

There are a number of topics to update you on in this edition of the Newsletter but by far the most timely is the article on the future of the Co-op. **Please read it and respond to it.** All the other articles are mainly updates: on the Yealm Hotel; our AGM; affordable housing; some other planning applications; and the two woods which we now lease.

### **THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE OF OUR CO-OP**

Everyone will be aware that the long term future of the Co-op has been uncertain for a number of years. We are now led to believe that it is highly likely to close unless the current premises can be expanded. This is not the first time that this threat has been made, but we understand that it is now very real as the shop size is insufficient to survive in the present commercial market (eg in the face of cut-throat competition and the ever-growing home delivery options).



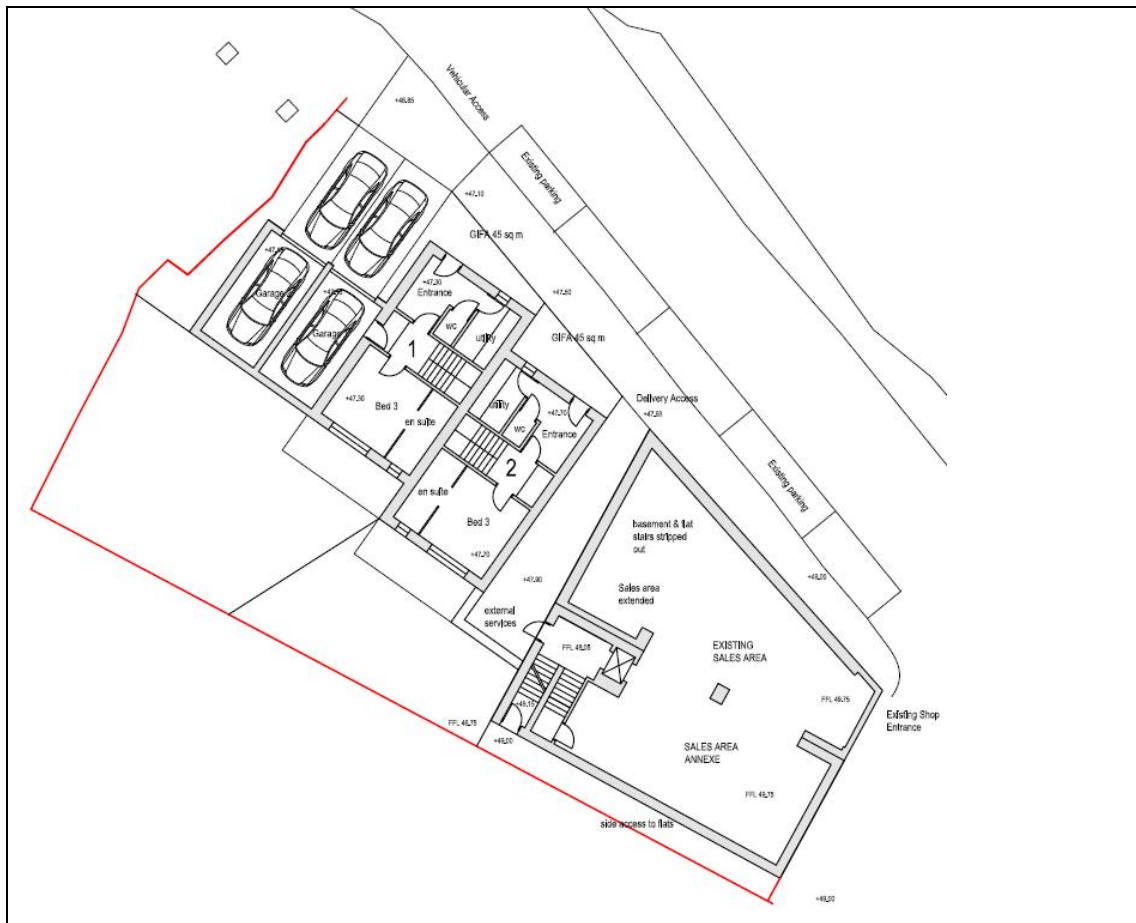
In March, George Buckland kindly organised a small, informal meeting with a representative from Co-op Estates. In addition to George, the meeting was also attended by your Chairman and reps from the Neighbourhood Plan team and Revelstoke Community Trust. The message from the Co-op was very clear:

- The shop floor area must be expanded if the Co-op is to survive.
- The in-store storage area must be increased and the access to it improved.
- To achieve this, the existing Co-op building and the neighbouring property (The Observatory - which is already in Co-op ownership) must be amalgamated into a single building.
- To fund this, it will be necessary to provide:
  - Two flats at first floor level. One already exists in the present Co-op building and a second will be provided above what is now The Observatory.
  - Two 4-bed town houses in the 'valley' between the present Co-op building and the drive down to Orchard Brook. These will include 2 off-road car parking spaces for each of the houses.
- It is not anticipated that the new expanded store will have a significantly increased footfall however the improved range of goods will allow customers to purchase 'larger baskets' ie do not

expect it to replace your major weekly shop if that is what you currently do.

- There is likely to be no change to the number of deliveries nor to the size of lorry delivering the goods.
- If the Co-op proceeds with this plan, the shop will provide an uninterrupted service during the development work.

At the meeting, the Co-op provided a discussion document with their outline proposed redevelopment. This accompanies this Newsletter as a separate document. It shows the plans and some illustrative sketches of a possible development. Here are some extracts:



The first floor plan



View from Newton Hill



View down Newton Hill



View from Church Park



View from Yealm Road

The discussion document will only be developed into a planning application if the Co-op is reasonably assured that the proposal has broad community support. If it does not, they will not waste time and money on an application. They were keen to stress that, in these circumstances, the Co-op will close. Those attending the meeting had a clear impression that this was not an idle threat. Therefore, if we want to see the local Co-op remain in business, we do need to be sympathetic to their proposal – or at the very least something similar if they modify their plans.

The RYDA has been asked to gauge the views of its members and so do please let us know what you think. No guarantees can be given, but it does seem to be support the proposal or say farewell to the Co-op.

### **UPDATE ON THE YEALM HOTEL**

This important planning application has obviously taken up a great deal of your Committee's time over the last few weeks. From the responses we received to our last Newsletter (03/2017) approximately two thirds of you gave reasons to object. A few remained neutral whilst the remainder were broadly supportive. The overwhelming majority of both objectors and supporters expressed relief that the hotel building itself was to remain, albeit in a modified form.



As a result of your comments, we submitted a letter of objection on your behalf. The main reasons we gave were: overdevelopment of the site; the incongruous design of the detached 3-bedroom house; parking issues; the scale of the new build apartment block; and the likelihood of high levels of second home ownership.

You may be interested to know that the current declared position of Red Earth Developments Ltd is that the application is all or nothing. At this stage they have given no indication that they might be prepared to modify parts of the scheme in order to mollify some of the more significant objections from both us and others.

At the time of writing there has been no hint whether the planning officer will be recommending approval or refusal, nor whether the application will be going to the Development Management Committee and, if so, when.

### **RYDA AGM**

We are pleased to report that we had a successful AGM in April with a good turnout who seemed to enjoy the briefings almost as much as the wine! For those of you who were not able to make it, your Committee remains unchanged:



Acting Chairman	Christopher Lunn
Treasurer	Alan Lomax
Secretary	Helen Lancina
Member (Planning)	Peter Pritchard
Member (Village Directory)	John Tighe
Member (Website)	Lesley Dempsey
Member	Chris Bradley
Member	Suzanne Sparrow

Perhaps the highlight of the evening was the spontaneous talk by George Lopes on the need to protect the red squirrel from the predatory grey. George passionately explained that the grey squirrel was doing incalculable damage to our woods with the potential over the next decades to change the entire character of the woods. He advocated the use of squirrel boxes which humanely kill the greys. He also revealed that, if anyone catches a grey, it is against the law to release it back into the wild; it has to be humanely destroyed. If anyone wants any more information, George would be very happy to hear from you. If there is enough interest in a further more detailed talk by George, he has offered to organise it.

## **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Members can hardly have failed to notice that the affordable houses on Parsonage Road are now complete and that a number are already occupied. We thought that you would be interested to know who is living in them.



### **Rented (8 properties):**

- 1 allocated to a family from the Parish
- 6 allocated to families from South Hams District (but not from the Parish)
- 1 remains unallocated. It had been accepted by another N&N family but they have withdrawn because they finally decided that they could not afford the rent. The property is being re-advertised.
- Every N&N family who applied and was eligible for a 2/3 bed property has been allocated. This mirrors precisely the drop-in session held by Devon & Cornwall HA when only a single, qualifying local family turned up (and has been successful). The only other local families who expressed an interest at the drop in session were only eligible for a 1-bed property of which there were none. The rules prevent under-occupation (cf. the so-called 'bedroom tax'.)

### **Shared ownership (7 properties)**

- Devon & Cornwall have had 10/20 enquiries but only 4 applications.
- 2 allocated to families from the Parish.
- 1 allocated to a family from Yealmpton.
- 1 from a Newton Ferrers family still processing a mortgage application.



These outcomes are disappointing on the face of it because previous housing need surveys had indicated a far higher local demand. So why the poor response? Impossible to be certain but it might be:

- Advertising failed to reach potential applicants? Unlikely as the advertising was quite comprehensive. And an affordable housing site so prominent on Parsonage Road for over a year is hardly out of sight out of mind.
- Rents too high? Clearly possible as one family has demonstrated.
- Previous HNS have been misleading about the true demand? Difficult to believe as the 2016 HNS was not wildly different from earlier ones.
- Design of the properties inadequate in some way?

- Concern over the future housing market? Worsening economy around Brexit; now seeing evidence of falling house prices?

The dilemma we have now is 'what do we do about affordable housing in the future?' since interest is so low and only 3 or 4 out of 15 properties have gone to locals.

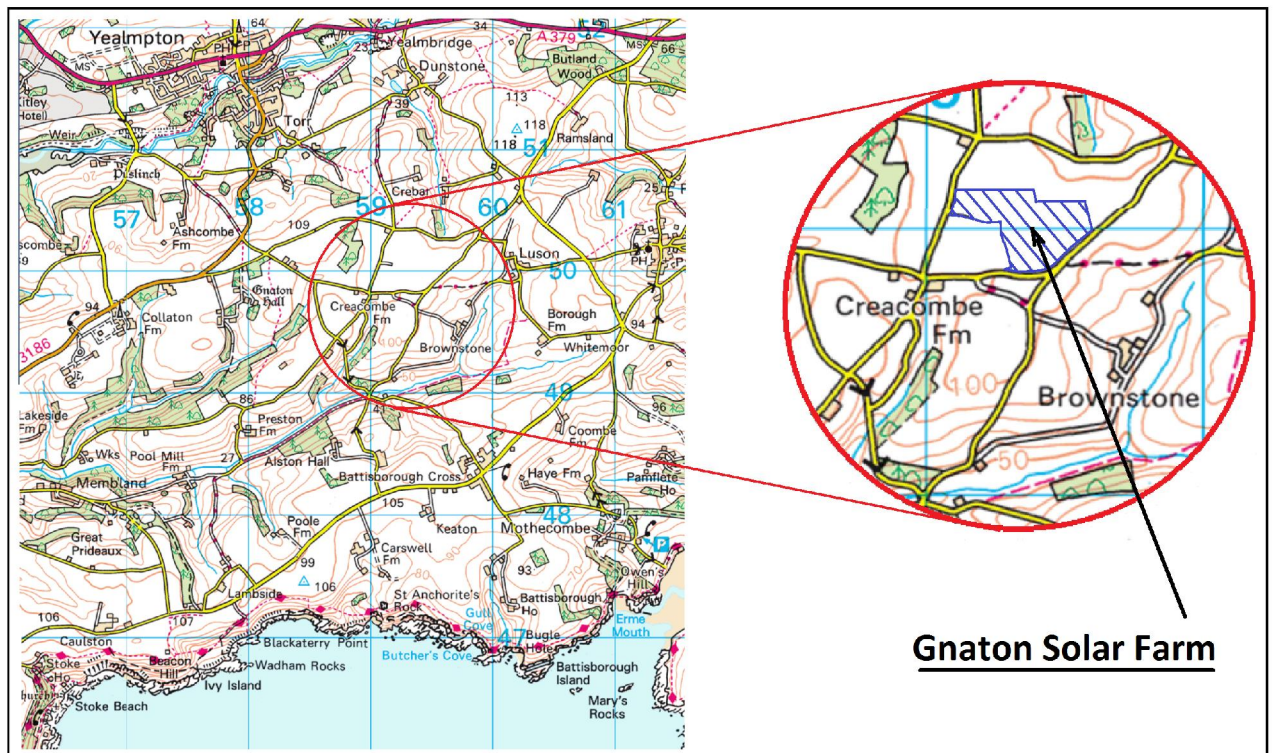
## PLANNING APPLICATIONS

### **The Tea House** Application ID: 4046/16/FUL

We briefed you in Newsletter 02/2017 on the application for a sunken one-bedroom holiday home at The Tea House, Beacon Hill, on the Revelstoke Drive. This application was refused by South Hams' planners in late March.

### **Gnaton Solar Farm** Application ID: 1109/17/FUL

An application for a new solar farm of up to 7.3MWp generating capacity has been submitted for land just north of Creacombe. It will lie immediately outside our Parish boundary in the Parish of Yealmpton.



Everyone has an opinion on solar farms. Notwithstanding that the site is in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, our current judgement is that this site is not so significantly intrusive when seen from within the Parish that our objection should be automatic. If you have an opinion, do let us know; the deadline for any comments to South Hams District Council is 24 May.

## BROOKINGS DOWN WOOD AND EASTERN HILL WOOD

As you know, the RYDA is now leasing Eastern Hill Wood on Middlecombe Lane from The Woodland Trust under the same terms as Brookings Down Wood. We include the Management Committee's latest newsletter for your information.



*"Our working parties have been very busy over the winter months especially now that we have started managing Eastern Hill Wood as well. We have had good support from up to 12 volunteers at working parties including some new recruits, logging no less than 250 hours of work. Their support and hard work deserves a big thank you and we welcomed Paul Francombe onto our committee in March."*

Brookings Down Wood Regular maintenance of paths and edges, strimming and pulling of bramble has resulted in a spectacular display of bluebells which peaked a week earlier this year. The steps behind the tennis courts need replacing and alternative access will be created.

Eastern Hill Wood The RYDA has now signed the lease with the Woodland Trust at a peppercorn rent and the maintenance becomes the responsibility of the Brookings Down Wood Management Committee.



*Prior to the WT contractors' arrival we had permission to start work on clearing the entrance of fallen trees and lonicera which extended past a dilapidated camper van to a caravan at the far end of the site. We removed three sheds of corrugated iron and placed the contents in piles to await removal by the WT contractors. In April the contractors cleared the site of all rubbish including the camper van and caravan and*

*made safe trees on Stoke Road and Middlecombe Lane.*

*The gate and posts at the Stoke Road entrance have been replaced and a squeeze-through entrance for visitors has been installed. The gate and posts have been treated with a preservative and we await a sign from WT. We have started to cut down some laurel and rhododendron and this will be one of the ongoing tasks for the autumn.*

*We have constructed steps into the top of the wood and off Middlecombe Lane. However there are no connecting paths at present and the wood is*

*steep and at times very slippery. We will be starting on connecting the two entrances with zigzag paths and steps in the autumn.*

*We have erected 11 bird boxes and a bat box and have planted sessile oak, wild cherry and hazel off Middlecombe Lane.*

*Thank you to all our 'Friends', donors, sponsors and volunteers without whom none of this would be possible. For more information or to become a 'Friend of Brookings Down Wood and Eastern Hill Wood' or even sponsor a bird box, please contact Val Lomax - [val@lomcroft.plus.com](mailto:val@lomcroft.plus.com) or 872444"*

## **HARBOUR CLEAN-UP**



The annual harbour clean-up will be on Saturday 13th May, later than usual because of awkward tides. Once again, it is being organised by Andrew Beveridge. Volunteers are still needed so if you can help in any way, please contact Andrew on 873351.

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