

LEVENS PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER – NOVEMBER 2017

Message from the Chairman

Welcome to this, the last Newsletter for 2017 and I hope some of the contents, at least, will be of interest.

As I am sure you will have noticed, the old carpet shop now has a “For Sale” sign from an Estate Agent and is also listed on the internet. We are grateful to the owner for having arranged for the grounds to be tidied up. We must now see what the future holds.

I recently attended a Local Area Partnership meeting and a representative of Highways England was present. They are responsible for the A590 and following a recent reorganization they have now taken more work “in house”. The effect will probably take time to work through but we were assured that the road is under review.

B4RN – high speed broadband – is steadily progressing and an update is included in this Newsletter. Nearby parishes that have gone live are very pleased with the results.

There have been expressions of interest in the plots of land the Parish Council has up for sale and more information is elsewhere in this Newsletter.

As usual, if you have any queries or concerns about the village please do not hesitate to contact me or any other Councillor.

Roger Atfield

Household Emergency Plan

ACTION with Communities in Cumbria (ACT) is encouraging households across the county to consider what local risks may affect them and how to be better prepared. It has prepared the enclosed leaflet and asked us for help in its distribution. The leaflet includes practical suggestions, including the benefits of having a plan; what to put in an emergency ‘grab bag’; how to stay informed and responding to an incident. We hope you will find it useful.

Levens Village Community Website <http://www.levens.org.uk/>

The Village Webteam works together to keep our website up to date, current and relevant and we welcome new members Guy and Maggie to the team. Members buddie up and liaise with groups within the village to check their own subpage for accuracy. Some groups have proved difficult to contact, for example the YFC and Friends of Levens School. Could members of these and any groups please check their content on the webpage and get in touch to update content if necessary or add a new page if you are not there.

Facebook – The group activated a link to our own Facebook Page in June and have fast grown to having 112 *Likes* in the village. Six of the Webteam are noted as admin on this page and are always looking for news, events and pictures to post to the page. Please feel free to send items or post yourself (admin will approve) or join in by commenting, liking and sharing some of our news. <https://www.facebook.com/levens.org.uk/>

Levens Community Project

There is current interest from a potential purchaser of Sizergh Fell Quarry, whilst interest has also been expressed in a couple of the plots at Cotes. Agents are following-up on these contacts and continuing to market on behalf of the Parish Council. In the meantime, we are working closely with South Lakeland District Council on funding opportunities. The Government has provided SLDC with £2.36m of funding in 2017 (known as the Community Housing Fund) to help tackle housing needs in local communities and enable the delivery of new community-led housing schemes. The Levens Project appears to satisfy relevant criteria and we are developing a significant bid into the Fund.

Affordable Homes to Buy on the Story Housing Development, Levens

Cllr. Helen Burrow is acting as Village Co-Ordinator between prospective purchasers, Story Homes and SLDC for the affordable houses on the new Story development off Greengate (to be known as 'Meadow Wood') and has written the following update:

There will be 17 affordable homes, of which 9 will be for "discounted sale" with the price set by SLDC according to house and bedroom capacity. (Current prices, which are reviewed annually, are: £100,947 for a 2-bed house or bungalow, £116,886 for 3-bed home).

Story's recently approached SLDC to get the "discounted sales" changed to "shared equity" which would have meant a mortgage for a percentage of the house and paying a rent on the remainder. I brought a great deal of pressure to bear on SLDC to justify this proposal and to make public both responsibility for any decision and the criteria applied. The Planning Department, the Chair of Planning Committee and Housing Strategy Dept. and our Councillor Annie Rawlinson, were all contacted to this end.

Luckily, my intervention happened before a final decision by SLDC had been taken. Within a week of the news, I was emailed with confirmation from the Housing Strategy Manager that the homes would REMAIN as "discounted sales" and NOT "shared equity".

In early October, I was notified by Story Homes that the first 4 x 3 bed houses would be ready for allocation around February 2018. The homes are now advertised on the Story website and on Rightmove. They will be advertised for 6 weeks with a closing date set by Story. At the end of the 6 week period, SLDC will assess all applications on financial aspects, savings, mortgage availability, local qualification and housing need. They produce a list of eligible applicants and supply that to Story Homes. Full details of how to apply are on the SLDC website: www.southlakeland.gov.uk.

Story Homes are responsible for property allocation NOT SLDC, but we are in discussion with Story Homes to ensure that due weight is given to applicants from Levens. I have acted as Village Co-Ordinator between prospective purchasers, Story Homes and SLDC for over a year now and will continue my support for Parishioners. If you need help, please contact me on 61082 or email: helenburrow20@gmail.com

Access Improvements at Sizergh Castle

We have been contacted by Sam Sharples, the local National Trust Ranger, with early thoughts about access improvements on the Sizergh Castle Estate. No physical works have been planned yet, but Sam is engaging in some public consultation on ideas about improvements. The Trust wishes to improve accessibility for wheelchair users and prams as well as investing in new maps and way-markers for designated routes. Sam suggests that Brigsteer Wood and around the visitor hub at Sizergh are places in the biggest need of an update. He wishes to take into account how the local community uses the land and whether there are thoughts on where improved wheelchair/pushchair access would be a benefit. We have raised the ongoing problems of dog fouling and will be asking for more specific signage on this (and particularly fouling in open country with the risks to grazing stock as mentioned in the last Newsletter). We will invite Sam to a Parish Council meeting to talk about proposals in more detail so if any Parishioner wishes to comment, please email the Clerk with thoughts.

Woodland and Roadside Verge Management

A meeting with the local Forestry Commission Officer is planned for late October when the extent of Parish and Charity woodland in the village will be reviewed. The scope for the development of a management and the availability of grants will be considered. We have drawn up plans for the tidying of the old W.I. land on Brigsteer Road, recently donated by them to Levens Charity and work on this will begin during the winter. This will include the planting of a tree donated by the local W.I. to commemorate their centenary. Discussions with other Parishes who have concluded arrangements with Cumbria County Council for the management of roadside verges have begun and it is hoped to have a scheme in place for the Spring of 2018.

B4RN (Broadband for the Rural North – high speed internet connection for the village)

Ducting has been installed from Hincaster to the A6 opposite Levens Hall; the main crossings under the A6, the River Kent, the A590 and the route into the location for the main cabinet have all been identified and work is being planned. Total investment in B4RN made by Parish residents is £82,000. Further investment will be required to make the project viable – Many residents are looking at taking £1500 shares to gain free connection.

The main core route round the village has been identified and agreement obtained from landowners. However, it would be possible to improve this route with further landowner agreement and this is still on-going.

The village is split into blocks of around 30 houses in order to plan a chamber (Manholes) that will enable it to connect to the village ring main and route through land and gardens – some blocks still do not have organisers / champions. News of the start of further construction is expected very soon.

Follow / Like <https://www.facebook.com/LevensB4RN/> for more news

Current Details for Levens Parish Council 2017/18

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Roger Mason	Heaves Farm, Levens, LA8 8DU	015395- 60200	roger@heavesfarm.co.uk
David Rogerson	30, Greengate, Levens LA8 8NF	015395- 61628	davelouise@btinternet.com
John Thacker	Over Plain, Levens, LA8 8PA	015395- 60136	overplain@yahoo.com

County Councillor: Jim Bland, Oakridge, Underbarrow LA8 8BL. Tel: 015395 68576
Email: james.bland@cumbriacc.gov.uk

District Councillor: Annie Rawlinson, Littlegarth, Lowgate, Levens LA8 8NJ. Tel: 015395 61531
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