

Corporation Meeting held on 8 April 1982

CONCRETE PAVILION – SUNNY BLUNTS

1. In October 1981 Easington District Council Housing Committee received a petition from residents living in the immediate vicinity of the concrete pavilion regarding misuse and excessive vandalism. A subsequent officer report was considered which essentially proposed demolition.
2. The Council, however, decided because of the financial situation (demolition, I understand, was estimated as £4,000 or £30,000 depending upon the method used) and that demolition was an obvious extreme solution, that the report should be deferred and the comments of the Development Corporation and Peterlee Town Council be sought with a view to possible joint action by the three authorities.
3. At this juncture Members should note the structure was transferred, along with the housing in 1978, and is solely the responsibility of Easington District Council; the Corporation are under no obligation whatever to become involved.
4. Following a request by the Chief Housing Officer at Easington, I attended a meeting of officers in January along with Tom Hunt, the local Town Clerk, to discuss the problems associated with the Pavilion.
5. It was made clear immediately by Mr. Miller, the Council's Chief Housing Officer, that whilst his authority were reluctant to demolish the structure they may have to do so due to public pressure; albeit the demolition could not take place at an early date because of lack of funds.
6. In discussion both local authority officer representatives indicated they were of opinion their authorities would support (subject to examining the financial implications) a venture which resulted in the structure being functional.
7. I indicated in the discussion that the Corporation would probably support financially some form of "clean-up" exercise but emphasised "financial cuts" did not merely apply to local authorities and any contribution would of necessity be limited. I also stressed that before there was any financial commitment discussions should be held with the local community and residents' association.
8. Accordingly a meeting was convened by Easington Officers on 18th March 1982 in the Council Chamber at Easington to which representatives of Sunny Blunts residents and Northern Arts Council were invited along.
9. Unfortunately, the residents were not represented, although an "observer" from Northern Arts did arrive to advise whilst the organisation would be interested in what was to happen to the Pavilion they did not wish to be involved in any way.
10. During the interval between the meetings I had talked to a local scout patrol leader with a view to the scouts undertaking a clean-up of the Pavilion, subject to the Corporation providing materials. The response had been favourable in that I was advised nationally "The Kentucky Fried Chicken Co." sponsored a competition amongst the scouting movement related to environmental improvements/clean-ups. Peterlee scouts, the patrol leader's group, had in fact been sponsored by Easington District in the same competition last year and had won the regional award for cleaning a stretch of the beach at Crimdon.
11. I advised the officers of the District and Town Council and we agreed a further meeting should be arranged to seek the views of residents on:-

- (a) the Pavilion being converted to a functional use;
- (b) the Pavilion being cleaned up by the scouts and other interested community groups;
- (c) any other suggestions

12. A public meeting was convened on 29th March 1982 in the conference suite at Lee House to obtain the views of residents. I attended on behalf of the Corporation along with officer representatives of the District and Town Council. The meeting was attended by approximately twenty residents, a representative of Shotton Hall School and the Press.

13. Although the residents could not be moved from a very firm view that it should be demolished. It was clear from the meeting that the problem is not so much a criticism of the Pavilion because of its artistic form, but genuine annoyance at the uses it is being put to by a large number of juveniles from areas as far apart as Wingate and Horden. The Northern Echo the day after the public meeting quoted as follows:-

“... Residents living nearby say they have the perfect solution. They claim it is used as a brothel and urinal and say it must be knocked down immediately...”

The Reporter did not misquote the residents.

14. The residents claim the Pavilion is used as a congregating point for youngsters from the nearby Shotton Hall School at lunch-time and in the evenings and at week-ends by juveniles from areas throughout the District as well as from Peterlee. One resident claimed that on Sunday evening, 28th March 1982, there were seventy-three youngsters around the pavilion at one point and that the last of them to depart did so at 11.20pm.

15. Despite pointing out to the residents that demolition of the Pavilion was not likely to stop the youngsters congregating, the unanimous view of residents was the Pavilion should be demolished.

16. Easington District Council were represented at the meeting by the Assistant Chief Housing Officer, Tony Cummingham, who explained that he would report the residents' wishes to his Council, but that because of the present financial stringencies demolition was unlikely to occur during 1982/83.

17. Accordingly, following further discussion the following action was requested by the residents;-

- (i) all three authorities to write immediately to the local Police asking for support in patrolling the Sunny Blunts Pavilion area on a more regular basis. (To date residents claim the local police have been totally unhelpful);
- (ii) Easington District Council to have a “No Trespassing” sign erected on the Pavilion;
- (iii) I should ask the Corporation Board if authority could be given to an occasional evening visit to the Pavilion by the firm undertaking security services on Industrial Estates and at Shotton Hall;
- (iv) That provided Victor Pasmore has sight of the Pavilion in its present state on 8th April 1982 (the date the Managing Director has asked

him to visit Peterlee) the local scouts be permitted to clean-up the Pavilion during the week commencing 12th April as their entry to “The Kentucky Fried Chicken Co.” annual competition, subsequently returning at a later date to design a mural to be painted on the Pavilion;

- (v) That Easington District Council contact Catterick Garrison to ascertain whether Army Engineers would be prepared to demolish the structure free of charge, possibly as a training exercise.

I have already contacted the local Police and now seek your approval to appoint Sure Security to undertake two visits per day to the Pavilion; the estimated cost of the service would be £92 per month and could operate for say two/three months.

18. In addition, I would appreciate your guidance in respect of the cleaning-up of the Pavilion. Obviously, the residents are likely to continue to press for the demolition of the Pavilion: It is therefore questionable whether the Corporation should spend monies on a clean-up of the structure. The cost of suitable anti-graffiti paint is of the order of £3,700 whilst masonry paint would cost approximately £1,000.
19. Before undertaking any clean-up there is, of course, an argument that Victor Pasmore should be consulted. The opportunity to do so will occur at the Board lunch in that Mr Pasmore is to attend.

I should be grateful to receive your instructions.