

CALDBECK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at Caldbeck Parish Hall on Monday 16th May 2011.

PRESENT Mrs A Cartmell (Chairman) Mrs A D R Noble
 Mr W R Cowx Mr A Armstrong
 Mr A Tyson Mr R Knowles
 Mrs A Glendinning Mrs C Little
 Mr N Atkinson

Mrs A Ward (Clerk)

Mr Duncan Fairbairn (District and County Councillor), PCSO Lyndsay Tuck (Wigton Police), Rev Malcolm Riches (Associate Vicar), Dr Davie (History Society), Rosie Thompson (Caldbeck Young Farmers), Pearse Coghlan (Hesta Scene), Michael Bell (RG Bell and Son), Pat Shaw (Caldbeck WI), Steve Razzetti (Calebreck Farm and Caldbeck Surgery), and 28 other residents, were present.

Apologies for absence were received from Parish Councillor Colin Smithson, Pete Barron (LDNPA Ranger), Mr and Mrs Rawson (Old Smithy Crafts).

MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 17th May 2010 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

CHAIRMANS REPORT and PARISH PLAN

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave her report as follows: "During the last year the ten of us have met every six weeks to discuss planning applications and other matters of parish interest. I hope we have not lost sight of the fact that we were elected by you to do this and we have been guided in our discussions by ideas and suggestions put forward by you. We do not meet up to spend two hours thinking of things to do and ways to spend your money as we think we might like, but rather as a result of discussions some of us will have had with some of you and we hope the ideas will continue to come from you as we are your Council. We have also tried to keep in mind the ideas put forward in the Parish Plan and will continue to do so.

At our meetings we have had regular support from Duncan Fairbairn, our Borough and County Councillor who has been as helpful as ever at pushing our ideas and complaints to a higher level of government. Graham Standring our excellent National Park ranger has been in regular contact with us and attended meetings when he could. He has now been moved to another area of the park and we look forward to meeting and working with his successor, Pete Barron. He has a hard act to follow. The police have also attended our meetings when possible and the Clerk and I have had a meeting with the Chief Inspector in Wigton when he explained the new police policies. The police regularly give us reports of their activities in the area and I am pleased to report that we are quite a law abiding lot. The Northern Fells Group Village Agent has also been to speak at one of our meetings.

Some of us have attended a number of other meetings outside our parish and we nearly always have a representative at our Neighbourhood Forums and Cumbria Association of Local Council meetings both in Allerdale and, more appropriately for us I feel, the Lake District Association of Parish Councils.

On the planning front, we have looked at plans to build new houses, agricultural buildings, camping barns, camp sites, barn conversions, old house improvements, window replacements, tree felling permissions, change of footpath routes and others. We have tried to keep an eye

on housing that has special clauses, such as local occupancy, to make sure they remain. We persuaded the Cumberland News that our planning applications in the National Park needed to be listed in the paper alongside the applications to other planning authorities and this they are now doing.

We have looked, yet again, at the parking problems in Hesketh Newmarket and had meetings with the National Park about extending the car park area. Unfortunately this has so far proved impossible as it is built on common land but we are still hopeful of a reorganisation of the area of the existing car park by removing the mounds of earth and delineating the car park spaces with sets in the ground to acquire room for a couple more cars. As you know the National Park is having financial problems which has unfortunately stopped our plans for trying to protect the front green at Hesketh Newmarket from being eroded by parked cars and traffic generally. We had come to an informal agreement with Graham Standring that they would edge part of the green with cobbles but this has unfortunately now had to be shelved. We are very conscious of this problem in Hesketh and will continue to try and find a solution. We are about to talk to the County Council Highways Department about this but are first finding out from contractors the likely costs. As a result of the Local Traffic Plan, and your suggestions through the Parish Plan, we have worked with the Highways Department to stop the through road on the side of the front green at Hesketh Newmarket to make the entrance to the play area safer. The second part of this initiative is to down grade Watery Lonning at Caldbeck to a bridle way, erect bollards and therefore stop people driving down it on the advice of their SatNavs. Hopefully this will happen this year.

We have continued to organise contractors to cut the greens in both Caldbeck and Hesketh Newmarket and we give a grant to Caldbeck Churchyard towards the cost of their grass cutting.

We continue to manage the allotments at Hesketh Newmarket and are in process of tidying up an unworkable area by the chapel which has been an overgrown nettle patch for years and our grateful to one of our Councillors who has spent some time doing this voluntarily. We collect the rents which we pay to the landlord and we make regular inspections and work closely with the Allotment Association. Our Clerk holds the waiting list and the allotments are for all those living within the parish.

At the time of last year's Parish Meeting we were about to open the new disabled toilet at the Methodist Chapel in Caldbeck to all with a radar key and this is now up and running and we have organised and pay for the cleaning of it and have erected signs at various places. At the Lake District National Park meetings of Parish Councils within the park the subject of public toilets keeps on reappearing and at the last one I attended the National Park seem to be very concerned that various toilets are likely to close and that it is essential to provide such facilities when they are in the game of encouraging visitors to visit the Park. At the moment our public toilets in Caldbeck are owned and run by Allerdale Borough Council.

We spent quite a lot of time this year investigating dredging the pond at Caldbeck to remove the annual pond weed and some of the silt but decided in the end that it was all going to be too expensive and complicated to do so. As you can imagine, there are a lot of environmental hoops to jump through with such a scheme. I don't know whether it was the extremely severe weather conditions of last winter but, so far this year, the weed doesn't seem to be as bad. Michael Bell very kindly cleaned out the outflow from the pond which has been a help. Although it is outside our parish we supported Sebergham Parish's bid for help from the County Council's Footpath Agency to repair part of the Cumbria Way footpath through Parson's Park. It was felt that this long distance footpath provides our parish with considerable income through the B & Bs, pub, shops etc. More work does however need to be done and we shall continue to support any further improvement of this path.

We have continued to support various local charities namely the Northern Fells Minibus, the First Responders Group, the Great North Air Ambulance and the CAB in Allerdale.

Edward Spratt decided to retire from being the moderator of the village website and Michael and Lynn Steadman then took it on but have also had to retire as have they have other larger commitments elsewhere. We are very grateful to all three of them for all they have done for the website. However, these two changes of moderator have made us look hard at this project

which has been a good thing and this coming year we are now going to redesign the whole website which will hopefully make it easier to run and easier for local groups to run their own sections. Watch this space!

In the Britain in Bloom competition last year Hesket Newmarket was runner up in the Best Kept Small Village section and we congratulate them. We have decided that neither village is entering the competition this year and we shall see whether local pride is enough to keep both villages looking as good as they did last year. As a Parish Council we continue to look after the seats and litter bins in the Parish and we look after, and keep insured, the John Peel shelter and Hesket Cross. We are conscious that some of the seats are coming to the end of their lives despite being sanded and re-stained each year and this problem will be addressed this coming year.

We have continued to report and re-report the “millions” of potholes in the roads and other highway related faults to the Highways Department some of which have been satisfactorily mended and some have not. One of your Councillors has made some gritting bins which we have placed at various bad spots around the parish and the County Council now keep these filled for us. They have also provided us with a number of their own bins this winter. Hesket Newmarket fared particularly badly in the bad winter weather and we are in the process of trying to get their gritting status upgraded from 3 to 2. It was particularly hard for the various small businesses in that village during the snow, which we have stressed to the County Council, and we are hopeful of improved status before next winter. We are also looking into the possibility of setting up a local scheme of road gritting in extreme winter conditions which may be in operation in time for next winter.

We decided to take the matter of the ditch below the old Joiner’s Shop below the pond in Caldbeck into our own hands having suffered various not very successful efforts by the County Council to solve the problem of water running off on to the road and freezing in the winter causing a dangerous road. We do not own the green but look after it for the County Council with the help of a grant for grass cutting. We organised and paid for a contractor to dig the ditch out properly, install a new drainage pipe and fill with stone chippings. Unfortunately a wagon drove over it a few days after completion whilst the edge was still soft but since then we have had cones protecting it whilst we are waiting for the Highways to have time to put small protective posts in place and now we await the winter to see if the new system works.

Roy Knowles, one of our councillors, has spent a lot of time on the proposed High Speed Broadband project and I will not speak about this now as you will hear properly about this later but we are grateful for his efforts and hope one day this will come to be a reality.

We are one of a minority of parishes in the county that has managed to have a contested Parish Council election which is a good thing although I would have preferred it to have been more of a contested election. Arnold Savage was not re-elected to the Council this time and, although he can’t remember how long he has been a councillor he thinks it is about 30 years, he has been a wonderful help with all sorts of practical projects as well as giving us lots of valuable advice at our meetings. Henry Hellon has retired from the Council and although in years he has not been a Councillor for long, it seems so as he has attended Council meetings on the other side of the room for a very long time. His interest in, and activities in and on the pond, are legendary and there are photographs to prove it of him ridding the pond of its mares tail weed, which was a real labour of love. Hopefully the beehive litter bins which he made will last forever. David Whitson has only been a councillor for one term but we shall miss his helpful advice, practical help and the fact that he brought down the average age of the Council and I hope he will stand again in the future. To all these three thank you. We welcome three new Councillors and as a new Council and we will try to listen and discuss your ideas over the next four years and look after your parish. There is a time set aside for you to have your say at every meeting of the Parish Council and you are all very welcome to come to any or all of our meetings to speak or just to listen.

I seem to have gone on at length but none of this would have been possible without the efforts of our Clerk who seems to have endless energy, patience and ideas and we are all very

grateful to her. The legal brains of her consort are also much appreciated and we thank you both.”

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Receipts for the year totalled £10,445.80 with payments of £10,535.12, so a small deficit of £89.32. The Clerk explained some of the detail of expenditure.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – OPEN DISCUSSION

The first matter was the introduction of the recently elected Parish Councillors especially those elected for the first time.

There was a question about the recently axed bus services to Penrith and Carlisle. The Chairman explained that this was a County Council decision related to expenditure cuts and low passenger numbers. However she and the Clerk were due to meet the Cumbria County Council Transport Manager on the 18th May to discuss the issue of public transport and whether anything might be done.

Mr Paul Doherty offered help with both the Broadband initiative and the website.

INTERVAL FOR REFRESHMENTS

Fairtrade refreshments were provided.

GUEST SPEAKERS

The Guest Speakers were Roy Knowles, the Parish Councillor who had been representing Caldbeck parish on the Northern Fells Broadband Initiative, and Craig Brass from NextGenUs, a Community Interest Company which reinvests a percentage of its profits in the communities where those profits were made. Roy explained that High Speed Broadband is being talked about as the ‘fourth utility’, and it means much, much faster speeds of broadband than we are used to. We get 2 megabits in Caldbeck village, much less as people live further from the exchange, whereas high speed broadband would offer 100 megabits. The Northern Fells Broadband is a separate group from the Northern Fells Group but covers the same area and is supported by the Group. Roy explained that high speed broadband is needed to handle the volume of internet traffic in the future, to make it easier to work from home, web based businesses can be started up, businesses will be attracted to the area, video conferencing and Skype will be easier and clear high density, stream feeding via the I player will be easier. There are different ways to connect to the home, ideally by Fibre Optic cable, but BT, Virgin and so on are not interested because of the expense – for our rural area it would need a government grant or a Community Interest Company like NextGenUs who would use local volunteer labour to organise the last mile or so or cabling.

Craig explained how a Community Interest Company operates and then gave examples of rural communities that have been helped to achieve high speed broadband: Newton and Stape in Yorkshire, Hull, Great Asby, and Ashby la Lounde. In answer to a question he and Roy explained that improved Mobile reception locally might be a bonus of a broadband scheme – it would be the T mobile/Orange/ O2 network. More questions followed and then the Chairman thanked Roy and Criag for their interesting and thought provoking talks. A number of Councillors and residents offered to help Roy distribute the Northern Fells Broadband explanatory leaflets to all the households in the parish.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm.