



Ravenglass Village Forum

October 2000

No 2

New lamps for old

Reactions were mixed when Copeland BC erected the first of our new lights in Main Street. Most residents were happy with them but a few soon made their criticisms heard very loudly.

The Forum invited Mike Nicholson, the Cumbria County Council's lighting engineer, to discuss the comments at a meeting on 8 June. Mr Nicholson has been working with Louise Rielly, Copeland's lighting engineer, on the installation. We went out to inspect the lights and agreed that there were problems that should be put right before the next phase goes ahead. The work was done very quickly.

The bracket lamp on Ashley Cottage, which was in danger of collision with tall vehicles, has been removed and will be replaced with a standard lamp at the NE corner of the building.

The new standard lamps have been shortened by a metre so that the light source is 4.5 metres from the ground (sorry: engineers don't speak in feet and inches any more). This gives illumination that is just as effective at ground level but not as aggressive to the eye as when the lights were first installed.

The light sources are recessed into the caps of the lamps, so that they can only shed light downwards. They should not cause problems for those who love to admire the sky on starry nights, but didn't the beach or the back yard always make a better observatory than Main Street?

The next phase

Some of the residents of Main Street between the Pennington Arms and the floodgate were unhappy about the number of new lights in the plan that was presented at the Forum's public meeting last November. The engineers have found that they can use fewer lights and stay within the statutory requirements. They can also offer residents a **choice of two schemes** for this part of Main Street.

Copeland BC will install the new lights in Spring 2000. If they are installed to comply with the minimum standards on number and spacing for **Highway Lighting**, Cumbria CC can then adopt them and assume responsibility for their maintenance. Lighting to this standard will require three more new lights on the landward side of the street, including one at the floodgate, and two on the seaward side. The lights will be of the same design as those already installed, with the same reduction in height. The bowls can be masked on the nearside if light shining into bedrooms is a real problem. This option will give an even spread of illumination for the length of the street.

The alternative is **Footway Lighting**. This involves replacing only the old lights by Clifton Terrace, the Barns and the floodgate with new ones, adjusting their position to provide better illumination. This option will lose only the two lights on the seaward side of the street. It is legal but the overall level of illumination will be inferior, the County will be unable to adopt the lights and responsibility for their upkeep will remain with Copeland.

In either case the new lights would be placed just clear of the boundary of the highway with regard to property boundaries and the need for residents' parking spaces.

There is **no option** to retain the present orange lights. They are due for replacement and they never were in character with Main Street. Nor is there an option to have Highway Lighting with all the new lights on the landward side of the street because of the way the road broadens in the middle.

If the Footway Lighting scheme is implemented and it proves unsatisfactory, upgrading later to Highway standard may not be possible. The cost may be prohibitive, especially after the work on the road surface and cobbled frontages has been done.

Having received this advice, **the Forum agreed to seek the opinions of the residents** in that part of Main Street before the final phase of the lighting project goes ahead. **For them only** a questionnaire is attached to this Newsletter. We look forward to receiving their views.

The plan on page 4 shows the positions of the lights for the Highway option.

Highways

In our first Newsletter we painted a visionary picture of the road improvements that could be made in Ravenglass. Since then we have been talking practicalities with Terry Geer, the manager of Cumbria County Council Design Services in Whitehaven. Mr Geer visited Ravenglass on 24 March for a tour of inspection with members of the Forum.

The improvements mentioned below will not all happen quickly. Mr Geer explained that the County Council would consider projects in February-March 2001 for funding in 2001-02. The Parish Council, not the Forum, has the power to deal with the Highway Authority. The Forum members therefore discussed the possibilities with Mr Geer and made recommendations to the Parish Council. The Parish Council has now submitted the request, adding two items of its own.

Starting at the junction with the A595, the first item was the replacement of the village name sign with a new sign, closer to the main road and clear of the summer growth that obscures the present sign. A more decorative village sign, further down the hill, is on the agenda but it is a longer-term project.

Safety

More urgent is the matter of road safety. The Parish Council suggested resiting the Give Way sign at the junction so that it will be less likely to obscure drivers' view. It agreed with the Forum's suggestion that the 30 mph speed limit should be extended up the hill, perhaps to The Grove. This will require a Traffic Regulation Order, which may come into effect during 2000-01.

Poor visibility and the tendency to speed create danger for pedestrians and drivers in the stretch from Walls Drive to the railway bridges. Mr Geer agreed to consider measures to reduce the speed of traffic approaching the village. The Forum and the Parish Council have recommended special measures under the Railtrack bridge: a pinch point to move the centre of the carriageway outwards and the creation of a footpath on the inside of the bend. The Ratty has taken up Mr Geer's recommendation to reduce the height of its retaining wall on the landward side of its main entrance to improve visibility for drivers leaving the Ratty or coming down the road. If the Ratty and the Highway Authority can agree on costs and timing, the work may be done this autumn/winter.

At the Neb by Holly House visitors' cars need to be directed more obviously to go left to the Village Car Park instead of trying to drive down Main Street. We have all seen displays of incompetent reversing when strangers find that Main Street suddenly stops at the Ship. At the Neb the plan is to install a curved and slightly humped strip of granite setts about 2m wide across the entrance to Main Street and improve the direction signs.

At the narrow part of the street between the Pennington Arms and the Post Office the recommendation is to lay paving and/or cobbles the full width of the highway to reduce the speed of vehicles. We have not recommended pedestrianisation of Main Street. That would cause too many problems for residents and others who require lawful access with vehicles. However, visitors who proceed this far should by now be aware that they drive further on sufferance. The Parish Council has recommended a 20 mph speed limit.

Further down Main Street our original idea to pave the highway from Pennington House to the ramp was ruled out on grounds of expense, but changing the colour of the tarmac would be a much less costly visual hint that the street is about to stop. The Forum still has to work out an overall plan for the treatment of Main Street from the Pennington Arms onwards, in consultation with the Parish Council and the Highway Authority. This plan will include cobbled parking areas in front of the houses and a water channel to improve drainage on the seaward side of the street, which must do its job without blocking access to residents' parking spaces. Elderly residents have expressed anxiety about walking on cobbles, so there must be paved paths to houses.

On the estate

At the back of the village the entrance to the Car Park requires attention. To some visitors Croftlands Drive looks like the road out to Bootle until they end up, thoroughly puzzled, at the bottom of Townfield Close. We have recommended more visible No Through Road signs, firm directions into the Car Park, narrowing the entrance to Croftlands Drive and a low table rise to provide an obvious crossing point for pedestrians moving between the Ratty, the Ratty Arms and Main Street. Mr Geer has agreed to redesign this junction so that Croftlands Drive no longer looks like a main road. This work will tie in with the National Park's work on the whole Car Park area to improve facilities and provide better directions to local attractions for visitors but (*see page 4*) it will take time.

No more maypoles

In our first Newsletter we announced that British Telecom had agreed to replace the overhead wires in Main Street with underground connections. The last wires came down and the 'maypoles' were removed the Monday after the Charter Fair.

Through last winter Kate Hunter acted as volunteer liaison officer between BT and the householders affected, obtaining their agreement to the new connections. BT bore the whole cost of the conversion, estimated at £15,000, itself. The Forum is grateful to BT for its decision to make this generous contribution to the village.

Norman Inglis had already drawn Norweb's attention to the state of the antiquated and ugly overground power supplies to some of the properties in Main Street. When Norweb received the request for power supplies for the new lighting scheme, it decided to tackle both jobs together. BT and Norweb co-operated on the trenching to minimise the disruption in Main Street. It was necessary to have the digging done before starting work on improvements to the highway and property frontages. Norman took the precaution of asking North West Water whether they had any need to dig the street up too. They assured him that they had no such plans.

We must thank Andy Lowe for his negotiations on the Forum's behalf with BT and Norweb, Kate Hunter and Norman Inglis for their liaison work with residents, BT and Norweb for their willingness to co-operate for the benefit of the village, and the residents of Main Street themselves for putting up with the inevitable mess and noise of the digging.

Millennium Garden

Chris Greenwood, the National Park's landscape architect, is working on detailed plans and specifications so that the contract for landscaping work can go to tender. The Parish Council, which owns the land, gave its approval in principle and the owners of the Old Reading Room and Waterside are happy that the area is to be improved.

If the Parish Council agrees, the National Park will manage the project and will seek local contractors to do the work, which includes attention to drainage as well as the surface work. Maggie Howarth, the artist who produced the cobbled mosaics in King Street, Whitehaven, and more recently in Gosforth, is designing a mosaic about two metres in diameter for the Garden. She is incorporating ideas produced by the children of Ravenglass in a design workshop that Alison Spurgeon Dickson organised early this year. The mosaic will be made in Maggie Howarth's workshop and installed after the landscaping is finished.

Where does the money come from?

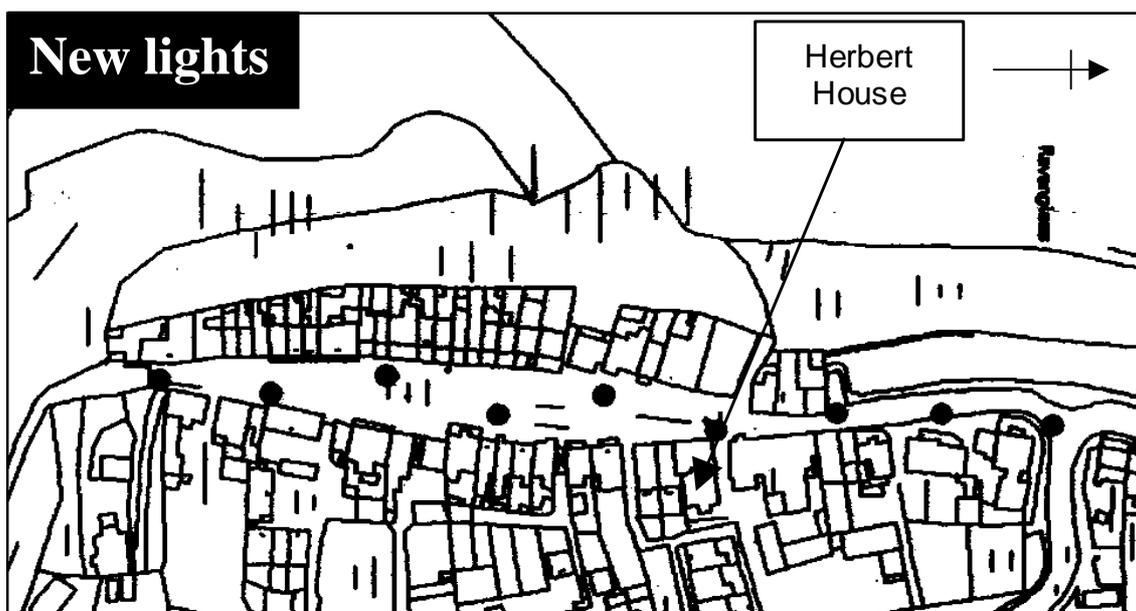
Readers need not fear that the costs of these projects will bounce back on them as increases in Council Tax. There are other ways.

British Telecom decided to bear the whole cost of converting phone lines in Main Street to underground cables, estimated at £15,000. Copeland Borough Council found sufficient money in its lighting budget for 1999-2000 to pay for the first phase of the new street lighting. These were both major contributions to village amenities. The National Park will commit a large sum to improvements, not just in the Car Park area but all round the village. However, the more we can raise ourselves in grant aid, the further the National Park's contribution will go.

The Parish Council was offered a grant of £1500 by Copeland BC towards the cost of a disabled ramp for the Village Green and the National Park offered £1000 towards the extra cost of facing it in natural materials. However, statutory design requirements demanded a much larger and more expensive ramp than the available funds allowed, so that project is in abeyance. The Forum, or rather its grants wizard Peter van Zeller, has applied for grants towards work to be done in the Millennium Garden. Recently the Forum has won £500 from Copeland BC Tourist Section for production of a guide to Ravenglass, which will be published shortly, and £350 towards amenities in the Millennium Garden from Copeland BC Small Millennium Grants. We are looking for more.

Thank you, Ravenglass Charter Fair

This year the Charter Fair Committee has agreed to donate £1000 to the Forum. This was a quite unexpected but most welcome gesture of confidence in our work. This money will be spent on seats for the Millennium Garden, one of which will be dedicated to the memory of Pam Conroy.



This plan, kindly provided by Mike Nicholson, shows where the new lights, shown by black dots to the left (south) of Herbert House, will go if the **Highway Lighting** plan described on page 1 is adopted. The Footway Lighting plan will omit the lights on the seaward side.

The Ratty's contribution

Jonathan Fisher, the Ratty's Group General Manager, and General Manager Steve Wood have already taken up the problem of poor visibility for drivers turning in and out of the Ratty's main entrance (see the Highways article on page 2). When their plans are implemented in that area there should be fewer heart-stopping moments for road users.

Elsewhere the Ratty has already begun to make its contribution to the Forum's work. New railings either side of the footbridge across the main line have replaced the ramshackle old fencing and unruly shrubbery. By the turntable new direction signs encourage passengers to visit the village or walk out to see the Roman Bath House.

Ian Allan Award

The R&ER Preservation Society's Heritage Group and Signal Engineer Gordon Nichol have made a first-class job of restoring the old BR Signal Box. This restoration won the prestigious national Ian Allan 'Railway World' Award for the most promising voluntary railway restoration scheme of 1999. The National Park's chief executive, Paul Tiplady, officially unveiled the plaque commemorating the award in the Signal Box on 14 April.

Village Car Park

Sadly, we have not seen any action by the National Park in this area yet. When members and senior officers of the National Park Authority came to Ravenglass on 13 June to meet Parish Councillors, the Forum's representatives made the point to Paul Tiplady, the Authority's chief executive, that this area is waiting for the National Park to demonstrate to the village the standards of improvement that it can achieve.

Mr Tiplady replied that the project will be a major one, not a quick fix. Landscaping, car parking policy, provision for buses and coaches, defining and signing pedestrian routes, improvements to the access road and Croftlands Drive: those are just some of the problems involved – not to mention finding the money. It will call for a combined effort by several departments within the Authority and consultation with the Parish Council, the Forum and the Highway Authority. The whole area will have to be re-planned to the satisfaction of all whose interests are involved.

Work on this site should start in the financial year 2000-01.

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