

LEVENS PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER – SUMMER 2022

Chairman's Jottings

At the Annual Parish Council Meeting held in May, I was re-elected as Chair and Councillor Roger Mason was elected as Vice-Chair. I am grateful for the confidence of my fellow councillors and will do my best to not disappoint! I take this opportunity to thank Councillor Dave Rogerson for all his efforts in his role as Vice-Chair in the last few years. With the anticipated progress in various areas of the Levens Community Project, the Parish Council felt that Roger Mason, as a key player in the Project, becoming Vice-Chair was a logical and beneficial decision. As usual the latest information regarding the Project is elsewhere in this Newsletter. May also saw elections for future members of the new Unitary Authority to replace SLDC next April. Congratulations to our Parish Councillor, Janet Battye, who was elected as member for the proposed new local ward.

June saw celebrations for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and as on previous national occasions, we had a beacon at Hying. The weather was mixed, but by the time the beacon was lit the rain had stopped and Roger Mason's experience of constructing these celebratory fires ensured that with just two matches the fire rapidly became visible to all. My thanks go to Roger for moving all the 'fuel' up to Hying and for its construction. Thanks also go to our Vicar, Bryan Kerr, for leading our cheers for Her Majesty. Thanks must also go to the organisers of celebrations and street parties which took place in the village over the four day bank holiday.

The sale of the old Carpet Shop is still progressing but not as smoothly as the Parish Council had hoped. We have again stated our support for the proposal and have provided further confirmation of the building's history for SLDC.

As I referred to in our last Newsletter the new village Website has been developed and has gone 'live'. Whilst there are a few wrinkles to iron out, the Parish Council feel it is a giant leap forward and hope you agree. Our grateful thanks go to Tom Hecht for all the work and expertise he has put into this project.

Other items currently under consideration include the possible replacement of the Parish Council Notice Board by the Methodist Church, because it is showing signs of age and is not really large enough for all the information we feel we have to display these days. The picnic area on the old W.I. site on Brigsteer Road needs the northern boundary wall extended and possibly some other changes. As mentioned elsewhere the Levens Charity has made two recent awards and hopefully will receive a boost to its funds in the near future. At our July meeting we heard about the 20 mile an hour limit recently introduced to the centre of Arnside. It has taken years to be implemented with several surveys and questionnaires on the way. The cost was around £20,000. Something for us all to ponder over.

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

Greening Levens Campaign

Greening Levens, which is supported by the Parish Council, is developing an exciting agenda and has had 3 meetings during the first part of the year: in May, Kate Jackson, who created the Lost Word Community Garden for Cumbria Wildlife Trust, gave a talk on Gardening for Wildlife, whilst in June, Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS) spoke about energy efficiency - which the Group hopes will lead to them mapping the Parish to provide advice about installing solar panels on our roofs. On 11 July, the Group had a really positive 'Next Steps' meeting pulling together ideas for future actions, starting with the Great Big Green Weekend on Saturday 24 / Sunday 25 September. More information on this and other initiatives can be found on the village website:

<http://www.levens.org.uk> - or contact Cllr. Janet Battye.

Levens Village Community Website

As promised in the last Newsletter, a refreshed Levens Village Community Website was launched in April creating a brighter and more dynamic web presence for the community. This is managed by the Village Webteam which works together to keep our website and Facebook pages up to date and relevant. The Team is always looking for news, events and pictures to post so please feel free to send items (the Team will monitor contributions) or join in by commenting, liking and sharing some of our news. Volunteers to this Team are always welcome.

The Contact details for the site, and Levens Facebook are:

Website.....<http://www.levens.org.uk>

Facebook.....<https://www.facebook.com/levens.org.uk>

The Parish Council section has been redesigned as part of this work and aims to bring more relevant and updated information to parishioners on aspects of its work. Refer to it particularly for Parish Council meeting agendas, minutes and, whilst some of its sections remain work in progress, most recent news on Charity activities and the Levens Community Project. The Parish Council wishes to record its thanks to Tom Hecht for all his creative effort and input to the new site and the Village Webteam for maintaining it. For the Levens Parish Council webpage, within the Community Website, visit: www.levens.org.uk/levens-parish-council.

The Levens Charity

In the last issue, we gave an update on the work of Levens Charity which makes grants available in support of qualifying projects and we are pleased to report two recently successful applications. In May, St John's Church was awarded £2,500 towards the renovation of its attractive lych-gate and in the same month Levens Methodist Church secured a grant of £1,000 towards the creation of a Community Garden within its grounds. In the last edition we also reported on the success of the Broadband for the Rural North (B4RN) community initiative which has now concluded after bringing hyper-fast broadband connectivity to nearly 320 properties in the village. This too was supported by the Charity, which in return has benefited from numerous donations to it from you, the connected residents of Levens, in lieu of payments to the local volunteers who undertook the work. The Charity Trustees thank all donors, as well as the B4RN Team, for delivering an important community project.

Further information on the Charity and Grants Criteria, together with the Application Form, can be found on the Parish Council page of the Village website: www.levens.org.uk/levens-parish-council.

Local Government Reorganisation - and go to: www.newcouncilsforcumbria.info

Most readers will be aware that local government in Cumbria is undergoing significant reorganisation. In short, the current six district councils and Cumbria County Council will be replaced by two new 'unitary authorities' which will come into being on 1 April 2023. Until then, all existing structures and staff remain in place. South Lakeland, Barrow and Eden will join to form Westmorland and Furness Council (W&FC) whilst Cumberland Council will cover Allerdale, Carlisle and Copeland. Elections to the new Councils were held in May when Levens Parish Councillor Janet Battye was elected to the new W&FC. This is operating as a 'shadow' Council and is planning the amalgamation of services under the new Authority with a goal of delivering local services if and where possible. Shadow Councillors are having briefing sessions on Council responsibilities and services to help them understand what will be required of the new Council. Janet is on the "Overview and Scrutiny" Board which is examining the proposals as they are being developed and is updating the Parish Council on progress at each meeting.

Levens Community Project

Progress with the Project continues in a positive way: the ground preparation (or infrastructure) work at Underhill has gone well and is nearly finished, including the diversion of the mains sewer in liaison with United Utilities. Infrastructure work (which is funded by a grant from The Community Led Housing Fund administered by SLDC) also includes the bringing of services to site including water and electric and the Project looks forward to finalisation of that work over the next few months. The preparation of invitations to contractors to tender for the building construction phase is close to completion and they will be issued as the utility services are installed. Further work has now been completed at the new Village Hall site and the quarry faces cut-back to the final perimeter. Tenders for the construction of the boundary walls to the designs agreed with the structural engineer have been received and a contractor appointed, though this work is unlikely to start until the Autumn. Much of the funding for the new Village Hall is coming from the sale of plots with planning permission to build dwelling houses and there has been good progress on this. Of the three plots at Cotes, two are now sold and one remains on the market, but with some current interest. Of the three plots at Church Road, two are sold and the third is under offer.

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

The Parish Council was delighted to respond to an invitation to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee by lighting a beacon near Hying as part of the national network on Thursday 2 June. Although it was a dour evening, around 120 people gathered to enjoy the event which was introduced by a few words from Cllr. Roger Atfield, Chairman of the Parish Council. Thanks are due to Cllr. Roger Mason who built and organised the beacon. The Parish Council was also pleased to agree a more lasting tribute to the Queen by registering with the Queen's Green Canopy Scheme designed to plant trees across the nation. The Parish Council has earmarked a site for a Jubilee Orchard on its land off Underhill and is working up plans for planting and a commemorative plaque.

Community Emergency Plan

In common with many other local communities, Levens Parish Council is turning its thoughts to the preparation of a Community Emergency Plan as part of efforts to develop resilience to changing circumstances, be they economic, cultural or environmental. Recent events such as Storm Arwen and the more recent spike in temperatures have demonstrated that climate based emergencies are increasingly frequent and can have significant impacts such as blocked roads and power cuts. The Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC), of which Levens Parish Council is a member, is encouraging parish and town councils to develop their responses to a variety of potential events with a view to maintaining local services and providing support for all, but especially for the more vulnerable members in our communities. CALC has produced a suite of helpful documents including what constitutes an emergency, guidance on response and risk assessments. A key element in this is to mobilise and coordinate a whole community response which in Levens would include the Village Hall, the Churches and voluntary organisations such as Levens Good Neighbours. A small Working Group of the Parish Council will have met by the time this Newsletter is published to explore and understand the advice available. It will prepare recommendations to the Parish Council on how village resources might come together to develop this initiative. It is likely that representatives of all key organisations will be invited to join a follow-up meeting to develop the practicalities of community emergency response.

Levens Parish Council 2022-23

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County Councillor: Jim Bland, Oakridge, Underbarrow LA8 8BL.

Tel: 015395 68576. Email: James.Bland@cumbria.gov.uk

District Councillor: Cllr. Kevin Holmes, Field Place, Levens LA8 8EJ.

Tel: 015395-52063. Mob: 0777 345 3548. Email: kevinrholmes0@gmail.com

Police: PCSO 5233 Jayne Park

Email: jayne.park@cumbria.police.uk

Website: www.levens.org.uk

Parish Council Meetings 2022-23

Meetings will be held in the Methodist Church Meeting Room commencing at 7.30 p.m. unless otherwise indicated / notified. Matters relating to Parish Council meetings will be posted on the Parish Council Noticeboard and on its webpage: <https://www.levens.org.uk/levens-parish-council>

2022	2023
14 June	
12 July	10 January
August – no meeting	14 February
13 September	14 March
11 October	11 April
08 November	09 May
December – no meeting	