

Public Meeting, St Annes 19<sup>th</sup> August 2009

# SAVE NORTH BEACH CAR PARK

## PUBLIC MEETING ~ REPORT ~

of a meeting to debate the pros and cons of disposal following  
the recent planning applications for residential development

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HOSTED BY: *Save North Beach Car Park Group*

ORGANISERS: *Save North Beach Car Park Group*

SUPPORTED BY: *Fylde Civic Awareness Group*

ISSUE: *Possible disposal and re-development*

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website: [www.snob.org.uk](http://www.snob.org.uk)

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PRINCIPAL ELEVATION

# **SAVE NORTH BEACH CAR PARK**

## **NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING**

**WED 19 AUG 2009 7.00PM**

United Reformed Church Hall, St Georges Road, Lytham St Annes,  
Lancashire FY8 2AE.

Fylde Borough Council have submitted planning applications to close the car park and build housing on the site which would result in the loss of this valuable community amenity. Take action now to hear the facts and make up your mind on the closure of the car park. Attend the public meeting on 19 Aug 2009.

**To object to the plans you must write to the planning officer at Fylde Borough Council  
before 26 August 2009. References 09/0503 & 09/0504**

Please display this leaflet to publicise the meeting and recycle afterwards  
Published by Save North Beach Car Park Group  
email [stannes@stannes.me.uk](mailto:stannes@stannes.me.uk), call 0845 305 5410  
or visit the website [WWW.SNOB.ORG.UK](http://WWW.SNOB.ORG.UK) for more information

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## BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

### BACKGROUND

The Save North Beach Car Park group was formed in 2005 when plans were submitted for housing on the car park. However, at that time the Borough Council had not undertaken a flood risk assessment.

The group believed this was why the application was withdrawn.

They became dormant as the threat receded, but have reactivated after the last Council meeting which again put the car park under threat when planning permission for two separate housing schemes was authorised.

### PRESENTATIONS

#### **Welcome and Introduction**

Chairman of the Fylde Civic Awareness Group, Cllr Mrs Barbara Mackenzie opened the meeting, and welcomed an audience of about 100 people. She explained that the Save North Beach Car Park Group were members of, and supported by, the Fylde Civic Awareness Group, and as chair of FCAG, she had been asked to chair this public meeting.

She explained that the Civic Awareness Group initially formed to bring about the Saint Anne's on Sea Town Council. It subsequently arranged seminars and workshops for people who were thinking of standing for election to one of the Town or Parish Councils, or the Borough Council, in Fylde.



Last year, the group had expanded its role to act as an umbrella for other groups and organisations in Fylde.

#### **Mayor of St Anne's, Councillor Tony Ford**

Cllr Ford began by saying it was good to see so many people concerned about the area in which they live. He explained that the Saint Anne's on the Sea Town Council is a consultee on planning matters in the town and they had considered this application at their last meeting. The Town Council had made objection to the application on the basis of

- Loss of tourist amenity
- Impact on dunes, flooding and SSSI
- Design out of keeping with local property



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He expressed a personal view that it had the potential to reduce parking in a tourist resort and this seemed a silly thing to do. He had been keeping personal records of the usage over the last 18 months and in his view as a Town Councillor, the Borough Council should keep it as it is.

#### **County Councillor Howard Henshaw**

Cllr Henshaw noted the dire financial position of the Borough Council and explained that the sale of this site was intended to part fund a new town hall.

Noting the Borough Council had welcomed the proposal from a business called TRAX to build a windsports centre on the beach; he felt the plan to build houses on the car park would conflict with this idea. He also noted that closing of the car park would mean that horseboxes used to bring animals to exercise on the sands would, in future, need to be parked on the roads



around the site which would block the cycle lanes, inconvenience householders and increase the risk of accidents.

#### **Councillor John Davies**

Cllr Davies welcomed the windcentre. He noted that parking may appear to be underused because of poor signage for the car park. He wondered if there was an ulterior motive to the disposal because the Policy and Service Review Scrutiny Committee had recommended it be removed from the asset disposal list, but the Cabinet had disregarded this recommendation. Just eleven days later he noted that a planning application for the houses was submitted.

#### **Councillor Mrs Karen Buckley**

Cllr Mrs Buckley explained she chaired the Policy and Service Review Scrutiny Committee which had looked at two aspects: the proposed windsports centre and the use of the car park.

She said that following procedural problems with another land disposal, her committee had recommended changes to the Councils Asset Disposal Policy

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so as to avoid having to continually suspend the Council's Standing Orders as doing so engendered suspicion about disposals.



Her committee had also recommended the removal of the North Beach Car Park from the Asset Disposal List, and had asked the Cabinet to seek the view of the full council before all major disposals.

The Cabinet had not agreed to the last two recommendations and its decision in this regard had been challenged by ten other councillors.

The Scrutiny Committee heard the challenge and decided to call in (in effect suspend) the decision of the Cabinet, and to refer it for debate at the full council, so it will be debated at the next meeting.

### Councillor John Coombes

Cllr Coombes said that as Leader of the Council he wanted to avoid political debate and to canvas the opinions of the audience. He explained the process had started in 2000 based on a plan to provide a new town hall with no impact on the council tax. In 2006, an asset review to highlight surplus or under-used assets was undertaken. It found the car park was under used and had maintenance costs. The cessation of sand yachting after the tragic accident had reduced the use still further. The exact current use was not known because there was no charging process for car park users.

He indicated the arrangements to provide the future town hall were being reviewed, and it might be provided in another way. He explained that nominating land for housing produces the best valuation, so that was what they had gone for.



He said all the concerns about flooding and access and so on would be addressed as part of the planning application process, and that the submission of the planning applications was a step, not a final decision, and nothing had finally been decided yet.

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#### Mr Peter Savic

Explained the background of the Save North Beach Car Park group and that he had been a member since 2005. He noted there was a link between this



*St David's Road Scheme*

application and the St David's Road application because the element of this development that was classed as 'affordable' (socially subsidised) was being provided as nine houses on the Saint David's Road former Council depot site. He said the car park was no longer shown as being on the floodplain, but that the draft Sand Dunes Management Plan said that it should be retained. However, he had been told today that the management plan will not be presented to the Cabinet in its present form.

#### Mrs Marion Coupe

Sent a letter apologising for the inability of the Civic Society to attend the meeting, but set out the CS strong objections to the plan which included:

- A strong objection to the granting of any permission to build on this site.
- Both applications remove part of the car park.
- It was sad to see a council selling off sites which are beneficial to the town.
- The protection of the dunes is essential for ecological and flood defence reasons.
- The dunes are a cheaper and more effective long term answer to flooding problems than a sea wall. If they are allowed to deteriorate the building of a sea wall will be inevitable.
- Increased housing and activity anywhere in the dunes will only put pressure on the ecology of the area and especially the dunes.
- If the car park is made smaller there would be pressure to access the beach in other areas of the dunes, thus contributing to their degradation. The current access point from the car park avoids the dunes being trampled elsewhere.
- The car park would have been better placed further inland.



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- The beach should be used for leisure purposes, an important part of the economy of the town. The car park is well used by walkers on the beach
- It is crazy for a local authority to restrict an amenity like this thereby increasing parking problems in all the nearby roads, or causing the visitors not to come at all.
- The car park is an amenity which should not be lost.
- We look to our council to provide long term leadership on these issues, not to see which assets it can sell for short term financial, political and speculative gain.



### Mr Alex Fishpool

Speaking on behalf of the owner of TRAX, (Mr. Eddie Sloane who was also in the audience), Mr Fishpool thanked Cllr Coombes for looking at their safety management plan to re-introduce windsports for the beach. He said the windsports centre would double as an educational tool, and that use of the car park would go up rapidly.

### NOTES OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

*Not all speakers announced themselves and sometimes the discussion was across the hall, so not everyone's comments will have been attributed or noted.*

#### Speaker 1

Asked why it was there had been no notice of the planning application posted on the car park. They believed this invalidated the application

#### Speaker 2

Commented that he lived in front of the St David's Road application site where some of the 'affordable' houses for the car park were to be built, and that application had a major flaw.



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#### Speaker 3

Asked if the Council has special powers to put the plans in because he believed anyone else submitting plans with a single access would have them thrown out before they were started. He also referred to the lack of notices. *Cllr Coombes said he would ensure the notices went back up and the Development Control Committee would make proper decision on the planning application.*

#### Speaker 4

Said he had previously been a councillor for St Leonard's Ward for 16 years and both he and Cllr Henshaw had always objected to anyone who had a go at the car park. This matter had made him so angry he was getting involved and considering standing for election again. He also referred to the fact that once the valuations had been received it was unlikely that any use other than housing would be allowed. *Cllr Coombes said that the Accommodation project (town hall scheme) would have no impact on TRAX and that the Council did have the power to accept tenders for purposes other than the highest value if there was sufficient justification.*

#### Speaker 5

Said she believed everyone there believed the sale of the car park was to fund the town hall scheme, but if it was to be used for another leisure use as Cllr Coombes has suggested, what sort of leisure use would **not** require a car park accommodate its visitors anyway? *Cllr Davies said he felt he had been misled by Cabinet's decision to go for housing on the site. Cllr Coombes said they had a duty to put a valuation on the land, but that perhaps they would look at another way of providing a town hall, perhaps by renting or sharing another building, and that this arrangement would mean they may not need to sell all the assets on the list.*



FRONT ELEVATION

#### Speaker 6

Asked why Cllr Coombes was so reluctant to listen to residents. He had heard no good reason to sell the car park. Why did Cllr Coombes want it sold?

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#### Speaker 7

Asked Cllr Coombes whether he was for or against the sale of the car park. *Cllr Coombes said he was not in a position to say because if the matter was debated at Council he may be thought to have a prejudicial interest and not be able to take part in the vote.*

#### Speaker 8

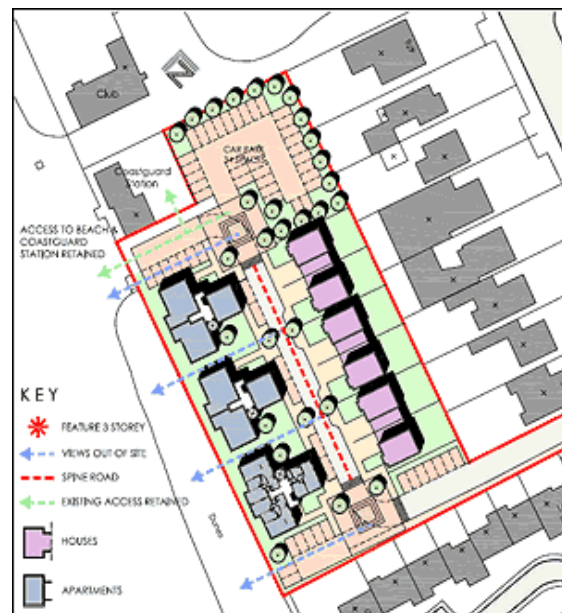
Asked Cllr Coombes why he didn't get a valuer to value the land. Why did he need to put a planning application in? A professional valuer could provide a valuation for different types of use.

#### Speaker 9

Said the problem was that Cllr Coombes must think it was surplus to requirements, but everyone here thinks it's not surplus to requirements, and Cllr Coombes must be desperate to have it declared as surplus to get some money. She went on *"You must want to mastermind the value of the land to be able to generate cash"*

#### Speaker 10

Said he lives in Fylde because of its amenities and asked if everyone wanted to keep their amenities in Fylde. He said we've now had two summers without a swimming pool and now we're going to lose this car park. He said Cllr Coombes was at the bottom of a hole and he should stop digging. *Cllr Coombes responded that before the disposal of the car park, the full council of 51 members will make the decision.*



#### Speaker 11

Said she had lived in St Anne's all her life and she believed it should be kept in its present use and not used for the sand yacht company which will be much bigger and have a greater number of wheeled vehicles on the beach. She did not want to see that.

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#### Speaker 12

Alex Fishpool, speaking on behalf of Eddie Sloane, said no-one wanted to see a repeat of the accident but risk exists and when risk is removed people seek it in more anti-social ways. He said managing the beach was about finding low usage times and it may mean restricting the size of the sand yachts. They were working with ROSPA on this matter.

#### Speaker 13

Said we were all missing the point. This was a unique and valuable asset. The car park is priceless to the Council and they shouldn't even be considering any other use for it.

#### Speaker 14

Asked if the car park was sold for £7.2 (*nominal cost of the accommodation project*) what would happen to the town hall if the reason for disposal is to improve the town hall.

#### Speaker 15

Said he had lived here all his life and he wanted to know what would happen to the coastguard if houses were built. He pleaded with Cllr Coombes to leave the car park where it is.



#### Speaker 16 (Cllr J Davies)

Said we have been told by Cllr Coombes that the decisions are made by the full Council, and all 51 members will decide on the disposal of the car park. But that's not the case, the Cabinet wouldn't even agree to 'consulting' the Council on asset disposals, let alone having the Council make the decision.

#### Speaker 17

John Bracewell (Save North Beach Car Park Group) said he wanted to take a vote on whether the meeting supported the disposal of the car park

#### Speaker 18 (Cllr John Coombes)

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Said he had welcomed being able to hear a cross section of residents and he supported the idea of a vote but he would like to propose a second vote to ask if those present supported the idea of spending £7.2 million to preserve the town hall. *(There was voluble dissent from the floor for this proposal)*

#### **Speaker 19**

Said he was from St Anne's Chamber of Trade and he wanted the car park to remain in the sole ownership of Fylde Borough Council as a car park for the benefit of residents and visitors

#### **Speaker 20 (Mr Savic)**

Noted that Cllr Coombes had said the decision on the disposal had not been made, but also that the minute from the council meeting was that *"it should be offered to the market"* and he wondered how those two statements squared with each other. *Cllr Coombes said they were compatible because it could only be disposed of if someone made an offer to buy it and that offer was accepted. That would be the decision to sell.*

Mr Savic said although he came with an open mind, he had heard nothing to convince him the car park should be sold. He said he felt as though the car park had been tried and found guilty in its absence.

He reminded those present that 26<sup>th</sup> was the date for objections to be received by the Planning department of Fylde Council.

The call for the vote was made again from the floor and Cllr Mrs Mackenzie put the question "Should the Council dispose of the North Beach Car Park?" Put to the vote of the hundred or so people there, none voted for disposal.

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## SURVEY FORM RESULTS

Self-complete survey forms were put out on chairs prior to the meeting. There were six statements with which participants were asked to "Strongly Agree, Agree, No Opinion, Disagree, Strongly Disagree". There was also a box provided for freeform comments. Of the 100 who attended, 68 returned completed forms.

*Broadly speaking people wanted the car park to remain open because it would closure would increase on-street parking and reduce availability of parking for residents and visitors, and because of the access it affords to the beach.*

The results were as follows:

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
North Beach Car park should be saved from closure for use by Fylde residents and visitors to the area	66	2	0	0	0
	97%	3%	0%	0%	0%
There is adequate off-street parking in St Annes	1	2	1	21	43
	1%	3%	1%	31%	63%
Parking is important to attract tourists to the area	65	2	0	0	0
	97%	3%	0%	0%	0%
The car park provides safe controlled access across the dunes to the beach	59	7	0	0	0
	89%	11%	0%	0%	0%
Clifton Drive North is a busy road but could safely be used in place of the car park	1	0	0	9	58
	1%	0%	0%	13%	85%
Any development on the car park should relate to tourism or nature conservation eg visitor centre of windsports centre	55	9	1	0	2
	82%	13%	1%	0%	3%
The meeting has been useful to me in understanding the issues relating to the car park	28	25	1	1	0
	51%	45%	2%	2%	0%



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#### FREEFORM COMMENTS

- I strongly object to the two proposals to build on the car park at North Beach
- The car park has been deemed "surplus to requirements" by the council. It is not surplus to the requirements of the people of St Annes and our visitors
- The flood plain should be considered
- For residential building the access is inadequate
- Better signage. Encourage wind powered sports.
- The beach is a unique asset to St Annes and to access it safely the Car Park must remain at North Beach. There is huge potential here both for local people and international events and it would be wicked to sell off the car park for short term gain.
- Loss of Tourist Amenity. The overall motivation for this project is totally financial by the council. Reducing number of car parking spaces. Parking on Clifton Drive North could cause accidents. Potential loss numerically of visitors who could not park so could drive off to Blackpool.
- Should not be developed
- Should not be developed
- As I am Partially disabled crossing a road with my dog is not an option
- Not sure we heard the whole truth from the council. If the proposed bye laws for control of dogs come into force the sand dunes north of the car park will be used by far more dog owners than at present. The car park at Squires Gate has been closed. This will increase the usage of North Beach Car Park.
- The Fylde Borough Council has already made up its mind to sell the Car Park. The Public Meeting is just to give the impression that it is democratic.
- I feel to have people parking on the main road would create an accident waiting to happen, i.e. unloading equipment and horses, children and families. We need this car park.
- This will create a dangerous situation on the main road. This is just another closure of an amenity in St Annes showing no concern for residents or tourism
- My opinion is that the car park should remain as a car park and be developed in no other way
- These suggestions are totally unacceptable to both local residents and visitors to the area. It should be left as is as it is an essential car park for both parents of young children, dog owners and horse owners. The

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use of main roads is not safe.

- This is outrageous. My family and I have been using the car park for over 30 years as its safe for us to unload children and dogs for the beach. Also as a user of the car park daily I see countless visitors using it and horse boxes.
- Meeting good and useful but too "conservative" in outlook
- Do not neglect flood risk element
- I would ask the council to remove the planning applications for North Beach Car Park
- A reminder that the area is at risk of flooding, which should be a fundamental consideration, deeming conservation of the sand dunes. Imperative to those who live nearby.
- Please keep the area as it is a car park for beach events and also for general use including horse riders. Also ie. Park and Ride to St Annes and Blackpool.
- I am concerned that this is a resource that is of benefit to the wider community, sale of the car park may have a huge impact on the use of the beach for locals and tourism. Emergency access may be reduced if sold. The future of the beach as a public open space relies on access and parking. The Car Park is not surplus but a well used asset.
- Atkins Report paid for by council concludes that there are not enough car parks
- Denying permission for parking at North Beach Car Park will inevitably lead to parking outside homes including Kilgrimol Gardens (which should be access only) parking on pavements will restrict elderly people using motorised scooters and wheelchairs
- Also the Closure of the South Shore Car Park for a new tram station. There will be no parking areas except in the neighbouring streets causing a lot of upset and stress to the residents.
- What about the closure at South Shore Car Park? There will be nowhere to park along the front, so people will park in the residential areas causing chaos for people who live there
- This car park must be saved
- If St Annes is to continue to be a tourist resort it needs tourist facilities and services to the local community. Amenities need to be retained.
- The dune point development has made a loss so why would anyone want to build more flats
- Due to the fact there is inadequate management of the sand dunes this results in excessive labour charges in sand clearance of adjoining roads using JCB machinery. Car parking on adjoining roads will lead to serious

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accidents which could result in a fatality.

- Selling this for what? More apartments? Sets a dangerous precedent for sea-ward side developments. The lack of imaginative planning by this Council is dire. The site belongs to the people of St Annes. If it is not to be used as a car park convert it into an amenity for all - a nature reserve for the dunes.
- I strongly believe that the car park should be kept open in order to encourage people to use the beach. As mentioned it should be more fully publicised. My husband and I visit kitesurfing locations all over the country. In other places watersports are being encouraged in order to attract tourists. This is vital to the future of St Annes.
- Prior to the ban on sandyachting, there was a vibrant sporting scene in St Annes with regular international events for which the car park was essential. This brought much needed tourists and income to St Annes. This can be brought back to the advantage of St Annes but not if the car park is sold.

### LOCATION OF RESPONDENTS

Completion of address and contact details was not mandatory, but the following analysis is available:

Location	Number
Ansdell	1
Blackpool	2
Fleetwood	1
Lytham	1
Newton	1
Preston	1
St Annes	49
Unspecified	12

### FOOTNOTE:

Following the meeting, the Council Planning Department posted site notices for both applications on the bus stop south of the car park entrance and the date for consultation was extended until 11 September 2009.

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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

The Save North Beach Car Park Group would like to thank: all speakers for taking time from their busy schedules to take part; the United Reformed Church for use of the hall; the Fylde Civic Awareness Group for their support, this comprehensive report of the meeting, and the loan of equipment; and Councillor Mrs Mackenzie, Chair of the Fylde Civic Awareness Group, for chairing the meeting.

We also wish to thank all members of the public who turned out to listen to the speakers and those who participated in the discussion and everyone for their exemplary behaviour and finally to everyone who helped publicise the event by displaying posters in windows and delivering leaflets door to door.

More information about the group and its activities can be obtained from the website [www.snob.org.uk](http://www.snob.org.uk) or by calling 0845 305 5410.

# FYLDE CIVIC AWARENESS GROUP



*What's going on?  
Who's making decisions?  
Can you make a difference?*

## *What's it all about?*



## *We help people understand....*

- ◆ **What Local Government is all about**
- ◆ **How priorities are decided**
- ◆ **What your money is spent on**

## *We work with local groups....*

- ◆ **To encourage participation and foster co-operation**
- ◆ **To provide tactical and strategic support**
- ◆ **To share information and ideas, encourage alliances where appropriate, and**
- ◆ **To provide support and experience without loss of autonomy**

Individuals can register for news and information about public events.  
Groups with an interest or influence in Fylde can become members and join our Delegate Assembly

**WWW.FYLDE.BIZ      0845 456 6122**

*Fylde Civic Awareness Group is an independent, non party political, not for profit community organisation*  
*Chairman: Barbara Mackenzie Vice Chairman: Bob Plant Treasurer: Barbara Moor*  
*Clerk: Fred Moor c/o 18 Sandhurst Avenue, Lytham St Annes, Lancashire. FY8 2DA*  
*Please contact the Clerk or visit the website for more details.*

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