

Chairman's report 2020

Welcome to those attending this Annual Parish meeting. We are in virtual attendance this year as we are in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic and so ordered not to meet in person, so we meet on Zoom which is an Internet meeting organiser probably unknown to most of us 3 months ago.

Soon after our Annual Parish meeting this time last year we co-opted two more Councillors bringing our number up to that allowed of 10. Both are from Heskett Newmarket village – Alison Young Poole and Paul Graham – and so with John Brown we now have 3 Heskett Councillors which redresses the pre 2019 total lack of representation from Heskett Newmarket.

I would like to thank all the Councillors for their time and trouble freely given for Parish Council business and for representing our community. It is a commitment being a Parish Councillor, and I hope an enjoyable one. Everybody contributes as they can, and that makes for a can do Council. What news in the year.

In November/December we consulted every household in the parish about various matters. We thank all those who sent in replies - 240 replies representing 40% of the those on the electoral role, although some replies may have represented the views of more than one person in the household. This was the first consultation since 2005 when our first Parish Plan was drawn.

The direct roadside **footpath** between the two villages requested in the 2005 consultation was again strongly supported by over 70% of respondents. The Parish Council's efforts to deliver this project have not progressed. Without agreement from landowners, A Public Path Creation Order is needed. The County Council say they support the footpath but have declined again to make that Order. "No can do" they say. As they don't have to they will not because there is risk and cost involved. The elected members of the County Council are denied any opportunity to tell their officers to change their mind. The Lake District National Park Authority will not make the Order. Allerdale Borough Council can also make the Order and we are in discussion with Allerdale about how to progress the footpath. Following the new Parish consultation we took an Opinion from a barrister on the prospects of success if the desired Order is made and then challenged at a public inquiry. His answer was positive and

gives us some reasons for believing we can make progress. We need to work out with Allerdale next steps, but for the first time in 3 years the news is encouraging.

The purchase from the Lake District National Park Authority of their land holdings in the two villages has not been completed. It received LDNPA board approval and was to go ahead subject to their own consultation exercise. We also included it in our Parish consultation exercise. It received a very high level of support. Unfortunately the LDNPA consultation produced, we are told, concern from their own policy people. The land in question is nearly all common land and hosts 4 car parks. Public car parks on common land give rise to concern in relation to the World Heritage site designation – even though the car parks have been there for 40 years or more, and I think the main ones were constructed by the LDNPA. The Open Spaces Society also expressed concerns about our possible plans to extend Hesketh car park. Then Coronavirus took hold and as a result the LDNPA tell us the sale is now on hold. We are trying to get them to move the transaction forward again. I would venture to suggest that the Parish Council would be a better manager of the land than the LDNPA. We already pay for over 90% of the grass cutting costs. The really good news is we have been offered an anonymous private donation to fund the purchase cost.

Street lights - Allerdale were to pass all responsibility for these over to us, but now we are just to pay the electricity costs from April 2021. Our December 2019 consultation told us to take them on. A survey of views has been carried out in Hesketh by Alison regarding the lights villagers would like to be retained. It is hoped the same will shortly happen in Caldbeck.

The public loos in Caldbeck Allerdale are again to transfer to us. That again is held up by Coronavirus. Again it was supported in the December 2019 consultation so the Parish Council will take them on. Allerdale have promised a face lift, or the money for a facelift, before they are handed over.

We have received a grant to employ a planner/architect to identify suitable housing sites for new build homes for locals – sites which the owners have said they would be willing to sell. He has visited and we await his report. The

difficulty will be persuading the planners which is why we have asked for expert assistance.

The last matter on which we consulted was the employment of a parish lengthsman. That again received majority support. So far we have had no applications for the job. If you know of anyone who would like a one day a week own time outdoor job please tell us.

The Parish Council is itself consulted on planning applications in the Parish by the planning authorities. We support applications, we say we have no objection, or we object and if we object we try and give reasons. Our objections are not always followed. At present we have objections to two current applications, one a private bunk house in Caldbeck village and the other to the unrestricted development of Fellside Mansion into 3 dwelling houses – unrestricted by local occupancy conditions or low cost housing terms which means they could become holiday homes.

Parish road maintenance is one of our problems. We harass, nicely we hope, County Council Highways, and now and then we achieve results. Our 3 Heskett Councillors have persuaded Highways to sort out the surface water drains at the bottom of Woodhall Lonning/the Street. Let us hope it works come the next deluge. We have a list of work we want done and it seems to get longer not shorter. Highways patch problem potholes and often enough more potholes soon reappear. To patch and push off is surely a false economy.

2 roads in Caldbeck need proper resurfacing – that through Upton and the back of the Green. The following is an extract from the chairman's report given to the Annual Parish meeting held on the 13th May 2015 : "The Parish Council had been informed that work to improve the road surface on the back of Caldbeck Village Green, would be completed before winter 2014, however despite considerable contact from us, we are still unable to get a firm date for the works to be completed. Rest assured we will continue to press the issue. Similarly resurfacing work is scheduled for the Upton Road in Caldbeck during the current financial year, again we continue to press for a start date."

Since then a large number of country roads were properly resurfaced after Storm Desmond, but my impression is we did not get our fair share in this Parish, though we are thankful for those which were done, and the above

Caldbeck village roads have still never been done despite 5 or 6 year old assurances.

It is dangerous to say what I hope the Parish Council may achieve this year in case some subsequent Chairman reads out my list in 5 years time. We hope to make progress with the footpath, with the village National Park land purchase. All I can say is we try, and we need to, as getting other people to do or provide what we need as a community can be trying.

We have had 10 meetings in the year all of which have been attended by nearly all Councillors. None of our meetings or business would happen and nothing would get done without the invaluable services of our clerk Simon Smith. He gives our community a huge number of unpaid hours, and takes a real interest and lead in what we do and try and achieve. We are very grateful to him for his can do no problem attitude, and wise advice.

My last thanks are to all those others in our community who help – whether quietly helping with village maintenance, helping your neighbours, especially during the Coroavirus pandemic, or doing other volunteering work of any kind. You all make this a great place to live, even during lockdown.

Tim Cartmell

18.5.2020