

# LEVENS PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER – SPRING 2022

## Chairman's Jottings

When you read this we will already be two months into 2022 and the pandemic will have been with us for almost two years. Whilst restrictions are easing, some of us are still taking precautions and are cautious as to where and how we go, but hopefully things will continue to improve for the benefit of us all.

Your Parish Council has continued to meet on a monthly basis and elsewhere in this Newsletter is more detailed information on some recently considered items. Work is progressing on the creation of the new village website which among other considerations will be more suitable to access from mobile devices. We do not yet know the full ramifications to us of the proposed local government changes to Cumbria however there will be elections in May - though they will not be for our Parish Council. We have submitted our Precept requirement for 2022/23 and it is a tad higher than last year but still prudent. The old Carpet Shop is 'under offer' as you will possibly have noticed and we hope that there will be a result acceptable to all. Plans have been submitted to SLDC regarding a footpath down Levens Lane but I must emphasise that this is a very early step and nothing can be taken for granted. The new village hall project continues to move on and a lot of groundwork has recently taken place at the site of the four homes at Underhill.

This year is the Queen's Platinum Jubilee – a first for our country. It is intended to light a beacon at Hynning in the evening of 2<sup>nd</sup> June as part of a country-wide celebration. We also hope to plant an orchard on Parish land adjacent to the new houses on Underhill by the bridge. It has been registered as part of the national Green Canopy plan to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee. If you have any thoughts about how we as a village could celebrate this unique milestone e.g. a giant bring your own picnic etc. then please let us know. All contributions gratefully received and if your neighbourhood has something planned, then please let us know as well.

It is a legal requirement to hold a Village Meeting once a year. The last 'usual style' meeting we had was in 2019. The 2020 meeting in March was cancelled at the last moment and the 2021 meeting was held via Zoom. Since May last year we must hold our meetings face to face and not remotely. Because of the considerations mentioned in my first paragraph, we have decided to hold this year's Annual Meeting before the March Parish Council Meeting. It will commence at 7pm on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March at the Methodist Church - but will be much reduced; dealing only with the legal requirements. In time, we will consider whether we can all get together later in the year to 'catch up' on what our village organisations have been doing and perhaps link it with something else.

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

**Roger Atfield – Chair Levens Parish Council.**

## Levens Community Project

Many residents will have noticed the commencement of work at Underhill where groundworks are underway prior to the construction of 4 affordable units (2 two-bedroomed and 2 three bed-roomed houses). Current works are being undertaken with the assistance of grants from the Community Led Housing Fund managed by SLDC. Two of the building plots at Church Road have been sold and two at Cotes are sold subject to contract leaving just one plot at each site left for sale. Once funds from the sale of these plots are secured, the Project will move on to the construction phase of the new Village Hall where current work is focussing on the design and build of the boundary walls. The Project is looking forward to considerable progress during the course of the year.

## **Levens Parish Woodlands**

The Parish Council owns a number of well-wooded sites and has the benefit of a 10-year Woodland Management Plan (September 2018) as well as a Tree Health Report (December 2020). In a semi-urban environment unmanaged trees can have a damaging impact - for instance on overhead power lines or adjacent highways, and the health survey indicated that a number of ash trees are suffering from ash die-back. The course of this disease will render some trees unstable, so removal is a situation that the PC will increasingly have to address through a phased programme of felling infected trees and general thinning of woodland plots. It is hoped that new ash with some resistance to dieback will regenerate, but this is by no means certain and if not, we may lose a crucial component of local woodland, as has already happened extensively on Scout Scar. This work was due to commence in early 2020, but Covid-19 delayed the procurement of a Felling Licence and work can only now be re-scheduled. Some limited thinning may have started by the time you read this, but only up to the end of March as no work will be undertaken during the bird nesting season. Over the next few years an extensive programme of woodland management will be required on a number of sites 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 encourages flora and fauna, whilst most broadleaved trees will coppice very quickly and grow back with vigour. Best management practice supports periodic removal on a rotational basis, allowing regrowth, leaving some as coppice stools and selecting others to grow back as standard trees. This is what the work along the Brigsteer Road is designed to achieve and is a management approach recommended for our compartments in the village. Initial work is likely to focus on the Heaves Quarry site opposite Heaves Farm, but we will ensure that future proposals for felling and thinning elsewhere are well publicised before the work is due to start.

## **Christmas in Levens**

Our Village Christmas Tree went up early on purpose this year, in an effort to bring some cheer to the village! It withstood some fierce weather and, surprisingly, didn't suffer any damage or even lose one bow. The tree was very well received and seems to have been genuinely appreciated once again - the 'Christmas Tree Team' received lots of positive comments and thankyou messages.

Thank you all for your support, appreciation and generosity. Your very generous donations totalled over £480 which is being donated to the local Food Bank. Special thanks are due to all those who gave extra help and to Vanessa & Dave at the shop, for contributing the electricity for our fantastic new lights! We can be a very proud village - here's to next year!

## **Greening Levens Campaign**

Phase 1 of this national initiative aimed to raise awareness about climate change and how we can all make small action changes. Scarecrows around the village helped to promote the campaign and some 50 people put cards in their windows to show support. Over a year their pledges would result in 26.37 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> being saved equating to some £13,800. Phase 1 also generated lots of ideas which we'd like to take forward, probably in a Zero Carbon Levens Group. This will work on a range of projects including the development of a community garden and Plants on the Green, supporting the Village Shop (to reduce food miles etc.), providing advice on retrofitting (to reduce our use of fossil fuels for heating), biodiversity and supporting and researching the potential of community energy. Watch this space!

## **B4RN – Broadband for the Rural North**

We are celebrating a remarkable village achievement as we finally reach the latter stages of making fast-fibre broadband available to ALL in Levens. The process began 6 years ago when the Parish Council invited Barry Forde, the founder and CEO of B4RN, to address the Annual Parish Meeting. This was followed-up by Cllr's David Rogerson and Kevin Holmes who invited him to an informal public meeting in the Institute. Keen interest from the Levens Community led to the creation of a Committee to take the initiative forward. Simon Doddrell (Chairman), Laurence Ormerod, who designed the routes, together with John Wood, Gary Mason, John Watson, David Rogerson and Kevin Holmes took key volunteer roles.

The cost of installation was in excess of £810,000. As the Project developed it secured funding from a government voucher scheme which realised £500,000. SLDC made a grant of £15,000 towards the distribution cabinet and the Project invited private investment from Parishioners in the form of shares. We are pleased to say that the voucher target was achieved by early December 2021. Now in March 2022 we are in the final stages of connecting everyone who subscribed amounting to over 300 properties - which is close to 50% of the Parish. Infrastructure is in place for properties that may require connection in the future.

As the Project nears completion, we would like to thank the numerous villagers who have voluntarily given their time to help drive the project forward in a multitude of ways - we all owe them a huge debt of gratitude. **A Community Project Built By the Village for the Village.**

## **The Levens Charity**

Levens Charity was created from the proceeds of the sale of Lowgate Allotments in 1994. The Charity Commission appointed Levens Parish Council as its sole Trustee to apply the investment income for any charitable purpose benefitting the inhabitants of the Parish. It does this by inviting written applications from organisations or groups of individuals in the Parish. These are evaluated in accordance with the published Grants Criteria which, with the Application Form are available on the Parish Council page of the Village website: [www.levens.org.uk/levens-parish-council](http://www.levens.org.uk/levens-parish-council).

The B4RN Team wishes to thank the Levens Charity for helping to fund the materials and equipment needed for the Project. **It is asking that people in receipt of Dig Grants from B4RN to consider donating some of the grant to the Levens Charity so that the money is there to help future projects in the village.** The suggested donation is £50 payable to the Levens Charity online via <https://www.justgiving.com/levenscharity> Or by sending donations payable to "Levens Charity" direct to c/o John Wood, Woodcroft, Levens Lane, Levens, LA8 8NQ.

## **Levens Parish Council Webpage**

Amongst several channels of communication for Parish Council news, a primary source is the PC page of the village website. This has been maintained in its current form for over 10 years and the Parish Council is pleased to announce that a redesigned and updated version will be launched in April. This will provide more comprehensive information on specific areas of Parish activity and ensure that statutory requirements are fully and easily accessible. Watch out for a brighter, better web page: [www.levens.org.uk/levens-parish-council](http://www.levens.org.uk/levens-parish-council).

### **LEVENS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

**The Annual Parish Meeting will be held at 7.00p.m.on Tuesday 08 March 2022  
in Levens Methodist Church.**

The Agenda for the meeting will be posted on the Noticeboard and web page and will consist of the Chairman's and Financial Report followed by an opportunity for Parishioners to raise any questions relevant to the work of the Parish Council.

## Levens Parish Council 2021-2022

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

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

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**Website:** [www.levens.org.uk](http://www.levens.org.uk)

### Levens Village Community Website

The Village Webteam works together to keep our website and Facebook pages up to date, current and relevant. The Team is always looking for news, events and pictures to post so please feel free to send items or post yourself (the Team will monitor contributions) or join in by commenting, liking and sharing some of our news. Contact details are:

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

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