

LEVENS PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER – AUTUMN 2021

Chairman's Introduction

It is six months since our last Parish Council Newsletter and looking back it seems that whilst nothing obvious has happened, there has been change in a variety of situations; some of which are given in more detail elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Our Annual Parish Meeting was held remotely on the 13th April and was limited to business legally required to be undertaken. We thank those villagers who were able to “attend”. At the “local elections” held in early May (for the Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner – if you remember) it was not necessary to have an election for Parish Councillors because the number of candidates did not exceed the number of eight persons who form our Parish Council. We all therefore continue to be Councillors and in May our Annual Parish Council Meeting elected me to continue as Chair. I take this opportunity to thank my fellow Councillors for all they do.

Since May our Parish Council Meetings have again been held in public and everyone in the village is entitled to attend. The location may change so please read the Agenda to check where the meeting will be held.

The proposed plan to split Cumbria into two Unitary Authorities has been announced but the effect on Parish Councils is not yet known.

I am sure you will have noticed some changes on some of our sites involved in the new village hall project and at least four of our “For Sale” sites have had offers made and accepted by the Parish Council.

Climate change in its widest sense always seems to be under discussion in the media and we have decided to “do our bit” with Parish Councillor Janet Battye taking the lead in encouraging us all to be a bit more responsible in how we use and can save on our energy consumption. SLDC have contributed to the cost of this first step.

Finally, on behalf of the Parish Council, I thank Vanessa and Dave at our Village Shop for obtaining us a grant of £2,500 from their new main supplier. The Levens Charity will benefit and the grant will be used to further improve the site on Brigsteer Road which was originally the site of the Levens Women's Institute meeting place.

Please take care and stay safe.

Roger Atfield – Chair Levens Parish Council

B4RN (Broadband for the Rural North)

Roll-out through the village continues at a great pace and at the time of writing there are nearly 200 households now connected to B4RN's hyper-fast internet connections in Levens. As a community project spearheaded by a local group of volunteers, the B4RN initiative aims to future proof villagers' online experience. Without the support of the Levens Charity, via grant funding, (which has enabled the Levens B4RN Project to purchase items such as a printer, tools for groundworks, publicity material and other consumables) the Project would not have been able to reach the stage that it is at now. To recognise the hours of time and effort put in by the small team of volunteers over the past 5 years, the local B4RN Group is asking all those going live to consider making a donation to the Levens Charity out of the (minimum) £150 'Dig Grant' that B4RN customers receive from the Government. B4RN's suggested minimum donation is £50 and may be made via on the B4RN website using the JustGiving link. For more details on how to make a donation visit:

<https://www.levens.org.uk/levens-b4rn-broadband.html>

Any donation will be gratefully received by the Charity.

The Local Plan

Early in 2020 SLDC announced its review of the Local Plan to ensure that all its planning policies are up-to-date and continue to meet the development needs of our area to 2040. The Local Plan allocates sites for housing and other developments, such as new employment sites. It also contains the policies used to decide whether to grant planning permissions for new development including affordable housing, as well as policies for improving biodiversity, reducing flood risk, and improving local infrastructure such as roads and cycleways. Residents may be aware that under current plans for local government re-organisation Cumbria is to have two unitary authorities, one of which will amalgamate Barrow Borough Council, Eden and South Lakeland District Councils. SLDC is putting in place its review of the Local Plan at this stage to ensure a seamless transition for the area when the new authority is launched. Under the current Plan, development sites were identified for Levens leading to the new houses on Meadow Wood. Last August the Parish Council was invited to make representations to be taken into account in the review of the current Plan. It expressed concerns about any further large scale housing developments in the village due mainly to inadequate infrastructure such as water supply, sewerage and traffic. This response may be viewed on SLDC's website (details below). The Review is currently in its Issues and Options phase which is a consultation open to all running to the 29 October 2021. As part of this consultation, the Parish Council has recently reaffirmed its earlier response (PC Meeting, 14 September 2021). **Residents with an interest in the revision of the Local Plan are encouraged to visit the SLDC website where a considerable amount of information is available and where consultation responses may be lodged.**

Visit: <https://www.southlakeland.gov.uk/planning-and-building/south-lakeland-local-plan/>

Levens Community Project

The Spring Newsletter (Spring 2021) provided a relatively in depth review of progress with the Project at that time and residents may wish to revisit that on the Parish webpage (www.levens.org.uk/levens-parish-council) in the Parish Council Newsletter section. Since then, offers have been accepted for two of the housing plots on Church Road and two of the plots at Cotes. This leaves just one plot at each site still on the market and the Project is hopeful that these will sell relatively quickly. Once funds are received from the sale of these plots the Project intends to invite tenders from building contractors for the construction phase of the new village hall. In advance of that, further groundworks are proposed and particularly the construction of the perimeter walls around the boundary of the site. Significant progress has also been made on the Underhill site where four affordable houses are to be built. Local contractor Tim Thacker won the competitive tendering exercise for groundworks and the site has been levelled prior to the construction phase - which again will be offered to building contractors on the basis of a tendering exercise. Prior to that Tim will complete the infrastructure work, including the diversion of the main sewer in conjunction with United Utilities. Progress made in 2021 now paves the way for significant works to commence. Thanks are due once again to the Project Team and architect Tony Halls for guiding this major Project.

Miscellany

Levens Post-Box – this was sent away for repair some time ago. Planning permission has been approved for its re-location on Nelson Square.

Levens Parish Council webpage – Changes to the design and content of the Parish Council webpage are taking place. Please accept apologies for temporary disruption to certain areas whilst this takes place. Agendas, Minutes and statutory notices will all continue to be published.

The Levens Greening Campaign

No-one can fail to be aware of the international concern about climate change and its impacts - and yet the ability to make a meaningful difference can often seem daunting to the individual or household. Levens Parish Council believes however that change can be achieved when communities work together and is promoting a local Greening Campaign for Levens. The Greening Campaign is a national initiative designed to encourage local communities to take small, easy to achieve actions that collectively will make a significant contribution to addressing the serious implications of climate change. The initiative, which is endorsed by South Lakeland District Council as part of its wider Climate Action Programme, moves through a series of phases that develop a community response to climate change. By the time this Newsletter is distributed, residents will already have received a Greening Newsletter which, amongst other things, promoted an on-line public meeting on 29 September. The Levens initiative will be formally launched at a public meeting to be held on The Green on 30 October to coincide with the crucially important United Nations COP26 Climate Change Conference to be held in Glasgow from the 31 October to the 12 November. Central to the Levens plan will be launch of the 'Small Action Challenge' initiative where local households can take on simple challenges to reduce, reuse, recycle – and make a difference. Households taking on action challenges can proudly display a Challenge Card to demonstrate their commitment to this cause. To promote the initiative in the run-up to the formal launch there will be workshops to make scarecrows to put around the village. These workshops will be held in the Levens Institute taking place on Saturday 16th and Sunday 24th October between 11.00am and 2.00pm and are open to all. **Please support the Greening Levens Campaign.** Further information can be obtained from Councillor Janet Battye, using the contact details on the fourth page of this Newsletter.

Woodland Management

It is now many months since we reported on the production of a Management Plan for the several plots of woodland that the Parish Council owns around the village. When the Plan was approved in the Autumn of 2018 it was also agreed that priority should be given to conducting a Tree Health and Safety Survey to identify any particular liabilities that individual trees might pose. That Survey was conducted by Andy Banks during 2019 and early 2020 and he produced a Report highlighting recommended actions. It was fully anticipated that work would begin during that year, but of course Covid 19 interrupted those plans. In addition, since the production of the original Plan, ash die-back (a fungal disease originating in Asia) has infected many more of the ash trees in and around the village. The future of infected trees is bleak - some may prove resistant, but many will have to be removed to prevent unsafe dead and dying trees becoming hazardous. This has left the Parish Council with an important programme of work which, with the relaxation of Covid restrictions can only just begin in earnest. At its meeting in September, Cllr. Kevin Holmes, Andy Banks and the Clerk were asked to submit proposals for the work required, dealing with the highest priorities first during the Autumn and Winter months and then working through the woodlands on a phased basis over successive years. In addition there is cut-back work to do on a number of areas bordering the highway and we are also engaging with residents on individual issues where appropriate. These woodlands are an asset to the village providing important amenity and wildlife refuges, adding to both its biodiversity and rural character. A number of sites have particular features of interest, but these valuable places do face other threats – from other tree diseases, non-native invasive species, changes due to climate change and the dumping of garden or building waste. Through this Newsletter, the Parish Council repeats its plea that no unauthorised work, including the removal of timber, interference with trees or dumping of garden waste should take place on Parish Council land.

Current Details for Levens Parish Council 2021/22

Councillor	Address	Tel.	Email
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Susan Bagot	School House, Church Rd, Levens, LA8 8PU	015395-60588	sbagot@schoolhse.co.uk
Helen Burrow	Davlen Fold, Brigsteer Rd, Levens, LA8 8NT	015395-61082	helenburrow20@gmail.com
Kevin Holmes	Field Place, Levens, LA8 8EJ	015395-52063	kevinholmes0@gmail.com
Janet Battye	Inglewood, Cinderbarrow, Levens, LA8 8PS	07711-583013	janetmbattye@gmail.com
Roger Mason	Heaves Farm, Levens, LA8 8DU	015395-60200	roger@heavesfarm.co.uk
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

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.

Email: kevinholmes0@gmail.com

Police: PCSO 5233 Jayne Park:

Email: jayne.park@cumbria.police.uk

Website: www.levens.org.uk/levens-parish-council

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/>