

LEVENS PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER – SUMMER 2023

Chairman's Comments

Welcome to this Summer edition of the Parish Council Newsletter. At the Annual Parish Council Meeting in May, I was re-elected as Chair and Councillor Roger Mason was re-elected as Vice Chair. As I said in the annual village meeting back in March, I thank my fellow Councillors for everything they do to support our village. On April 1st the Westmorland and Furness Council came into being; replacing SLDC and Cumbria County Council. The Councillor representing this area on the new Council is Janet Battye who is also a member of our Parish Council. We wish her well in her new role. For the first time in four years we had a 'proper' Annual Village Meeting in March, with contributions from most village organisations, which I always enjoy and makes me realise just how much goes on in our village. Thanks to all who came and to Councillor Roger Mason for his update on the new Village Hall project. May saw us celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III and thanks must go to all involved in the village celebrations, be it the buntings and flags around the bus stop and in other places and properties and the people behind the picnic on the playing fields which was very well supported and which enjoyed good weather. The observant amongst us will have seen the new Parish Council Noticeboard. We were given a grant towards its cost by Councillor Jim Bland whilst he was our Councillor on the old Cumbria County Council and thank him for the donation. There will be an addition to the Notice Board to commemorate the Coronation of King Charles III.

Work is progressing on the new Village Hall site with the perimeter walls under construction. The north, stone, wall looks very impressive. There is also progress in other areas.

Following an incident in the village the Parish Council wrote to several local cycling clubs asking that they remind their members that we are a village which does not have footpaths on every road. Our concern was appreciated.

We are still trying to find a person who can help us with maintenance / woodland matters etc who is suitably qualified and insured. If you are interested or know someone who might be interested, please get in touch with any of the Parish Councillors or our Clerk Martin Curry.

Please take care, stay safe and do not hesitate to contact any member of the Parish Council if you have any concerns or suggestions to improve our village.

Roger Atfield - Chair, Levens Parish Council

Levens Community Project

Progress on the issue of invitations to building contractors to tender for the construction phase of the new village hall continues as the Project completes of several tasks in the pre-construction phase. The work on the 'back' or eastern boundary wall is going well but is technically complex and therefore following detailed specifications drawn up by the Project's structural engineer. When last we wrote, there was reference to the ongoing work to bring electricity and water services to the new village hall site. The ability to get services onto the site was never in doubt, but as liaison with Electricity North West (ENW) developed, so too did concern about the high costs they were quoting for the work. Part of the problem was that the early discussions were relatively remote i.e. email correspondence with a desk-based unit that had a fixed view of where the route should be and a book-based price for the work. The Project Team then worked exceptionally hard to identify suitable alternative routes and to consider different ways by which the 'on the ground' work could be delivered. This led to very positive discussion with local representatives of ENW during which all possible options were explored and a significantly more cost-effective solution identified which has now been agreed. The Project thanks ENW for working with it on achieving this outcome. A quote for water supply has also been accepted. In the meantime, the sale of surplus stone from the site continues, generating an important income stream for the Project.

Levens Parish Woodlands

A year ago, we wrote about the long-term plans for the management of woodland owned by the Parish Council in and around Levens village. The Parish Council knows that unmanaged trees can cause problems - for instance on overhead power lines or adjacent highways. In addition, a tree health survey in 2020 indicated that a number of ash trees are suffering from ash die-back and the Council will increasingly have to address the removal of individual trees that pose a particular risk. This work has already commenced, and it is hoped that new ash with some resistance to dieback will regenerate, but this is by no means certain. Also of immediate concern is the thinning of trees that are growing through power lines. Representatives from the Parish Council recently met with a Lead Surveyor from Electricity North West who acknowledged that work on trees is required in several locations. The Parish Council cannot employ contractors to do this work which must be commissioned by the electricity board and may require power shut-down for a time when the work is being done. Unfortunately, the power company is currently inundated by work of this nature, and it may be some time before they can attend. In the longer-term however an extensive programme of woodland management will be required and will include felling and thinning on a rotational basis. The immediate impact of woodland work often comes as a shock to some and can appear to be an unnecessary 'destruction' of a cherished woodland plot. Positive woodland management, however, significantly improves woodland structure - from ground cover, through the shrub layer to the taller canopy, and benefits the overall woodland ecosystem. Increased light to the woodland floor after felling and thinning encourages flora and fauna, whilst most broadleaved trees will coppice very quickly and grow back with vigour. The Parish Council will ensure that future proposals for felling and thinning are well publicised before the work is due to start.

Care for the Village

The Parish Council has always considered that the maintenance of the public spaces around the village is of considerable importance in the projection of a well-cared for local environment. It also appreciates that not everywhere needs 'tidying-up' and that for instance some roadside verges are exceptionally rich in their floristic quality and that therefore a balance needs to be struck. The Parish Council meets informally in June annually and takes a walk around the village to note good news stories or to discuss areas where attention may be required. On 13 June it took such a tour and in addition to the question of trees discussed above, it noted that a number of roadside verges in the village centre were looking in need of a trim. This is part of the work that a parish 'handy-person' could attend to but unfortunately the Parish Council failed to appoint someone following its advert towards the end of last year.

Are you / do you know a handy-person? The Parish Council is actively looking for 'handy-person' who can tackle a wide range of general maintenance work. This is a paid position and ideally the person appointed should be trained in the use of trimmers and other powered equipment. If you, or anyone you know are interested in taking on this role, please contact the Clerk at levens.parish@gmail.com or phone 07388 920410. A written job description is now available.

Greening Levens Campaign

The Great Big Green Week is now an annual national event that sees people come together to celebrate community efforts to protect the planet through tackling climate change and protecting nature. As this Newsletter is being prepared, the 2023 event (10 – 18 June) is drawing to a close and Levens can be proud that it has played its part through the Greening Levens Campaign. The event kicked off on June 9th with a talk about Dark Skies by Jack Ellerby, whilst there were a variety of activities on Saturday 10th including displays on energy efficiency, waste and recycling, composting and a nature watch in St John's Churchyard. To round off the week on 17 June there was a screening of David Attenborough's film 'A Life on our Planet' in the Levens Institute. More events are planned by the Levens Greening Group during the rest of the year, and all are welcome to its meetings.

For further information, contact Janet Battye: janetmbattye@gmail.com

The Jubilee Orchard

As previously announced, the Parish Council is pleased to have registered a site under the Green Canopy Scheme which was initiated as part of the Jubilee celebrations by Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The scheme promotes the planting of trees across the nation and the Parish Council has proposed the creation of a Jubilee Orchard on land that it owns adjacent to its affordable houses on Underhill. Plans are well underway for the creation of the site which will provide a lasting commemoration of the life of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. And whilst on matters Royal, the Parish Council was pleased to witness a range of activities in the village organised in celebration of the Coronation of King Charles III over the bank holiday weekend 6th – 8th May. It thanks all organisers and participants for creating a weekend to remember.

Highways Matters

The plan for a footpath down Levens Lane nearly came to fruition in the months preceding the new Westmorland and Furness Council (W&FC) but unfortunately stalled on the question of costs. The money that had been budgeted for this project was allocated elsewhere by Cumbria County Council but Cllr. Battye (local Councillor for W&FC) has undertaken to push the scheme as a continuing priority within the new Council. Flashing warning lights have been installed at three locations around the School. The Parish Council continues to engage with Westmorland and Furness Council over other highways matters in the Parish. If parishioners identify highways issues such as potholes, do please relay these to the Parish Council – but also log concerns directly under [Report a Problem](#) on the Highways website at:

<https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/parking-streets-and-transport/streets-roads-and-pavements>

Miscellany

Community Emergency Plan: This remains work in progress and a further meeting with key players in the Village is being arranged to take the concept forward.

Levens Annual Parish Meeting: The Annual Meeting was held on 21 March and the Parish Council would like to thank all who attended and particularly those who gave reports on a variety of activities run by local organisations. After the break during the 'Covid years' it was encouraging to hear and share in the resilience of the village.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2022-23: The Annual Internal Audit of governance and accounting practices has been successfully completed and the Parish Council has approved returns for submission to the External Auditor. Further information on this process can be found on the noticeboard and/or the website at:

<https://www.levens.org.uk/parish-council/parish-council-finances>

Levens Parish Council 2023-24

Councillor	Address	Tel.	Email
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Clerk	Address	Tel.	Email
Martin Curry	18 Barn Holme, Kendal, LA9 5LP	07388 920410	levens.parish@gmail.com

Councillor, Westmorland and Furness Council: Cllr. Janet Battye, Inglewood, Cinderbarrow, Levens LA8 8NX. Mob: 07711 583013. Email: janetmbattye@gmail.com

Police: PCSO 5233 Jayne Park. Email: jayne.park@cumbria.police.uk

Parish Council Meetings 2023-24

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of most months in the Methodist Church Meeting Room commencing at 7.30 p.m. unless otherwise indicated / notified. Matters relating to Parish Council meetings including Agendas and Minutes are posted on the Parish Council Noticeboard and on its webpage: <https://www.levens.org.uk/parish-council>. All are welcome to attend and there is an item for public participation on every Agenda.

2023	2024
July 11	January 09
August – no meeting	February 13
September 12	March 12
October 10	April 09
November 14	May 14
December – no meeting	

There are, of course, other sources of local information so do please check out our official website at: www.levens.org.uk or join the discussion in our Facebook Group - just search for 'Levens Village Community'