

LEVENS PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER – SUMMER 2024

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

An election for Levens Parish Council in May did not take place because there were only seven candidates for the eight places. Susan Bagot did not offer herself for re-election after having been a Parish Councillor for about 40 years and I take this opportunity to sincerely thank her for all those years of service to our village. We will miss her local and county wide knowledge and all her experience gained over that time.

At the first Parish Council Meeting in May I was re-elected as Chair and Councillor and Roger Mason was re-elected as Vice Chair. In addition, it was agreed to issue a Notice of a Vacancy for a Parish Councillor and this is on the Parish Council Notice Board and on the Levens website. More details are elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Our application to look into a 20 mile an hour limit in Levens did not succeed in this first round of Westmorland and Furness Council proposals but it will continue to be reviewed.

We all have a duty of care to ensure that hedges / bushes etc on our properties do not obstruct or restrict the width of pavements, roads and footpaths. This can also affect visibility at road junctions. At this time of fast plant growth perhaps we should check our gardens and trim back if necessary.

To end, I would just like to remind you that you will need to show proof of identity when you vote in the General Election on the 4th July.

Roger Atfield – Chair, Levens Parish Council

Vacancy for a Parish Councillor

Elections to local authorities, including parish councils, were held nationally on the 2nd May 2024 and in his introduction above, the Chairman highlighted that Levens Parish Council has a vacancy for a new Councillor. This has arisen because nominations from those wishing to stand had to be submitted in advance of the election date and by the deadline for submission there were 7 prospective candidates for the 8 places available. Appointment to the Parish Council was therefore uncontested and no election was necessary. This was confirmed in a Notice issued by the Returning Officer for Westmorland and Furness Council which is on the Levens Parish Council noticeboard and website. When a vacancy arises under circumstances where fewer candidates stood at an election than the number of places available then, following that election, a Parish Council may appoint or 'co-opt' an eligible candidate itself.

So - are you passionate about your local area – do you possess positive energy, are a team player and care about your local community? And if so, have you considered putting yourself forward to become a co-opted Member of Levens Parish Council?

The Parish Council is now inviting Expressions of Interest (EOI) to be submitted to the Clerk from eligible persons. The opportunity to submit an EOI will remain open until 31 August 2024 and a co-option will be considered at the Parish Council meeting on 10 September. The Parish Council may interview candidates to assess the qualities that they can bring to the role and does reserve the right not to co-opt as a result of the receipt of an EOI or to select a candidate if there is more than one EOI. If no candidates are co-opted as a result of this Notice, the Parish Council may thereafter co-opt a Parish Councillor without further notice.

[Further information](#) or email the Clerk (levens.parish@gmail.com).

Levens Community Project

In the previous issue, the Project was pleased to report that it had issued invitations to tender to several building contractors for the construction phase for the new village hall and the affordable houses. That process has gone well and each of the five contractors approached has submitted quotes for consideration. With only one of the full-market value self-build plots left to sell, and significant grants secured to date, the Project has done remarkably well to raise its original funding target of over £2million. It has however been aware that delays caused by Covid, the associated rise in the price of building materials and subsequent inflation were likely to have increased the overall build costs. The quotes from contractors have confirmed this, but for reasons for commercial sensitivity and because the tender process is still live, figures must remain confidential for the time being. It is therefore important that fund raising initiatives continue - and an application to the Community Ownership Fund is nearly finalised, whilst other opportunities are being pursued. In the meantime, however, the Project is working closely with contractors to identify potential cost-savings and in their turn, they are contributing positively to this exercise. Significant reductions have already been submitted to the Project and individual contractors have accepted invitations to meet with representatives of the Project to discuss these before the final selection is to be made.

Working With Westmorland and Furness Council (W&FC)

The Parish Council provides an essential link between the local community and Westmorland and Furness Council which is responsible for the delivery of many local services including highways, traffic management and transport, streetlights, waste collection and re-cycling, determining planning applications and social care. Levens Parish Council works closely with W&FC whenever a relevant issue arises, and the following is an update on some local matters:

Levens Lane footpath: The Parish Council continues to work with W&FC to achieve an acceptable plan for the provision of a footpath down Levens Lane. This is a complex issue and W&FC has allocated resources for a feasibility study to inform next steps.

20-mph Speed Zone: Earlier in the year, the Parish Council submitted a full application to W&FC to be considered for the introduction of 20 mph zone in the centre of the village. It was not selected for inclusion in the first tranche of localities to be accepted, however, and now waits to see how the process unfolds. It is stressed that if selected for future inclusion then it will only proceed if there is evidence of robust evidence of support from residents.

Traffic management within the village: In addition to a possible speed restriction, the Parish Council has re-opened long-standing discussions with Highways to agree other traffic calming measures, particularly in the vicinity of the school.

Reporting Highways problems: Do remember that you can report many highways issues such as potholes, blocked drains, faulty street lighting, road signs or roadside vegetation direct to W&FC at <https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/parking-streets-and-transport/streets-roads-and-pavements>.

Planning for the Future: W&FC not only determines planning applications but is also responsible for preparing the Local Plan for those parts of the district outside the National Parks. Local Plans take a broad and medium-term view of needs of the area and W&FC is starting the process of preparing a new Plan. This will replace the four existing plans developed by the previous District and Borough Councils. The Plan will set out the Council's vision for how the area will change over the next 15 years and how Council services will be developed and delivered to meet those needs. Before W&FC put pen to paper on the new plan, however, they want to hear from stakeholders and communities about what is important to them. To help them with this, they are about to embark on an 'Early Conversation' with communities lasting from the 8th July to the 6th September 2024. They will be advising parish councils and others on what form this consultation will take and Levens PC will do its best to keep you informed on the opportunities offered to communities to get involved.

And, in other matters:

Coronation Community Orchard

The Parish Council is delighted to announce that its bid for grant support from the Coronation Community Orchard Fund has been accepted and it has expressed its thanks to the administrators of the Fund. This means that work can commence on the plot at Underhill and hopefully the site will be ready to accept fruit trees in the back end of the year.

Greening Levens

The Great Big Green Week is now an annual national event that sees people come together to celebrate community efforts to protect the planet through tackling climate change and protecting nature. As this Newsletter is being prepared, the 2024 event (10 – 18 June) has concluded and Levens can be proud that it has played its part through the Levens Greening Group. More events are planned by the Group during the rest of the year, and all are welcome to its meetings. For further information, contact Janet Battye: janetmbattye@gmail.com

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023-24: The Annual Internal Audit of governance and accounting practices has been successfully completed and the Parish Council has approved returns for submission to the External Auditor. Further information on this process can be found on the noticeboard and/or the website at:

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

Village Maintenance

As reported in the last Newsletter and following the thinning out of trees at Cotes towards Underhill, lengths of timber have been removed and stored pending sale, either as a lot or in smaller quantities. Tree work has also taken place on Lowgate with some thinning out of saplings alongside public footpaths. As an aside, but on the subject of income generation, considerable quantities of good quality building stone continue to be sold from the site of the new village hall. This is being sold at commercial rates and has realised a significant income stream for the Project.

Thanks are due to John Morris who has cleared encroaching vegetation from the footpaths through the woodland down from Lowgate.

Andy Brayshaw will soon be strimming a number of grass verges in the village centre and also opposite the site of the new village hall on Lowgate. Vegetation will also be strimmed and cut back at the picnic site on Brigsteer Road. The dry-stone boundary wall on the north side of the site will also be tidied up at its western end.

STOP PRESS: Local Bus Service: As this Newsletter was being finalised on the 20th of June the following email was received from W&F Councils Bus Service Officer:

Kirkby Lonsdale Coaches have decided they are no longer able to provide their service 530 / 531 / 532 (Cartmel - Grange-over-Sands - Levens - Kendal) on a commercial basis. They have asked to cease operations on the 8th July. However as the required forms were not supplied to the Council until last Wednesday, and six weeks' notice of a change is needed, we will be asking the Traffic Commissioners Office, who oversee bus service registrations, to delay this date until the 21st July, to allow extra time for the Council to contact other operators to hopefully arrange a replacement service, and provide revised publicity for the service. There have recently been a number of issues with the service, with journeys being dropped due to late operation; vehicle breakdowns; and non-operation on some Friday and Saturdays due to staff shortages. We will therefore be looking to incorporate some suggestions made by the operator and by the public into the new timetable to address these issues and improve reliability of the service. The Monday, Wednesday and Friday 532 service operated by Blueworks is not affected, and a further short term contract has just been let to extend this service until the start of November, when it will be part of a review based upon the results of the consultation exercise carried out across the whole Council area in April.

Levens Parish Council 2024-25

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
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 453548	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
Vacancy			
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.

The following dates are scheduled for meetings in the Parish Council year for 2024-25:

2024	2025
July 09	January 14
August – no meeting	February 11
September 10	March 11
October 08	April 08
November 12	May 13
December – no meeting	

For other sources of local information 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'.