

LEVENS PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER – SUMMER 2026

Please note that in the following articles, references to Levens Parish Council and Westmorland and Furness Council may frequently be shortened to the PC or W&FC respectively.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

For those of you who do not know me, my name is David Forshaw, and I am honoured to be the new Chairman of Levens Parish Council. Levens is a very special village, and I feel privileged to serve both the Council and the people who make our parish such a welcoming place to live.

I begin by thanking our previous Chairman, Roger Atfield, for his dedicated leadership over the past 14 years. I would also like to thank our former Vice Chairman, Roger Mason, for his outstanding commitment to the community over the last 19 years. Roger Atfield will continue to serve as a Parish Councillor, while Roger Mason has stepped down from the Council. We are delighted that he has agreed to continue as Chair of the Project Advisory Group, leading the development of the new Village Hall and the ongoing enhancement of the Jubilee Orchard at Underhill.

Much of the work of the Parish Council takes place behind the scenes, often without much recognition, but it plays an important role in protecting and enhancing village life for everyone.

The Council's role is to listen to residents, represent local concerns, and work constructively to maintain and improve our community. Your PC will continue to focus on the issues that matter most to residents: protecting the character of our village, improving safety and local facilities, supporting community initiatives, and ensuring that Levens remains a thriving place for future generations.

Like many rural communities, we face a number of challenges. Traffic concerns, pressure on local services, planning matters, and the changing needs of village life all require careful consideration and cooperation. While the Parish Council cannot solve every issue on its own, we can ensure that the views of Levens residents are clearly and respectfully represented.

I firmly believe that the best outcomes are achieved when communities work together. I hope to encourage open communication and constructive discussion across our entire parish. To make sure everyone can share their views, we will be hosting regular drop-in sessions and community forums where you can meet the councillors directly. Your active participation is what keeps Levens strong, and I invite each of you to get involved, share your ideas, and help us shape a bright, prosperous future for our wonderful village. Ultimately, Levens is defined not by its buildings or boundaries, but by the people who live here and care about its future. I look forward to serving as Chairman and working alongside residents to ensure that Levens remains a village we are all proud to call home.

David Forshaw – Chair, Levens Parish Council

COUNCILLOR VACANCY

The PC now has a vacancy for a Councillor which it is keen to fill. The main requirements for being a Councillor are that you care about your local community and that you can bring energy and a desire to make a difference to Levens as place to live, work and visit. If you are passionate about your local area and want to support efforts to enhance the quality of life in Levens Parish, please do express an interest to the Clerk (clerk@levens-pc.gov.uk) who will provide you with further information. The PC looks forward to hearing from you.

THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The Annual Parish Meeting took place on the 19 May 2026 and was well attended by parishioners and representatives of local organisations. There were reports from Cllr. Roger Atfield in his final report as Chair, from Cllr. Roger Mason on the Levens Community Project, Cllr. Janet Battye on W&FC initiatives and the Clerk on finance and administration. 12 Village organisations gave reports on their recent activities demonstrating the breadth of activity in the vibrant community of Levens. The draft Minutes of the meeting can be viewed at <https://www.levens-pc.gov.uk/?Meetings>

DUMPING OF GARDEN WASTE: Unfortunately, the PC has noted several examples of the dumping of green waste on its land. Dumping green waste on public or private land - often done under the false impression that it "decomposes naturally" - actively destabilises local ecosystems and causes severe environmental damage. What seems like a harmless pile of grass cuttings or hedge trimmings can damage trees and help the spread of aggressive weeds which suppress native wildflowers and natural regeneration. It is considered fly-tipping and perpetrators can face fixed penalty notices of up to £600 if their waste is found dumped on land belonging to another.

SHAPE THE FUTURE OF LEVENS: HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE NEW LOCAL PLAN

Levens Parish Council urges all parishioners to take note of the emerging Westmorland and Furness Local Plan and to actively share your views in the current consultation process.

The new Local Plan will establish the planning framework for our area for years to come. Once finalised, it will:

- **Determine Development Needs:** Set out how many new homes and employment sites are required to support local communities.
- **Guide Strategic Location:** Ensure new development is built in the right places, balancing the needs of people with the protection of our natural environment.
- **Allocate and Protect Land:** Identify specific sites for housing and development while explicitly safeguarding other areas from construction.
- **Decide Planning Applications:** Formulate the core policies used to assess and decide future planning permissions.
- **Manage Resources:** Plan for development relating to essential minerals and waste management.

How to Get Involved: W&FC has launched a public consultation, running to 11 August. It is seeking the views of local residents on what the Plan should address, what it should aim to achieve, and how communities can remain involved as progress is made. A wealth of information is available to help you understand the proposals, including a general poster, flyers, a *Local Plan Quick Read Leaflet*, and an online feedback form. You can access all of these resources via the W&FC Website at www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/localplan or the Parish Council Website at www.levens-pc.gov.uk.

If you require a paper copy of the consultation documents to complete, please contact Cllr. Janet Battye at janet.battye@levens-pc.gov.uk or Janet.Battye@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk.

The Parish Council's Position: Levens Parish Council will be submitting a formal response to this consultation. At this early stage, the Council does not hold a pre-determined view on the development of individual sites. However, it has deep concerns regarding the ability of the local infrastructure to cope with a significantly increased number of residents. Its primary focus remains to ensure that the village's core infrastructure is fit for purpose, specifically regarding:

- Roads and pedestrian road safety
- Surface water drainage
- Sewage system and water supply capacity
- Electricity grid reliability
- Local school and education capacity

These critical concerns have been raised with Westmorland and Furness Council on several occasions in the past. We will be reinforcing them strongly in our upcoming response, which will be published in full on the Levens Parish Council Site for residents to read.

Your PC is facilitating the availability of feedback forms in the village: Please don't leave it to others—make sure your voice is heard before the 11 August deadline.

MISCELLANY

Defibrillator: BT has now confirmed its agreement to the transfer of ownership of the redundant payphone box on The Green to the PC for use as a defibrillator base. This is in line with many PCs / local organisations elsewhere that have re-purposed old phone boxes in this way. There is a formal transfer of ownership agreement and some obligations in relation to electricity supply. The PC is currently checking these out as a matter of due diligence and expects to move forward in the Autumn.

Levens Emergency Action Plan (LEAP): The development of the Emergency Plan is progressing well. There are to be training sessions in resuscitation for local volunteers on 15, 22, 29 September.

Dogs on Leads: Please remember that The Highway Code (Rule 56) specifies that dogs should not be allowed out on the road on their own and should be on a short lead on roads and paths shared with cyclists or horse riders. As always, please do pick up your dog waste in all areas in the village and beyond.

The 20-m.p.h. zone: The final rollout of the scheme is now simply subject to the availability of a contractor to install the appropriate roadside signage.

Levens Post-Box: The post-box has been out of commission recently for the want of a new door. The PC is pressing for its re-instatement as soon as possible.

MODERNISING THE PARISH COUNCIL: OUR TRANSITION TO NEW DIGITAL STANDARDS

Keen-eyed parishioners will have noticed recent changes to the digital identity of Levens PC through the launch of a new website and revised email addresses. Far from a simple cosmetic update, these changes are part of a major, mandatory upgrade to how local government operates across the UK. In today's world, local councils rely daily on digital communication, manage complex public websites, and handle significant amounts of personal data. To reflect this reality, the government has introduced strict new requirements known as Assertion 10 which moves digital best practices from optional guidelines to legally binding accountability, making digital governance more transparent than ever before. Compliance is completely mandatory; failure to meet these standards risks triggering immediate audit scrutiny and regulatory penalties. To achieve full compliance, your PC is actively implementing changes across two core areas:

1. Official Communications: To remain fully compliant and ensure all correspondence is highly secure, every Councillor and the Clerk has transitioned to a council-owned email address. Parish Councillors' individual email addresses can be found on the last page of this newsletter. All official council business should now be conducted via: clerk@levens-pc.gov.uk

2. Website Accessibility: To conform with statutory regulations on digital accessibility, the Parish Council has constructed a brand-new, stand-alone website at www.levens-pc.gov.uk which is no longer embedded within the broader Levens Community Website. Strict accessibility guidelines require a simplified, highly functional platform aiming to ensure that residents of all abilities can easily find and view local information. The new site features a fully compliant accessibility statement and hosts a structured IT policy explicitly demonstrating our compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Levens PC remains dedicated to keeping your information safe while ensuring our public services remain modern, open, and accessible to everyone in our community. It is also fully committed to providing financial support for the existing and excellent community website.

LEVENS COMMUNITY PROJECT

While you may have noticed a lack of physical activity on the New Village Hall site recently, behind the scenes, work is progressing steadily. The project remains on track, with a clear and achievable goal to complete the build within the next two years. The journey so far has brought its share of challenges. Initially, the project team was advised to find a single builder to manage the entire project and provide the necessary warranties. However, when the initial tenders came back, the quotes were unjustifiably high. While global economic factors played major part, a further issue was the requirement for complex mechanical engineering systems - such as wall insulation thicknesses - to be calculated by the builders. This lack of detail led to heavily inflated pricing. In response, the team has shifted strategy and partnered with ACS, a comprehensive professional firm featuring dedicated quantity surveyors and building regulations specialists. ACS is currently drafting a detailed bill of quantities, a schedule of works, a rigorous cost plan, and up-to-date building regulations applications. Crucially, they are value-engineering the design—exploring options like Structurally Insulated Panels (SIPs) to lower expenses. ACS estimates these measures could slash the original build costs by 25% to 30%. They are now working to finalise and present their complete findings. Once this new data is in hand, the project will be broken down into individual packages and tendered out directly to local tradespeople, including builders, joiners, roofers, electricians, and plumbers. If budget constraints remain, a single-story redesign will be considered. This alternative layout would eliminate the need for a lift and stairs, providing a larger building footprint at the expense of a few parking spaces. A final decision will be made once the ACS report is reviewed, and the firm may stay on to project-manage and officially sign off on the build.

On another positive note, excellent progress is being made on the four affordable homes at Underhill. Tenders have now been received for the construction of the main floor slab, as well as the essential drainage and sewer connections. The water connections and meters are already installed, electricity supply has been agreed and paid for, and the necessary way-leaves are being finalised ahead of running ducting to the site. Funding for this stage is securely provided by a Homes England grant via Westmorland and Furness Council. This funding is legally ring-fenced strictly for the affordable housing and cannot be diverted to the Village Hall. Building regulations for the homes are currently being finalised, and pouring the concrete slab will permanently protect the project from any future regulatory design changes or inflation hikes.

Levens Parish Council 2026-27

Councillor	Email
Cllr. David Forshaw (Chair)	david.forshaw@levens-pc.gov.uk
Cllr. Roger Atfield	roger.atfield@levens-pc.gov.uk
Cllr. Helen Burrow	helen.burrow@levens-pc.gov.uk
Cllr. Janet Battye	janet.battye@levens-pc.gov.uk
Cllr. Kevin Holmes	kevin.holmes@levens-pc.gov.uk
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Martin Curry	clerk@levens-pc.gov.uk

Councillor: Westmorland and Furness Council:

Cllr. Janet Battye, Inglewood, Cinderbarrow, Levens LA8 8NX. Mob: 07711 583013.

Email: Janet.Battye@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

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-pc.gov.uk>.

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 2026-27 Parish Council year:

08 September 2026
13 October 2026
10 November 2026
12 January 2027
09 February 2027
09 March 2027
13 April 2027

Please note that there are no meetings in August or December.

Parish Council Website:

www.levens-pc.gov.uk 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.

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.

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