

# Saltburn Foreshore Committee

The newly constituted Saltburn Foreshore Committee would like to take this opportunity to introduce itself formally to the residents of Saltburn and readers of Talk of the Town. The committee was initially born on a wave of frustration over the total lack of management, leadership and foresight with regard to Saltburn's prime resource and traditional focal point – the seafront.

Saltburn has resort status; in short this means that Saltburn is actively promoted as a tourist destination. One look at the gift shop in the Tourist Information Centre and it's plain to see just how much effort goes into this endeavour. The latest and most reliable data to confirm that visitor numbers have increased are ticket sales on the cliff lift and the fact that both car parks on the lower promenade will shortly be charged all year round. If there is one department that works really well its finance and procurement! This committee will be asking robust questions of our local authority. With the help of the local strategic partnership we can highlight problems, promote events and actively improve the overall look, efficiency and business potential that should have been addressed, given the amount of regeneration money already spent.

If you go to a council meeting or ask one of our highly paid chief executives why the sea-front at Saltburn is in such a state they will readily be able to tell you: (a) how much money they haven't got, (b) what can't be done, and (c) why nothing of any real value has been added to the infrastructure in the last five years. Let's not forget that any local authority is only in existence in order to serve the community which elected it. However, problems seem to stem from a culture of crisis management which runs through all levels of Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council. Again and again we see decisions being made by accountants and then justified by politicians.

As a general rule of thumb we are all pretty powerless as individuals to facilitate change or influence political agenda, either nationally or locally. I'm sure everyone reading this article will have had exasperating and exhausting dealings with large organisations, conglomerate groups or local government bodies. It is only when people and communities band together to speak with one voice that our elected representatives take any notice at all. In any organisation, no matter how large, there has to come a point where someone stands up and says "Wait a minute, the emperor's got no clothes on!" Saltburn Foreshore Committee's overriding remit and the primary reason for its establishment is to act as a lobbying/pressure group in order to effectively target existing resources; constantly improve services; maintain infrastructure and successfully promote tourist facilities for both upper and lower promenades. To this end we have and will be regularly updating a website and in line with our constituted aims will also be regularly reporting our progress in achieving these goals.

A closer inspection of local authority policies and

budgets reveals that monies that have been ear-marked and allocated for improvements in Saltburn are, in actuality, being diverted and deflected around the borough in order to stabilize budgets elsewhere. For instance, Jarvis (which is one of, if not the largest subcontracting organisation used by Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council – for everything from valuation and information technologies to painting and general maintenance) are paid a set fee per year for general maintenance on the sea front. Why then did the recent 'refurbishment' of the main toilet block cost us a staggering £54,000 on top of their annual flat fee? Have you ever watched one of the many popular home-improvement programmes? How on earth was such a sum spent? For this kind of money you could have demolished, rebuilt and still had change. With this in mind one shudders to think how much the new steps leading to the end of Hazelgrove will have cost. It is, of course, deeply gratifying to see these steps being sited and whilst we all applaud long overdue improvement in access between upper and lower promenades, it would be even more gratifying to see these recent additions as part of a clearly defined and co-ordinated programme of development.

The 2007 season is approaching rapidly and the seafront remains in an underdeveloped condition. The local authority is responsible for the letting of vacant space yet still, even after two years, we have no facilities for sit-down eating. The toilets, showers and lockers within the foreshore building are well maintained by Saltburn Surf School, yet unfortunately are available only when the School is in operation (seven days a week in the summer). In spite of resident businesses persevering we find ourselves in basically the same situation we were in ten years ago. Compromises have been offered with no responses given; alternate business proposals have been rebuffed. To what end? Surely this makes no economic sense? In the view of Saltburn Foreshore Committee and the wider community, it is essential that the local authority start to deliver on its stated tourism initiatives in order to finally realise Saltburn's publicised prominence in the 'Coastal Plan: Hartlepool to Saltburn' document.

The Saltburn Foreshore Committee's aim for 2007 is to bring together local people, public sector organisations and businesses in order to have a sea front that we can be proud of. There is no room for party political allegiances within these aims. It's about common sense and having a vision for improving and maintaining our wonderful sea front that will be long lasting and sustainable. The government has set much store in the importance of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) functioning as a recognised link between local authorities, private and voluntary sectors and the local people. We'll see if they work!