

LEVENS PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER – SUMMER 2025

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

The May Parish Council Meeting is always our Annual Meeting and this year I was re-elected as Chair and Councillor Roger Mason was re-elected as Vice Chair. Now seems an appropriate time to thank my fellow Councillors for all their work during the last year and also to our Clerk, Martin Curry, for all the work he does "behind the scenes" as well as his more obvious role.

Since our last Newsletter, further progress has been made on several of our projects. Firstly, the old WI site on Brigsteer Road has had its stone wall completed. We are grateful to Vanessa and Dave at our Village Shop for facilitating a grant to us from their main supplier for this purpose. Secondly, the Coronation Community Orchard at Underhill has had grass seed sown and has had some trees planted with more to follow later this year. Thirdly, on the new Village Hall Site nearly all of the stone has been removed and concrete blocks for the retaining wall have been delivered.

Consultation on a possible 20mph zone in the village has commenced and there is a short form to complete on the Westmorland and Furness Council website. This is something you can most definitely have an influence on the outcome because W&F have said that for the proposal to go ahead there must be clear proof that the majority of our village are in support. Please therefore make your feelings, for or against, known by completing the questionnaire online. This consultation ends in mid-July.

Other consultations by W&F taking place at the moment are for comments on waste and recycling and parking facilities in their area. Again, your thoughts can be made online through the W&F website.

I hope you all enjoy summer and please contact the Parish Council with any thoughts, problems or ideas for making our village an even better place.

Roger Atfield - Chair, Levens Parish Council

Please note that in the following articles, Westmorland and Furness Council may frequently be shortened to W&FC.

Westmorland and Furness Council Lighting Policy

As mentioned in the previous Newsletter, W&FC has approved a new street lighting policy which includes giving Parish Councils the opportunity to transfer street lighting under their ownership to the wider Council. The ownership and maintenance responsibilities for lighting across the region are complex and inconsistent and this initiative allows W&FC to develop a harmonised approach to exterior lighting assets. Following this, it asked Parish Councils whether they wished to transfer to W&FC or to keep ownership of existing footway lighting and continue to act as their own Lighting Authority. At its meeting in May, Levens Parish Council agreed unanimously to submit a response in favour of transferring its streetlights. A second question posed by W&FC was that where footway lighting is transferred, W&FC will look to comply with the requirements of the revised Highways and Local Lighting Policy and asked which type of "Switching" would most likely benefit the Parish: Dimming 50% (2100 - 0600hrs) or Part Night Switch Off (0000 - 0500hrs). Following considerable discussion about the pros and cons of both, it was agreed that for reasons of public safety and security the Parish Council should elect for the dimming option.

Dog-Fouling

Sadly, and as reported in the last Newsletter, the incidence of dog fouling seems to be on the increase again with issues reported from several areas in the Parish to which the public has access. The Parish Council is in contact with a newly appointed Officer at W&FC with responsibility for environmental issues and it is hoped that the legal requirement for owners to clean up after their dogs will be reinforced

Coronation Community Orchard and the Brigsteer Road Picnic Site

Both these sites are owned by Levens Charity which is improving them to become community-based amenity assets. Progress with the development of the Coronation Community Orchard at Underhill continues and following the levelling of the site the ground was harrowed, seeded with a recreation type grass seed and rolled. Consideration will be given to planting a wildflower mix in due course. In addition to locally sourced damsons, the plan is to plant 20 fruit trees, and the Parish Council is grateful for advice from the South Lakeland Orchard Group which recommended to plant half the trees now and half in the autumn. 8 apple and 2 pear trees (mixed varieties) have been planted now. Due to the configuration of the site the trees are planted roughly in rows, but they are offset so as not to be in straight lines. Each tree has a rabbit guard and a wire fence to protect against deer browsing. Further work is required on the site including digging-in a duct for the electricity supply to the affordable housing site to the north and the reconstruction of the dry-stone retaining wall against the road. Other boundary works will include provision for access for all to the site. At the Brigsteer Road Picnic Site, the repair of the northern boundary wall has been completed and an information board describing the history of the site is to be installed. This will include an acknowledgement of the grant of £2,000 from NISA and thanks to Levens Village Shop which secured the grant.

20-m.p.h. Initiative

In 2023, W&FC published a Speed Limit Policy Statement which included details of how 20-m.p.h. speed zones can be introduced in local communities. The 20-m.p.h. scheme aims to promote road safety, reduce traffic noise, and support walking and cycling. Parish Councils were identified as the focal point for coordinating this initiative and were required to pass an Expression of Interest (EOI) to participate. At its meeting in November 2023, Levens Parish Council considered informal representations from a number of parishioners and on the strength of these it resolved to submit an EOI. W&FC subsequently issued detailed guidance on how to apply for a 20-mph zone together with an application form. Localities are required to fulfil eligibility criteria, and final decisions will be based on robust public consultation. It was noted that if an application was successful, then W&FC would coordinate public consultation as part of the next stage. The Parish Council was clear that its stance on the introduction of speed restriction would be governed entirely by the outcome of public consultation and on that basis, it submitted an application in February 2024. Levens was not one of the localities selected for consideration in 2024-25 but is included in the cohort for 2025-26. **Residents are invited to give their views during a public consultation running from Wednesday 4 June to Friday 18 July.**

Printed materials are available locally, a drop-in session with the Westmorland and Furness team will be held at Kendal Town Hall on Tuesday 8 July from 2.30pm to 5.30pm and an online survey form is on the Parish website at: <https://www.levens.org.uk/news/2025/6/4/public-consultation-opens-on-possible-20mph-speed-limit-in-levens>. At the time of writing, the response rate from Levens stands at 35% so thanks to all who have participated so far. Everyone in the Parish is urged to participate as your feedback will help shape the final decision and determine whether the village proceeds with the scheme.

Other Local Initiatives

Levens Lane Footpath: A feasibility study funded and implemented by W&FC is nearing completion and is to be assessed prior to a decision on whether the scheme can proceed.

Traffic Management within the village: W&FC Highways are monitoring the effects of the temporary road management initiative in the vicinity of the Playing Fields Gates. If the outcome suggests a case for improvements, then a funding allocation will need to be confirmed.

Greening Levens: The Great Big Green Week (7th - 14th June) was once again successfully run and well attended. Anyone interested in helping Greening Levens should contact Cllr. Janet Battye.

Levens Community Project

Following the detailed update given in the Spring Newsletter there is not too much to report this time round. Further elements of groundworks, including a substantial retaining wall on the new Village Hall site are underway whilst detailed conversations and procurement procedures are ongoing to secure a price for the construction phase within the existing budget. Likewise with the affordable homes, a revised Business Plan is being prepared to support further conversations on funding with Westmorland and Furness Council. The water supply to the site at Underhill has now been connected and the Environment Agency has issued the permit enabling a duct to be dug in to take the electricity supply to the site.

Westmorland and Furness Local Plan

W&FC is working on its new Local Plan which will replace all the existing Local Plans previously put in place by the former Councils. The Local Plan is an important planning document which (amongst other things):

- sets out how much new development (e.g. homes and employment sites) is needed to support local communities;
- makes sure new development is built in the right places and in a way which is best for people and the environment;
- allocates sites for new housing and other development;
- protects some areas and green spaces from development;
- includes policies that are used to decide planning applications;
- plans for development relating to minerals and waste.

W&FC appreciates that it is important to give everyone the opportunity to contribute to the discussion about how Westmorland and Furness should develop over the next 20 years. To do this, it held 'early conversations' with local communities over the summer of 2024 and also asked people to identify land or sites that may be available to be developed for housing, employment, minerals or waste purposes (the 'call for sites'). In May, it published maps showing the sites that have been submitted for consideration (<https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/localplan>). These maps just show the location of land that developers and landowners have *suggested* could be suitable and are not yet allocated for development. W&FC will now carefully assess each of the sites - some which could be ruled out at this stage - for example if they are unavailable for development, or there are too many constraints on the land. Following this assessment, 'short listed' sites will then be subject to full public consultation before being agreed and formally allocated as part of the Local Plan. It is expected that this public consultation on any 'short listed' sites will take place in the Autumn. Several proposed sites are within Levens Parish, and the Parish Council will play its full role in the consultation process.

Parish Emergency Plan

Development of the Community Emergency Plan continues to make good progress. Several volunteers have offered support and Levens Good Neighbours are also keen to be involved. There is opportunity for external funding for resources such as emergency kit bags and discussions are due to be held to try to secure an appropriate level of grant. There are also discussions with Electricity Northwest Ltd to better understand the layout of the local electricity zones so that in the event of power failure, checks can be made to see if power is available elsewhere. The Plan is not yet ready for publication but should be soon once Version 1.1 is finished and agreed.

Annual Accounts

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2024-25 (including the Internal Audit) has been published and may be viewed at <https://www.levens.org.uk/parish-council/parish-council-finances>. It has now been submitted to the External Auditor. The Period for the Exercise of Public Rights runs from 13 June to 24 July.

Levens Parish Council 2025-26

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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 2025-26

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 during the 2025-26 Parish Council year:

2025: 08 July; 09 September; 14 October; 11 November

2026: 13 January; 10 February; 10 March; 14 April.

The Annual Parish Meeting will take place (provisionally) on the 17 March 2026 at 7.30pm in the Village Institute/Hall.

The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council will be held on the 12 May 2026.

Levens Village Community Website

For other sources of local information do please visit the village website at: www.levens.org.uk. where you will find material on a wide range of local activities. If you haven't been there, it really is worth checking out. One page (<https://www.levens.org.uk/parish-council>) is devoted to the activities of the Parish Council where the minutes of its meetings, information on finance and much more is to be found - including a Contact facility enabling the reader to get in touch direct with the Council.

There is also a local Facebook Group where items of local interest are discussed - just search for 'Levens Village Community'.