

LEVENS PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER – WINTER 2023

Chairman's Comments

Welcome to this edition of the Parish Council Newsletter which I hope you will find of interest as we all want the best for our village. With Westmorland and Furness Council replacing Cumbria County Council in April the progress of some matters, unsurprisingly, slowed but all are now back underway.

About a month ago, whilst putting out the wheelie-bins at night under the streetlights, I caught sight of a dark coloured dog trotting down the middle of the road, obviously off lead. I was just wondering why and how when the owner, I presumed, passed me. By this time the dog was about 10 metres away and approaching a road junction. Bearing in mind it was dark, with a loose, dark-coloured dog and the person responsible for it wearing dark clothes, I thought "this is a recipe for possible hurt and loss". Within a 30mph speed limit a dog must legally be kept on a lead when on or near a road. If you love your dog, please keep it on a lead - and you legal.

Recently, the Parish Council has received comments over vehicles parked in unsuitable locations and in places which make the road so narrow that whilst a car could pass, an emergency vehicle like an ambulance or fire engine could not. We might know another way around, but an emergency vehicle driver will not have that knowledge. There are also areas where cars are parked half on the pavement when really the road is wide enough for the car to be fully on the road and yet leave enough space for larger vehicles to pass.

Whilst on the subject of traffic, the suggestion of a 20mph limit throughout the village has been raised periodically and Westmorland and Furness Council is currently developing its policy on this matter. As you no doubt know, Wales has recently made this change nationally and it has not been favourably received by everyone. There is a little more on this later in the Newsletter - something to think about.

Since our Summer Newsletter there have been changes to our bus service which give more buses into Kendal during the week and on Saturdays as well. Full details are on the Village Website. "Use it or lose it" is a well-known phrase and this is so true of this benefit to us. So can I please ask you to try and use these buses which take us into Kendal and back into the centre of the Village – no more traipsing up Bell Hill from Levens Bridge!

Electricity North West have advised us that they will be doing tree work at Cotes and Underhill, including some Parish Council land on the weekend 25/26th November in the vicinity of their power lines. See the article on woodland management for more detail further on in this Newsletter.

The new Village Website has proved to be popular and well used. Indeed, we have received several complimentary comments. We need to keep it relevant and up to date and to this end if you feel you could help with any part, whether that be contributing photographs of village events and places or perhaps typing items / features to be uploaded etc. please contact the website designer Tom Hecht at tom.hecht@levens.org.uk in the first instance. Thank you.

The Parish Council is pleased to be able to help celebrate Christmas once again this year with a tree between the bus stop and shop as usual. We hope the switch-on will be on Sunday 26th November and more details will be given closer to the date. Meanwhile you might like to put it in or on your calendar/diary/phone!

And as this is the last Newsletter for 2023 may I take this opportunity to say an early "Seasons Greetings" - and please take care.

Roger Atfield - Chair, Levens Parish Council

Levens Community Project

Financing the Project has always been a key priority in the minds of those tasked with delivering it, and so far it has been extraordinarily successful in generating the funds necessary to realise its objectives. The aim has always been, and remains, that it shall be cost neutral as far as the Parish Council is concerned - and yet the Parish Council has been a major source of funds for the Project. This has been made possible by the sale of parcels of Parish land where, through innovative thinking, the value of those parcels has been significantly uplifted by securing planning permission on them. Of seven plots (including Sizergh Fell Quarry) originally forming part of the overall Project, five have been sold and one is under offer, leaving just one to sell in due course. This demonstration of raising resources from within the Project is a vitally important component in securing a second channel of money through external grants. Through this strand, funders look to ensure not only that the scheme meets relevant criteria, but also that the applicant has shown commitment to raise funds for itself (match-funding). Many external funders have, and continue, to exhibit their confidence in the Project by providing financial support and the Project is deeply grateful to them. Formal acknowledgement will be made in due course. One of the most recent opportunities for new funding is through the Government's Community Ownership Fund and the Project is delighted that an Expression of Interest submitted to the Fund recently has been accepted. This will now require considerable work on the part of the Project to prepare and update a suite of detailed technical and financial data before an application is submitted. And herein lies a third strand of resourcing for the Project through the intense voluntary effort of those involved in its management. If a value could be put on the time input from this sector, it would certainly match, if not exceed the contributions attributable to own resources or external funding. This is a remarkable example of team working and dedication to achieving an end goal for the benefit of the village.

Levens Parish Council Woodlands

In the last Newsletter we updated Parishioners on plans for the long-term management of Parish Council woodlands, including a site meeting that had taken place with Electricity North West (ENW) about the encroachment of branches adjacent to power-lines at Cotes and Underhill. Clearing power-lines of obstructions is the responsibility of ENW and can only be done by them. They acknowledged the problem but indicated that due to other priorities it would be many months before they could get to the work. We were therefore pleasantly surprised when they gave us notice that they have scheduled the work for the weekend of 25-26 November. Their plan is to prepare the site(s) on Saturday and switch the electricity off on the Sunday to enable them to do the work. This is something over which the Parish Council has no control but those likely to be affected should note the dates. We are sure more detailed information will be available closer to the time. The work will be significant but limited to a corridor either side of the power-lines. In order to take advantage of this work, we have applied for a Thinning Licence from the Forestry Commission to deal with failing ash and thin out the dense understorey (mainly sycamore) over a wider area. This work will be undertaken on a phased basis over a five-year period and is work that is in line with recommendations in the Woodland Management Plan prepared in 2018. Though the immediate impact may look dramatic, the increased light that will be allowed through to the woodland floor will encourage a diversity of flora and fauna and broadleaved trees will readily regrow with a new vigour.

Greening Levens

The Greening Group has had successful, well-attended sessions recently, including one by Cumbria Action for Sustainability on Retrofit Made Easy, where thermal imaging finds cold spots in houses and advice is given on how to make houses more energy efficient. Thermal imaging is available for Levens householders. The Group is thinking of ideas for more talks on climate change and biodiversity loss in the Spring, possibly including Active Travel and Waste/recycling. Any other ideas welcome! **Next event** – see Miscellany. For further information contact janetmbattye@gmail.com.

B4RN – Broadband for the Rural North

Connections to the B4RN network have continued since the local volunteer team disbanded in May 2022 and there are now 333 properties taking advantage of hyper-fast fibre-optic broadband. If you are interested in signing up (£60 connection fee and £33pm for 1000mbps service) and would like some advice, then contact levensb4rnproject@gmail.com here in the village or go to the B4RN website <https://b4rn.org.uk/get-b4rn> and complete an expression of interest. One of the added benefits of the Project was a scheme conceived by the local B4RN Team whereby residents in receipt of a grant from B4RN (the 'dig grant') were encouraged to donate a proportion to Levens Charity in lieu of connection costs which were done free of charge by local volunteers. This attracted a great response, raising over £11,600 in donations and a further £770 anticipated from HMRC in respect of donations that were Gift Aided. The Trustees of the Charity have expressed their sincere thanks to all in the B4RN Team and through this Newsletter to all those who donated.

Highways Matters

As advised last time, don't forget that the Highways Section of Westmorland and Furness Council (W&FC) maintains a system that enables anyone to report issues with local roads and paths - so if you spot a problem do go to: <https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/parking-streets-and-transport/streets-roads-and-pavements>.

The Parish Council has a small Working Group looking at road safety and traffic calming around the village. In the recent past, and with financial help from the Levens Charity, this has successfully installed two speed indicator devices (SIDS) to add to the one that rotates between local parishes. The Parish Council would be delighted to welcome anyone keen to work with its existing team as a volunteer in the management of these devices. If that is you then do please contact the Clerk on levens.parish@gmail.com.

More recently, the Working Group has worked closely with Highways to get flashing warning lights on the approaches to the school. At the request of the Working Group, Officers from Highways are doing further work on measures to improve pedestrian safety and expect to have plans ready for consideration by the Parish Council by early November.

Recently, W&FC have been developing a Policy that will enable local communities to propose 20 mph zones in their local area. Parish Councils will be front and centre to any such process which will also require meaningful public consultation. Details of any proposals would have to be worked up by Highways followed by further formal consultation. The question of costs, which are likely to be significant, would need to be confirmed.

And finally, Highways are offering to have discussions with Parish Councils to confirm arrangements for snow ploughing and gritting on roads that are not in Priorities 1 or 2 (most of Levens) and the Parish Council will follow up on this.

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.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2022-23: The external audit has been completed and the Notice of Conclusion of Audit issued.

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

Cold Calling: Levens is a No Cold Calling Zone (NCCZ) and the Parish Council is in contact with Trading Standards who will provide a new Toolkit and the various literature, stickers and road signs to support the initiative.

Brigsteer Road Picnic Site and the Jubilee Orchard: Plans for improvements to the Picnic Site and the creation of the Jubilee Orchard continue to be worked up by the Parish Council.

Talk to Greening Group 13 November: The Lowland Curlew Recovery Group: Meth. Ch. 7.30pm.

Levens Parish Council 2023-24

Councillor	Address	Tel.	Email
Roger Atfield (Chair)	The Old Court, Church Rd, Levens, LA8 8PU	015395 61574	rogeratfield@btinternet.com
Roger Mason (Vice-Chair)	Heaves Farm, Levens, LA8 8DU	015395 60200	roger@heavesfarm.co.uk
Susan Bagot	School House, Church Road, Levens, LA8 8PU	015395 60588	sbagot@schoolhse.co.uk
Helen Burrow	Davlen Fold, Brigsteer Rd, Levens, LA8 8NT	015395 61082	helenburrow20@gmail.com
Janet Battye	Inglewood, Cinderbarrow, Levens	07711 583013	janetmbattye@gmail.com
Kevin Holmes	Field Place, Levens, LA8 8EJ	07773 452548	kevinrhomes0@gmail.com
David Rogerson	16, Nethercroft, Levens, LA8 8LU	015395 61628	davidirogerson@btinternet.com
Mark Willacy	Hundred Acre View Church Rd LA8 8PS	07786 080893	mark@dhwillacy.com
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
November 14	January 09
December – no meeting	February 13
	March 12
	April 09
	May 14

There are, of course, other sources of local information so do please check out our official website at: www.levens.org.uk. There is also a local Facebook Group where items of local interest are discussed - just search for 'Levens Village Community'.