hosted by a-q Ltd. in Hunslet. It is good to have a Leeds ISP, but this will be periodically reviewed.

We have agreed to establish a subscription to "Locality" (£100) as soon as adequate funds are available. Locality <http://locality.org.uk/about/> is the leading national network for community groups.

**Recruitment:** The Board intends to advertise for new members in partnership with Kirkstall community organisations, encouraging people to join both the Neighbourhood Forum and their local community groups. Age and gender equality are important here. Scatter plots will be used to identify areas with very few members. The board wants to recruit from the full range of local residents and therefore agreed to use a wide variety of campaigning methods including direct mail, local newspapers, local schools, door knocking, social media and a stall at Kirkstall Festival. Doorstep contacts have been difficult to organise during the local election and referendum campaigns.

**Questionnaire:** The Board wants to engage better with the wider membership, and to pick some “easy winners” which are enjoyable to do. We hope that teams of like-minded members will focus on specific topics, so that several can move several forward at the same time. For instance, time is running out to register the existing “off road” footpaths within the old Leeds County Borough boundaries, and also to create some new ones. Is there a potential footpath team waiting to tackle this job, walking the routes, identifying the paths and seeking registration? An electronic / paper questionnaire is available from the website, and is being circulated to all members, gathering information about which teams people might like to join. Please fill it in, because otherwise we will be guessing what our members want.

**Boundary:** The dispute with Headingley Neighbourhood Forum remains unresolved. This causes problems for Queenswood Tenants and Residents Association (QTARA) whose operating area is split in half. This reflects inadequate public consultation when the Headingley Neighbourhood Forum was established, but it is difficult to mend without their cooperation. The Board is seeking an amicable resolution and is preparing a Memorandum of Understanding with Headingley. The Kirkstall councillors and people living in the Foxcrofts and Queenswood Road / Drive can attend Headingley meetings, and put the Kirkstall view. It is desirable in any event to maintain good relations so that we can align planning policies across the boundary.

**Major Policy Issues:** There are five priority areas listed on the Agenda where the Board needs a steer from the full membership:

**Affordable housing:** The key to success in Neighbourhood Planning is not to blindly oppose all new development, but to demonstrate that intelligent design enables more to be achieved with less resources. Developers are already talking to the Council about the future of the Tesco site, and proposing the same inefficient, land-hungry designs that we can see all over Leeds. They haven't yet thought about the traffic problems.

The resolution calls for affordable housing *in addition* to any retail development. Houses could be on the surface with street-level step-free access, while car-parking and retail are buried in the hillside, fully exploiting the opportunities of a sloping site. At present the preferred housing model is the Lilac cooperative on Victoria Park Avenue in Armley <http://www.lilac.coop/>, but this isn't the only possibility and we need to move with the times. This could be a zero-carbon development if that policy is agreed.

The Kirkstall District Centre is a massive job, where we may wish to employ specialist consultants. It includes highway engineering, structural design, development economics and aesthetic style. Our biggest problem may be convincing Tesco that their land is worth less than they hoped. There seems to be public support for a design competition, but this must be properly managed and evaluated.

**Design Quality:** In theory, Leeds Planning Department maintains consistent planning policies across the entire city. In practice, inner-city residents could be excused for thinking otherwise, since it often appears that second-rate designs are considered “good enough” for poorer areas. It is difficult to quantify building designs, but it won’t harm to flag this issue up, so that next time we see a really rubbish scheme we can argue that it wouldn’t pass in Bardsey.

**Flood Relief Scheme:** Leeds City Council is inviting consultants to design a flood relief scheme. No construction funding has yet been agreed, but local land deals are already being struck in Kirkstall. It is important to engage quickly, otherwise we may find that the scheme has gone too far to incorporate local views. Be careful what you wish! People are presently talking about environmentally-friendly upstream measures, but it is not yet certain that these are feasible, or at an affordable price. Even the celebrated Pickering scheme gives limited protection and includes a large reinforced concrete component. We could be back to old-fashioned flood walls sooner than people expect.

There is a possibility that flood relief might fund improved riverside sports facilities and better public access to the river banks. This won’t happen unless people put it on their shopping list from an early date.

**Sustainable development:** In July 2015 the new Conservative government relaxed the 2016 zero carbon targets for new house building which had been in place since 2007. Please visit <http://rcimag.co.uk/news/government-abandons-zero-carbon-homes-goal> and <http://www.sustainableenergyassociation.com/consumers-condemned-higher-bills-scrapping-zero-carbon-policy/press-release/> for reaction to these changes. There is no point in engineering a head-to-head confrontation, which the government will inevitably win, but it may be possible to specify higher standards in Kirkstall if we can show that these are achievable. The 2015 Treasury Report still includes some carbon strategies: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/443897/Productivity\\_Plan\\_print.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/443897/Productivity_Plan_print.pdf) Our proposed policy only applies to major developments, and in practice only the Tesco site is presently available. It may be possible to achieve zero carbon performance at this location with a combination of renewable technologies, high insulation standards and good building design. In particular, there could be a major role for **water-source heat pumps** abstracting heat from the River Aire, which were recently pioneered by Vickers Lubricating Oils in South Leeds: <http://marinebiolubes.vickers-oil.com/2016/03/08/revolutionary-river-technology-marks-first-for-leeds-and-milestone-for-new-eco-friendly-facility-for-vickers-oils/>

**Traffic and Congestion:** The position has deteriorated since the opening of the Metric Centre on Bridge Road, which has yet to trade at full capacity. The situation varies from day to day, but long, slow moving traffic queues develop on all approach roads at peak times. Pedestrian crossings, cycling and public transport facilities are inadequate, and there are many conflicts between different traffic streams. No provision has been made at the main gyratory for the additional road traffic expected from Kirkstall Forge, or from new retail development on the former Tesco site. There is little room for road alterations and no provision in the highways budget. Council officers have opposed new pedestrian crossings on Wyther Lane, claiming adverse effects on car capacity, but have continued to approve new retail planning applications regardless of the long term consequences. The board seeks your approval to commission our own independent highways advice.

The Board accepts that the Neighbourhood Plan itself will require specialist advice. It is likely to start from the “Vision for Kirkstall” but might go considerably further. Is there a consensus on basic points, such as keeping clear of the flood plain and concentrating new development on brownfield land? The Board wants to hear your views.

**Future Business:** We are planning a stall at Kirkstall Festival on 9 July and volunteers are needed for this. It seems likely that our next public meeting will be in September or October, but we hope that the recruitment campaign and specialist working groups can continue over the summer holidays.

The rejection of the trolleybus scheme means that suburban rail may be back on the agenda. There are potential commuter stations on the Aire Valley line at Bridge Road, and on the Harrogate line at Clayton Wood (north of the Ring Road) and between the Hawksworth Wood and Spen Hill estates. All are presently low priority, but politics is about changing priorities, and doing what people want.

Leeds may regain the control over local bus services that it previously enjoyed before the Thatcher reforms. It would do no harm to consider the implications and any changes that people would like to see.

John Illingworth  
3 June 2016