

Update 28th July

Over 90 people packed into the Bowling Club to hear about the proposed crematorium on Northcliffe Park.

The Chair of FON, Steve Bruzzese, outlined the facts as we know them

- Northcliffe Park and Woods are held in a charitable trust by Bradford Council, through a conveyance in 1921 to Shipley Council paid for by Norman Rae.
- The Council itself is the Trustee but to avoid conflicts of interest delegates this responsibility to the Regulatory and Appeals Committee (sitting as Trustees). Such delegation is advised by the Charity Commission. There are currently 4 Labour, 2 Conservative and 1 Liberal Councillors on the Committee, with a similar number of alternative members for each party who can attend in place of members
- Trustees are supposed to act for the charity first and not put Council policy first
- The Council's Bereavement Strategy 2016-2026 requires the Council to build two new crematoria to replace the existing ones that are polluting and cannot be updated in the existing buildings
- The Council has identified 5 possible sites, one is Northcliffe, another is Littlemoor Park, also land held in trust by the Council, and 3 privately owned sites which we have no information about
- If the Council wants to breach the terms of the Norman Rae covenant it will need to apply to the Charity Commissioners
- At the Regulatory and Appeals Committee (sitting as Trustees) on the 19th July the councillors decided not to follow the Council officers' recommendations to apply to the Charity Commissioners at this stage, but to order a valuation of the land and then undertake a consultation with people from Shipley and Heaton (although it is not yet clear what the questions will be). The Council Executive had already agreed to get an outside firm to do a feasibility study on all 5 sites. When the consultation and valuation of Northcliffe are done the Committee sitting as Trustees will meet again to make a decision about applying to the Charity Commissioners.
- the time-scale is likely to be a few months so it may be the autumn before they meet again.

Then the meeting was opened up for questions and comments

- there were several questions and comments about the councillors who are trustees and how they handled conflicts of interest
- the original conveyance refers to the public, not just people in Shipley or Heaton, as the beneficiaries of the Trust so the consultation may not be able to be limited to Shipley and Heaton

- whether it was possible to get the legal advice they refer to, although if they say they received it as trustees then it is not covered by the Freedom of Information Act; blurred lines as if it was the Council who sought it then it would be covered
- the need for legal/ charitable advice and offers of help from several people who were knowledgeable about charitable trusts
- where is the proposed site in Northcliffe? This is vague, but access would be from the High Bank Lane end and some considerable way in - if the tarmac path is followed from that end, it appears to be somewhere either side of it at, or after, the point where the woodland on the right drops back away from the path
- it is at an early stage in the process - there are lots of opportunities for the idea to be rejected
- making the case against using the land, endangered species of moths, the meadow being a regional wildlife site
- possibility of offer of land by St Paul's and how this could be promoted
- the need to get organised and have a clear campaign strategy which people could follow

The meeting then formally closed and people signed up to help with

- fund-raising, petitioning, leafleting, social media and to organise events
- a small campaign strategic thinking group was formed to look at how best to ensure that Northcliffe remains as it is with no crematorium

Note: The decision made by the Regulatory and Appeals Committee (meeting as Trustees) on 19 July 2018 was not published by the time of our meeting. It is now available on the Council website. It is unclear from this whether and how the valuation and consultation are to be linked.

Actions you can take – sign the on line petition and get others people to sign it, download a hard copy of the same petition and get people to sign, we need them back by September 15th 2018