

Chairman's report 6.5.2021

Welcome to all 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 a few months ago.

Those were my opening words for my report in 2020. Nothing much has changed since, save we have in the meantime had 2 more lockdowns and sadly we have lost parishioners to the virus - but this year we now have hope that while we may not get rid of the virus we will be able to live with it normally.

My main task today which is to thank people.

My first thanks on behalf of the Parish go to Alistair McFadzean who not for the first time has resigned as a Parish Councillor. His first appearance in Parish Council minutes I have come across dates from 1978 when as a member of the concerned public he attended a Parish Council meeting about the plans to do up what was the Oddfellows Green, then unsurfaced, and he expressed his opinion on the works proposed. He then became a Parish Councillor attending his first meeting on the 22nd July 1979, and remained in post until he retired from the Council after the meeting on 22nd April 1991, as he was then working and living at Lowther. But back he came in 2015 and rejoined the Parish Council for another 6 years. So he has done about 18 years. Additionally of course he has been the mainstay of Caldbeck voluntary maintenance. He has said he will carry on doing everything he does behind his barrow or trailer or strimmer or hand implements, which is great. He is a founder member of the Caldbeck and District Grasscutters and Gravediggers Association which he thinks he chairs, but the only other member may not agree. I am sorry we will miss his humour and well expressed views on the Parish Council, but I am glad he will still be dishing out his cheek to all in the Parish he comes across in his wellies. And we thank him profusely for his 18 year service as a councillor

My next thanks are to our clerk Simon Smith for his time and diligence throughout the year, in all things, including his quiet insistence that the Chairman has no authority to make our own rules as to how we meet in future, after virtual meetings are no longer allowed after tonight. Seriously we are very lucky to have Simon as our clerk, as he takes a helpful interest in all we try and do as well as doing the boring things he has to do, so well that even the auditor sings his praises.

So what have we tried to do.

Affordable housing. We want to keep some young in the village as the marketplace is making us a primarily retirement Parish. Simon obtained a grant from Allerdale to enable us to employ an architect to look at a potential building site, obtain pre planning advice from the National Park, which was positive, provided all the 8 units

planned were affordable. That has a knock on effect to the price which can be paid to the landowner – there is a maximum sum we found - so sadly that has gone to sleep. But if anyone knows of another potential building site for affordable housing, or better houses with workshop units for trades, which could be for sale within the Parish and which stand a chance of planning consent please let Simon know.

Last year I reported that Allerdale were packing in the provision of the public loos. Covid has seen them closed for over a year, and no progress for their handover. The Parish Council has looked at alternative public loo provision and there is nothing viable or affordable. We hope to see if we can open them as they are with contract cleaners, or whether they will have to be done up first, as Allerdale have said they would do before hand over , in which case we wont have public loos till the end of the year.

The direct roadside footpath wanted by the community between the two villages we thought last year had taken a step forward when Mike Johnson our County Councillor and the leader of Allerdale said that Allerdale would make a footpath creation order subject to their officers talking to the landowning objectors first. That eventually happened and Allerdale are now asking we investigate the possibility of upgrading an alternative but existing footpath via Matthew Rudding to make it suitable for wheelchairs etc.. We walked that route with Mike Johnson three weeks ago and are now consulting those affected on it. It is not the direct roadside route the parishioners want. One of the problems is whether it would be used, as the main purpose is to get pedestrians off the road. We intend to ask the barrister, who advised on the prospects of success of a footpath creation order last year, for further advice in the light of the Allerdale concerns about the alternative and whether the barrister changes his previous advice.

Street lighting was surveyed a year ago in Hesket Newmarket by the Hesket Councillors and after consultation in the village 2 poles are earmarked for removal. Ian Shaw and Alistair McFadzean surveyed the Caldbeck lights. We plan to remove none and the one pole which has been removed in Upton we are discussing whether to replace with such contributions as we can muster from those responsible for its removal.

My half time thanks go to Mark Binnie. We have employed Mark Binnie as a parish lengthsman since July last year, and we are very happy with his service. He keeps drains and gulleys unblocked and litter picked, and seems willing to do anything else asked of him. In addition he has and has had for a while the grass cutting contact for Caldbeck and Hesket greens, which we have renewed again for 3 years. Thank you Mark.

The Parish Council asked Alison Young to chair a working group to look into managing Caldbeck Green to enhance the biodiversity as requested by a majority of responders to our December 2019 Consultation. She and Ian Shaw enlisted help

from others, and we are grateful to you all. We have their report on the table this evening before the Parish Council to bin, bless, or send back.

Parish maintenance. Some of the benches got a touch up or repair last year - thank you John Pattinson, Zoe Glendinning and the Young Farmers, and Norman Atkinson our expert decorator. We need to try and give all the remaining benches a makeover this year. Please volunteer yourself, or your spouse partner or neighbour. There are plenty to do. The John Peel Shelter has had professional attention to its roof and amateur attention to its gutters and partially rotten windows. The litter bins also are asking for attention.

Much more serious and costly work has been done to the Caldbeck/Hesket lonning – a patch up so far with a re-smear surface promised. The same treatment for the Street. Norman Atkinson drafted an excellent paper on the Highways seemingly bizarre road repair programme when roads we need done and request endlessly get no treatment or half treatment and other roads such as the 2 mile stretch between Hesket bridge to Brickhouses outwith our Parish is resurfaced to motorway standard to take a couple of cars a day, and Norman on his bicycle. Upton is years overdue. But we thank Matt Bish of Highways for what he does.

And they have done good works in HNM, not quite finished, to sort out the drains which come the next storms will work a treat and take all the village water. Thanks to Alison again and Hesket Councillors for getting that done.

Simon had a letter the other day from a visitor complimenting the village and its footpaths on litter free state. I would like to thank all those in the village who quietly get on and do things like litter pick, grass cut odd bits and keep the place right.

My last topic is the purchase from the Lake District National Park. This project started in March 2017 and we still have not got signed up. We have agreed the price but what the deal keeps getting changed by the LDNPA. Having offered to exclude “difficult” bits (such as those subject to adverse possession or easement claims) we are now asked to take them. We have received and have had in the bank since December a very generous anonymous donation to the Parish to pay the £10000 price, we have received Counsels Opinion on the present use of the common land for car parking etc and the purchase has been signed off by our land agent and valuer. Trying to get the LDNPA solicitor and land agent to push the job on at their end is like climbing a sand dune.

I finish with more thanks. The Parish Councillors give their time for free. Gone are the days when you turned up to a meeting every 6 weeks – we now have a torrent of emails and attachments sent to us, and pages of reading. Many Councillors take on additional work. We try to do what the community want. We do not always succeed. We will continue to try. Thank you