



What Next for the Railton?



Castle Ward Green Councillors are calling for action to sort out the derelict former Railton Hotel on Westbourne Road. The building had been previously granted planning permission for a large extension, but this permission has now lapsed.

Cllr Jon Barry said: *“We have had a number of complaints from local residents about the building. In the past, the City Council has been able to get limited tidying-up done on the building and surrounding land.*

However, after five years of dereliction, we really need a more permanent solution. We have asked the City Council to look into its powers over empty buildings, to try to push the Railton back into life.”

Castle Ward City Council election results

Jon Barry (Green)	1492 (elected)
Melanie Forrest (Green)	1204 (elected)
Tracey Kennedy (Green)	1142 (elected)
James Groves (Lab)	589
Peter Rivet (Lab)	585
Joe Wright (Lab)	512
Kyle Patterson (Con)	366
Natalia Weglarz (Con)	247
Paul Bramhall (Lib Dem)	117
Rebecca Parris (Lib Dem)	108
James Parker (Lib Dem)	97
Aaron Spence	38

Cllr Melanie Forrest said: *“Many thanks to everyone who voted for us. We will do our best for all residents over the next four years – whether you supported us or not.”*

Partnership on City Council Cabinet

The results from the May elections were that no party had an overall majority of the 60 seats. After discussions between group leaders, it

Seats on the City Council	
Labour	24
Green	8
Conservative	16
Morecambe Bay Ind.	10
Free Independent	2

was agreed to form a cabinet of Green and Labour members. Cllr Jon Barry said:

“Unlike the national coalition, there is no collective responsibility on the cabinet. Councillors are free to vote against and comment publicly on decisions that they do not like. We felt that this was

important to preserve our independence as the Green Party.”

The two groups have drawn up a list of policies to be considered in more detail throughout the summer. These include issues such as: more provision of social housing; renewable energy generation on Council houses; new allotment sites; and protection of heritage on the canal corridor site. However, the first priority will be to make sure that the Council can set a budget without making major cuts.

RSPCA Close ‘Puppy Farm’

A suspected dog breeding facility in a barn off Ashton Road has been closed down and all of the 37 dogs taken into care of the RSPCA.

Local residents and animal lovers contacted Cllrs Jon Barry and Melanie Forrest with concerns about the dogs’ welfare, and requests for help.

After Cllr Forrest raised the issue at a Castle Ward PACT meeting on July 5th, the issue was taken up by Police Community Support Officer Amy Knott. She arranged an unannounced visit with the RSPCA and a vet. All the dogs had some sort of health problems, such as skin conditions and eye infections. The dogs were mostly pugs and shitsus, plus lurchers and spaniels. Some were 2-3 week old puppies. The owner was nowhere to be seen.

The dogs have been taken to centres across the north-west and will be kept there until the case goes to court. The RSPCA is confident that they will all be re-homed.

Greens Oppose NHS Reforms

The Green Party is campaigning against Government plans that will break up the NHS and allow private companies to take over NHS services.



The Government is planning to get rid of Primary Care Trusts and put groups of GPs in charge of purchasing care from private companies and public health care providers. The Government has back-tracked on some aspects of the plans but the following proposals still remain in place:

- **Privatisation:** Private companies will be allowed to bid for NHS work. This could result in private companies creaming off the most profitable work, leaving the NHS under greater financial strain as it is left to cover the unprofitable work.
- **Quality of care:** There will be competition between private and public health care providers as they bid to supply services. This could mean that the cheapest services are provided, rather than the best quality for patient care.
- **Not a national service:** The NHS will become a market of competing private and public health care providers, rather than a single public health service. The Government will no longer have to ensure that comprehensive healthcare is available throughout the country.

Cllr Tracey Kennedy said. *“A better direction would be for the Government to follow Scotland and Wales and scrap the internal ‘Health Market’, saving around £5 billion per year, and spend this money on improving services.”*

Slippery Pavements

Tracey Kennedy has had the Council clear the wet seeds that were making parts of Westbourne Road slippery. Please complain to Tracey about slippery pavements in other parts of the ward so that she can get them cleaned up too.

For more information see: www.keepourNHSpublic.com.

Residents' Parking

Ward councillors met recently with the County Council's Highways Officers. They said that they have money to speed up the consultation on residents' parking in Fairfield (but they won't commit to a timescale).

Officers say that changes to the existing residents' schemes (e.g. making Wheatfield Street residents' parking and limited waiting) could be made at the same time.

To suggest changes to the existing schemes, please email: customerservicenorth@lancashire.gov.uk or ring 01772 538800.

Weed-killer Worry

After pressure from Cllr Tracey Kennedy the Council has agreed to put up warning notices in future if using strong weed-killers. This issue arose after a dog received burns following spraying of Japanese Knotweed near to the priory.

Sunnyside Lane

Cllr Jon Barry did a spot of pruning on overhanging trees on the green space at the intersection of Sunnyside Lane and Ashfield Avenue.

He has asked the Council to do a fuller job as part of their maintenance programme. Tracey Kennedy also arranged for some of the kerbside weeds to be cleared.

Priory Damage

There has been a spate of damage to gravestones and trees around the priory. After action from Cllr Melanie

Forrest, the Council has agreed to repair the damaged stones, and the police are patrolling there at night.

20 mph Limits Coming Soon

Green councillors are delighted that the County Council will be introducing 20 mph speed limits in all residential streets in Lancashire by the end of 2013.

The police have agreed to enforce the speed limits in the same way as for 30 mph. Cllr Chris Coates said: *"Consultations for 20 mph measures in most of Castle Ward will take place this autumn, for potential implementation in spring 2012."*

Storey Garden

Ward councillors are trying to get the Storey Garden re-opened to the public. Cllr Jon Barry said: *"A lot of public money was spent on the gardens and it is important that the public should have access."*

Potholes

Many potholes have been filled in, but councillors know of outstanding cases on Westbourne Road, Dallas Road and Coolidge Avenue.

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