Statement to the Park Authority Meeting on 28 March 2013

Item 15: Commoners Dwelling Scheme

Good morning, my name is Ted Widdows, Chairman of the BRRA

The cynical proposal to change the panel composition and to review the Commoners Dwelling Scheme, after the horse has bolted may come too late for me, but I will focus some comments on Recommendation 4 'that the guidance notes and application form be amended'. Not surprisingly the amendments need to go well beyond what is proposed. We are happy to agree to proposals 1-3

Step 1.

Is to re-examine and a take independent legal advice on what the eligibility criteria must be and to ensure that the guidance notes reflect that. You have heard from John de Trafford that the Authority is in denial about the specific wording of the CP11.

Step 2.

Is to ensure that the application form reflects the full eligibility criteria and is accurately answered.

It would make sense for the confidential information to be in a separate, removeable section of the application form, so that interested members of the public can have sight of the other sections.

Step 3.

The authority draw up the Commoners Dwelling Scheme Pane Statement in a clear way, which answers questions either 'Yes' or 'No', with an accompanying explanation which has not been spun to meet their own agenda. It should also be complete.

Step 4.

Following approval of this statement by all members of the Panel, it should be issued immediately as a public document. It can then be challenged by members of the public, as part of the planning process and not rely on the freedom of information act to obtain the document.

I put it to you that these proposals would be:

- Much fairer to both applicants and objectors
- Much less likely to result in negative publicity
- Much less likely to lead to an appeal or judicial review

Finally...

the commoners' dwelling scheme was reviewed as recently as October 2011.

The fact that it needs reviewing again, after only two applications, reflects badly both on the the scheme and on the panel.

There is no point in making any of these changes unless the criteria are applied both robustly and honestly, which was not the case with the last application.