



Darlaston Local Neighbourhood Partnership – 4th January, 2006

Funding Priorities for Action

Portfolio:	Local Partnerships
Service Area:	Neighbourhood Services
Wards:	Bentley & Darlaston North Ward Darlaston South Ward

Summary of report

The purpose of the report is to inform Members of the Darlaston Local Neighbourhood Partnership of progress to date with the funding priorities.

Recommendations

- (1) For LNP members to note the progress to date
- (2) For the LNP to review progress at the next meeting
- (3) To note each project will be formally assessed by the LNP Project Team to ensure they meet all of the agreed criteria.
- (4) To note each project will be passed to the relevant council officer who will liaise with project champion when required

Progress

Two new projects have been submitted:-

- Archaeological study of the site of the former Bentley Hall, now marked by a cairn stone – (see Appendix 1 below)
- County Bridge Community Association – Youth Project encompassing Environmental improvements to fishing pool at the Bentley Leisure pavilions. – further information will be provided at the LNP meeting.

Please note a detailed update on previous projects will be given at the LNP meeting on 4th January, 2006

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Appendix 1

Archaeological Study of Bentley Cairn

Community- based archaeological study of the site of the former Bentley Hall, now marked by a cairn stone.

May 2005 saw the completion of an extremely successful community-based project to restore, improve and interpret the site.

During the restoration work, excavations revealed stonework of what current evidence suggests, is the remains of the last of the three manor houses believed to have been built on the site.

Following discussions between representatives from the Bentley Cairn Restoration Group (BCRG), Mike Shaw, archaeologist for the Black Country and Kirsty Nichol of Birmingham Archaeology, a study unit based at Birmingham University, we believe that the site now warrants closer examination. This could take the form of an initial geophysical study of the land immediately surrounding the cairn. This would identify any changes to the land below the surface, possibly identifying an imprint of the remains of any construction.

Initially the survey would focus on the possible remains of the 19th century hall. However, we are aware of archive records of an earlier Jacobean building, which was of particular historical significance. It featured in the escape of Charles II after the battle of Worcester in 1651, and was visited by the Rev'd John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church.

There is also archive evidence to suggest that there was an even earlier manor house in Bentley, dating back to the medieval period. Prior to the restoration project, it was widely believed that there had only been two halls associated with Bentley.

Over the centuries there has been considerable disturbance to much of the land in the area – mining, quarrying, construction of the housing estate and the M6 motorway. This will reduce the chances of finding evidence of these two earlier buildings. However, the nature of the site – large expanses of green open space used only for informal recreation – would allow for possibly one of the most detailed archaeological studies in the Black Country for twenty years.

Should initial survey techniques, which can be carried out without disturbance to the ground, reveal interesting results, a traditional archaeological dig could then take place.