



Kirkbymoorside Town Brass Band
50 West End
Kirkbymoorside
North Yorkshire
YO62 6AF



3/12/2014

Dear

I am writing on behalf of the Trustees of the band to pass on our festive greetings and to update you and your fellow Town Councillors on the bands activities over the last twelve months. However, I would also like to ask you and the Town Council to have a serious re-think about its support for residential housing in Manor Vale. I will return to that issue later in this letter, but first here is my "good news" update from 2014.

Throughout the year the band has continued to develop its five bands made up of around 110 players. The vast majority of our learner musicians are youngsters still at school, though adults also frequently have a go and our Community Band, with its smattering of retirees is a testament to that. Hundreds of hours of free tuition are provided by our volunteer unpaid senior band players passing on their expertise to learners and developing musicians.

The senior band has enjoyed a very successful competitive year and qualified to represent and foster the good name of the town at the First Section Finals of the National Brass Band Championships in Cheltenham in September. One unique feature of our senior band is that almost every player has learned to play through the bands tuition programme and most senior players continue to live in the town or the surrounding villages. Even within the brass band world this sort of continuity is quite exceptional.

Our musicians have provided music for community and charitable events throughout the year and one of our proudest moments of 2014 was to again lead the Armistice Day parade in this special year 100 years anniversary of the start of the First World War. With a general decline in the number of brass bands in the UK, increasingly fewer communities are able to boast the presence of their own local town band for such events these days and our senior band players take great pride in the fact that we can still fulfil such a need in Kirkbymoorside.

It is fantastic that because we currently have a strong organisation within the town we are able to independently support events in the Town. We don't only talk "Community" – we actively and enthusiastically do "Community". Not only have we worked hard and raised funds for our own organisation, but we have also supported our own Christmas Concert Charity, Welburn Hall School, Bedale Chapel, Kirkbymoorside Primary School, Christmas Town Market, the Town 10k run, Air Ambulance Tractor Run and Help for Heroes. We do so gladly and with great community pride. We enjoy playing music but we are also greatly enthused by the wonderful support and encouragement that we receive from local folks.

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On a more cautionary note though, during the year the band had to react to what it saw as a significant threat. Following the sale of the former NYCC Highways depot in Manor Vale, and with a heavy heart, we had to object to a significant planning application for the development of residential housing in Manor Vale.

The band has successfully based its operations in Manor Vale without complaint since before the First World War. We would not under any circumstances dream of building a new band room in the middle of a residential housing estate and so we saw a great threat to the band's future from those who now wish to surround the band room with new housing. Put simply, complaints of noise nuisance from new residents could threaten the strong structure that the band currently enjoys and which could quite easily ultimately lead to the demise of the band. We therefore had to oppose those plans. Whilst the planning application has currently been abandoned, as we all know Ms Greetham is still actively considering renewing it and, if this comes to fruition, we must again oppose any new housing in Manor Vale.

We have looked at measures to reduce the noise and mitigate the effects of the band practicing but such measures can only ever potentially deal with reducing noise emitted from the premises. Sound proofing cannot ever address the issue of noise and disturbance from people and cars arriving and leaving during evenings and on Sunday mornings from 8.45am onwards. The band room can often be in use most days of the week and this is normally during the evening hours.

Ms Greetham has now submitted a notification to change the use of the old Council Offices into a two-bedroom dwelling under the new Permitted Development Rules. Any success Ms Greetham might enjoy through the new Permitted Development notification procedure must not be allowed to set any precedent for the development of an entire new estate in Manor Vale..

I appreciate and understand that sometimes the Town Council has to make difficult decisions in the best interests of the whole community. I can also see that Manor Vale poses specific and difficult questions, but nevertheless, it is the established home to two great local organisations in the Town. I do feel that the Town Council maybe did get the balance wrong with its support for the now abandoned planning application that the band opposed in 2014. Did the Town Council really believe that Ms Greetham's alternative plan for a depot would be "... *detrimental to the band...*" without ever asking the band for its view? I feel that the band functioned perfectly well when NYCC Highways Department ran its Depot operations from Manor Vale.

I would therefore like to ask the Town Council to rethink the stance that was adopted last summer. It may be worth reminding you that the Town Council supported the housing development proposals "...*subject to assurances to be provided that there will be no repercussions at a later date to the detriment of the Scouts and Brass Band...*" Any such assurances would ultimately prove futile and the only certain way to prevent any detriment to the Scouts or Brass Band is to firmly oppose residential development in Manor Vale.

We recognise that the former NYCC depot has been an eyesore, and as an organisation we have had to put up with that fact for many years too, but we feel this is not a valid planning reason to support residential development. Surely non-residential development would be better than development at any price. We should be striving for what is most appropriate and

so instead of the construction of dwelling houses in a disused road stone quarry I would like to ask the Town Council to give greater support to the alternative development ideas that have been discussed with the Town Mayor.

The Band has worked hard with others to try and help secure a new Scout building at a suitable location. We have long harboured ambitions to acquire the Scout hall land and, should the Scouts ever move from the site, we might be able to extend our premises to provide additional rehearsal space, individual rehearsal rooms, better storage for equipment and chairs and also to provide the band with a tailor made concert performance area. The band is hopeful that those alternative ideas could greatly enhance the bands already fantastic band room in Manor Vale and provide further community facilities too.

However, new residential housing in Manor Vale could only have a negative effect on our development aspirations. The Band Trustees and Executive have already made it clear that should residential development be permitted in Manor Vale they would not consider building an extension to the present band room. We want to see the NYCC site improved in some way because it has been an eyesore for far too long, at the same time we want to do all we can to ensure that the Band and Scouts can continue to operate from Manor Vale.

I have watched with great interest the application to cover several acres of farmland to the west of Kirkbymoorside with 225 houses and what surprises me most in all of these discussions is the fact that hardly anyone ever mentions "Community". If planning consultation is to mean anything, surely it should not be about where to build this house or that house, but it should be about Community in its widest possible sense. The Kirkbymoorside Town Band is part of the Community, enthusiastic, self sufficient and local. Not wishing to blow our own trumpet too loud, but without doubt Kirkbymoorside is the home of the best and most successful Band in the 575square miles of Ryedale. Kirkbymoorside Town Brass Band has never carried the name of a sponsor. for over 160years we have always proudly displayed the name of our local Town. We are an established, vibrant community organisation integral to Kirkbymoorside and the district of Ryedale.

So, despite the planning worries, the band has had another good year. A good year born out of the fact that at the moment we are a very strong, hard working community based organisation that benefits from the support and encouragement of the good people of Kirkbymoorside and surrounding area. We hope that 2015, the 200th anniversary of the earliest record of a band in the town, is the start of another 200 years of great community based music making in the town.

However, in 2015 we will undoubtedly need the unstinting support of the Town Council as we never have before. On behalf of the entire Band please do not let our Bi-Centenary year become a milestone marking the start of our gradual demise. When the time comes to consider future applications for residential housing in Manor Vale please think Community, please think Scouts and please think of the beloved Town Band.

Merry Christmas and please, make it a Happy New Year for Kirkbymoorside.

John Woodward

Kirkbymoorside Town Brass Band