

**Draft Minutes of the Meeting of St Bees Parish Council held on
Monday 16 June 2025 at 6.30pm in the Village Hall**

PRESENT: Cllrs E Taylor (in the Chair), P Argyle, J Benedicic, N Bettinson, N Graham, C Hale,
A Kaldos & the Clerk

In attendance: Cllr Mark Fryer, Leader of Cumberland Council
Cllr G Minshaw, Ward Councillor, Egremont North/St Bees

Also present: 7 members of the public

103/25 CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed Mark Fryer, Leader of Cumberland Council, and thanked him for accepting the invitation to meet St Bees Parish Council. Councillors were grateful for the opportunity to hear more of Cumberland Council's priorities and to raise issues of concern to local residents.

104/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllrs Dowber, Gilmour, Linton, Millington and Sim.

105/25 DISPENSATIONS & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Bettinson declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda item 9 Village Hall as a Trustee of the Pagan Trust. Cllrs Benedicic, Hale and Taylor declared non-pecuniary interests in the same item as members of the Village Hall Management Committee. Cllr Argyle also declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item as she had a close connection to a member of the Bega Lodge.

106/25 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Two members of the public expressed their interest in hearing the discussion with Mark Fryer about beach issues. Other members of the public were interested in Agenda item 9 – Village Hall.

107/25 MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING ON 19 MAY 2025

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the annual meeting on 19 May be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to an amendment to minute 91/25 to include Cllr J Benedicic as a member of the Finance & Risk Advisory Group.

108/25 DISCUSSION WITH LEADER OF CUMBERLAND COUNCIL

The Chairman welcomed Mark Fryer, Leader of Cumberland Council, and invited him to address the council.

Mr Fryer began by explaining that he had grown up in Workington and still lived in the area so he knew well some of the challenges facing local communities. The first 12 months of the new unitary authority had been very much a settling-in period with the initial priorities being improvements in children's services and adult social care. Children's services were initially rated as inadequate but were now rated as good. Adult social services were being reassessed next week and it was hoped that they would be rated as at least good.

Considerable savings had been achieved by efficiencies and improved performance rather than by cutting front line services. It was acknowledged that roads could be better and pot hole repairs continued to be a challenge. Although government funding for pothole repairs had been increased, the materials required had increased dramatically in price. It was important that all potholes were reported so that Highways teams could respond appropriately.

Mr Fryer explained that the council was working to encourage new nuclear developments and welcomed the recent announcement that land would be released for possible development of small modular reactors on the Moorside site. This would bring employment opportunities and the power generated would be used at Sellafield and by other businesses.

The Parish Council had raised the issue of possible scope for collaboration on beach issues. Mr Fryer was aware that officers had carried out a site visit with Cllr Minshaw and PC representatives to look at the need for better access from the promenade to the beach and he was hopeful that this would be resolved in the next few months. Whilst this was welcome news, parish councillors pointed out that there had been no feedback to the Parish Council following the meeting. Mr Fryer made it clear that Cumberland Council was not in a position to contribute to the costs of maintaining the toilets and play area or to share the proceeds from the car park. He suggested that charging for use of the toilets should be considered by the parish council to help with costs.

Councillors raised the issue of coastal defences and believed that the preferred option in the recent consultant's report (Option 12 -managed realignment) was simply leaving the problem to be addressed by future generations. The promenade (owned by Cumberland Council) would be at risk. Mr Fryer agreed to look into the situation and was keen to work with local councils to ensure that funding bids were well supported.

In many instances there had been a good working relationship between the Parish Council and Highways but there had been delays and lack of communication in resolving the drainage problems affecting properties on Sea Mill Lane and one property was still left with deep cavities in the garden which presented a safety hazard.

Councillors outlined some of the projects being pursued by the Parish Council. Progress had now been made with the plans to improve the Outrigg play area with Cumberland Council providing a draft lease for agreement. The Parish Council had received considerable help from the Community Rail Partnership in taking forward plans to create more off-street parking adjacent to the existing station car park. However, the project was being delayed by difficulties in resolving land registration issues after Cumbria County Council erroneously registered land belonging to Network Rail. The plan for an off road cycle track between St Bees & Whitehaven was being actively promoted by our local MP who was holding regular meetings with Cumberland Council officers, local companies etc. Mr Fryer offered to help in any way he could and asked for further information on these projects.

In response to a question about the proposed mayoral authority, Mr Fryer said that the new authority offered opportunities for large scale funding for transport projects which would never be available to Cumberland Council. The funding from central government was still under discussion but he would be pressing for recognition of the huge number of tourists visiting the area.

109/25 CUMBERLAND COUNCIL WARD REPORT

Cllr Minshaw provided a report on the following items:-

- The yellow lines by the Main Street/Outrigg junction would be repainted and further visits had been requested from the enforcement team.
- Resurfacing of Main Street was scheduled for 2026/27 but might take place sooner if the schedule allowed.
- The light at the bottom of the lane to the Village School was expected to be replaced in the coming weeks.
- A period of electronic speed monitoring had been requested on the B5345 near the Abbey Vale junction.
- The sign post at the Nethertown Rd junction had been included on a list of heritage signs to be refurbished but there was no indication of when this might happen.
- It was likely that a bus service between St Bees and Egremont would be included in a list put out for tenders from local operators.
- The Community Panel would be meeting on 17 June to consider grant applications. One of the applications to be considered was from the Adams Recreation Ground Committee for a teen shelter. The Parish Council had no information on the proposal and it was unclear whether there had been any consultation with the owners of nearby properties.

110/25 FINANCE & RISK MANAGEMENT

(a)Monthly Finance Report

A summary of the accounts at 31 May was received and noted. There had been several plumbing and electrical repairs required at the beach toilets and tradesmen had been used to carry out the work. The Finance & Risk Advisory Group would be meeting in July to look at the variances from budget at the end of Qtr 1 and would report to the next meeting.

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It was noted that the Chairman had authorised an order for parts for the play area (£656.43 + VAT) as urgent expenditure to enable the repairs to be done as quickly as possible.

It was noted that Cumberland Council had agreed that the Parish Council's contractor could cut the grass at the Outrigg play area whilst the lease was being agreed. The Changing Lives Trust had agreed to allow the contractor to gain access from the school field with prior agreement.

(b) Payments

It was RESOLVED that the following payments be approved:

- Npower- electricity May £35.43 + £1.77 VAT Total £37.20
- Works 4 You Ltd – allotment work £140.00 + £28.00 VAT Total £168.00
- JRB Enterprise Ltd -dog bag dispenser £94.95 + £18.99 VAT Total £113.94
- Village Hall Committee – donation to VE Day event Total £50.00
- PA Hannah -fitting cisterniser at toilets £385.00 + £77.00 VAT Total £462.00
- Wicksteed Ltd – timber stepping logs £789.36 + £157.87 VAT Total £947.23
- Village Hall Management Committee –monthly room hire Total £70.00
- J Donaldson -salary June Total £779.13
- J Donaldson – reimbursement of printer ink charges £11.24 + £2.25 VAT, play area tools £5.60 + £1.12 VAT Total £20.21

Payments/direct debits since the last meeting were noted:

- Spurr Electrical Services – work at beach toilets Total £580.00
- PA Hannah -plumbing work at beach toilets £130.00 + £26.00 VAT Total £156.00
- J Donaldson – materials for play area repair £110.60 + £22.12 VAT Total £132.72
- Water Plus – water/wastewater £45.31 (direct debit 18/06/25)
- Answer 4 U – answering service £15.99 + £3.20 VAT Total £19.19 (direct debit 17/06/25)
- S Kelly – toilet service charges £240.00 (SO payments 23/05, 30/05, 06/06, 13/06)

111/25 VILLAGE HALL

Cllr Bettinson had declared a non-pecuniary interest as Trustee of the Pagan Trust. Cllrs Taylor, Hale & Benedicic declared non-pecuniary interests as members of the Village Hall Management Committee. Cllr Argyle declared an interest as a close family member was a member of the Freemasons, one of the parties involved in the matter of the sub lease.

It was noted that three letters had been received expressing dissatisfaction with the decision made at the last meeting to provide funding up to £2500 to the Pagan Trust & VHMC jointly to help with the costs of legal advice to resolve any issues remaining at the end of the sublease with Bega Lodge.

As there were insufficient councillors present with no conflicting interests to discuss the substance of the complaints, it was agreed that a complaints committee be set up to investigate the complaints in accordance with the complaints procedure. The membership of the committee would be made up of councillors with no conflict of interest.

112/25 CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

The Working Group had not met since the last meeting but a meeting was being arranged in July.

113/25 PLANNING

(a) Applications received for comment

There had been two new applications received for comment since the last meeting:-

- Ref 4/25/2161/TPO Crown raising of 2.5m and lateral reduction of 1 m of lime tree in the conservation area - 1 Fleatham Gardens

It was noted that the deadline for comment had been before the June meeting. Following consultation with the Planning Advisory Group a reply had been sent under delegated authority raising no objection but asking that Cumberland Council take advice from their specialist arborist on the work before making a decision.

- Ref 4/25/2201/TPO Lift & thin out crowns of six trees within the conservation area
1 Seacroft Drive

It was noted that this group of trees is a significant feature of the landscape in the centre of the village. It was RESOLVED to respond that the Parish Council would not wish to see work done to the trees unless Cumberland Council's arborist was satisfied that it was necessary for the health of the trees or to prevent danger to people or properties.

(b) Other Planning Matters

It was noted that the Planning Inspectorate had not yet made a decision on the applicant's appeal against refusal of permission for a new dwelling adjacent to Stonecroft, Sea Mill Lane.

(c) Applications approved by Cumberland Council

4/25/2158/TPO Pruning of 4 sycamore trees within conservation area – 3 Seacroft Drive

4/25/2143/TPO Various works to trees in conservation area – Seacroft House

4/25/2128/TPO Various tree works in conservation area – St Bees Priory

114/25 PROJECT REPORTS

(a) Community Events

Cllr Kaldos reported that the Eat Street Cumbria event would be going ahead over the weekend of 12/13 July. Cumberland Council had agreed to reduce their charges as proceeds from the event would be used to benefit the local community. The event was not being organised by the Parish Council but the organisers were hoping that the Parish Council might provide some volunteers to help on the day.

(b) Beach & Play Area

Cllr Linton had circulated a written report explaining that Chloe Pennington had agreed to work on a design for a mural at the toilets and would undertake the work in September.

The new timber stepping logs for the play area had been delivered and Cumberland Council hoped to begin work on repainting the lighthouse shortly. Cllr Kaldos was researching items of equipment to replace the spinner in the toddler area and would be meeting a representative from Playdale before the next meeting.

(c) Upgrading of Outrigg Play Area

Cumberland Council had now provided the draft lease and this was being passed to the Parish Council's solicitor for comment/advice. There were some minor queries on the boundaries shown on the lease plan and a meeting had been arranged with an officer of Cumberland Council's Estates & Properties Team on 1 July to look at the situation on the ground.

(d) Station Car Park/Transport Hub

There was no further progress but an online meeting would be taking place on 1 July when it was hoped to learn more about progress with the land registration issues.

(e) Valley Link Cycle Track

Sustrans was preparing an estimate of costs to revise the original scheme. LLWR and NWS had offered suggestions for possible sources of funding.

(f) Priory Paddock/Tree Planting

Cllr Bettinson reported that the Friends of Priory Paddock had entered the RHS competition again this year and the assessors would be visiting on 16 July. There had been a number of visits by Coast to Coast walkers and some positive comments had been received.

Cllr Bettinson had recently attended Speech Day at St Bees School and had been told that the school was thinking of extending the wooded area below the far end of the car park to create an environmental study area which could be used by local schools. The Parish Council had collaborated with the school on other tree planting projects in the past and councillors expressed support for the plans.

(g) Interpretation Boards

There was no progress to report.

115/25 FOOTPATHS

The report from Cllr Hale was received and noted. It was noted that PROW 423004 from The Crofts was somewhat overgrown but still passable and the lengthsman would be asked to help trim the section where the path goes into the field from The Crofts.

116/25 REPORTS FROM MEETINGS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports.

117/25 CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's report on ongoing matters was received and noted. There had been some minor damage to the fence at Beck Edge Garden caused by a vehicle. The lengthsman had been asked to organise a repair.

118/25 CORRESPONDENCE

(a) Details had been received of CALC's training programme to July 2025. Noted.

(b) Correspondence had been received from a local resident about the state of the groynes and other possible improvements at the beach area. A reply had been sent explaining the conclusions of the consultant's report on the effectiveness of the groynes and the work being done by the PC and Cllr Minshaw to press for better access to the beach.

(c) Cumberland Council had launched a public consultation on the future of library services with a deadline for comments of 4 July. Noted.

(d) CALC had passed on information on free Kooth services which provide online mental health and wellbeing support to children and offer sessions designed to help children transitioning from primary to secondary schools. Noted.

(e) Cumbria Wildlife Trust had provided information on plans to hold their annual SeaFest event at the main beach on Sat 2 August. Noted.

(f) Correspondence had been received from a local resident about the lack of signage to warn of bullocks in a field crossed by a public footpath and problems caused by feeders placed close to the path. This was being followed up by the Footpath Group.

(g) NALC was seeking nominations for the Star Council awards for 2025/6 with a deadline for nominations of 5 September. Noted.

(h) The Local Government Boundary Commission had published its draft recommendations on the ward boundary review for Cumberland (copy circulated to parish councillors). Noted.

(i) Details had been received of the Open Spaces Society AGM to be held on Thurs 3 July at 11am in London. Noted.

(j) Notification had been received from Cumberland Council of a Public Path Creation and Definitive Map and Statement Modification Order 2025 which would create public rights of way in the area of the main beach and promenade. The Order would be published in the Whitehaven News and, unless objections are received, it would be confirmed in early July. Noted.

(k) CALC was seeking nominations for the role of CALC Treasurer (a voluntary position and non-voting director). Nominations were invited from member councils and require the nominee's consent. The deadline for nominations was 31 July. Noted.

(l) CALC had forwarded information from Cumberland Council about the deadline for applications to correct non-registration or mistaken registration of common land and village greens. Applications must be received by 15 March 2027. Noted.

(m) Cumberland Council was reminding residents that waste collection calendars for the next 4 months could be viewed and downloaded from the Cumberland Council website. A review of the bin collection schedule would be undertaken in September when collection arrangements might change. Noted.

INFORMATION ITEMS

NALC Chief Executive's Bulletins

Rural Services Network Newsletter

Cumberland Council Newsletters

Cumbria Police newsletter May– Whitehaven & District

119/25 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/FUTURE AGENDA

- (a) An application had been submitted for St Bees to take part in an award scheme organised by Cumbria in Bloom to celebrate community spirit. The assessors would be shown areas of the village to showcase the efforts of Village in Bloom, the community gardeners, volunteers who maintain the Sleeping Child Garden, Holy Mowers etc. The application had been submitted at short notice to meet the deadline but reimbursement of the fee would be considered at the next meeting.
- (b) Discussions had taken place with Rosehill Theatre about using St Bees Village Hall as a venue for workshops as part of the Art of Wellbeing programme.
- (c) It was reported that large commercial vehicles and camper vans were regularly parking in Fairladies car park. Whilst the car park was intended to take vehicles off the narrow streets, the spaces were not designed to accommodate large vehicles.
- (d) The next event at the Village Hall would be a Summer Serenade on 12 July.
- (e) Cllr Graham reported that he had been invited to an event to discuss emergency response plans in his capacity as a co-opted member of the Whitehaven & Coastal Community Panel. Emergency planning might be an appropriate lead role for a parish councillor. It was agreed that this would be included in a future agenda.

120/25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was RESOLVED that the next Parish Council meeting take place on Monday 21 July 2025 at 6.30pm in the Village Hall.

Signed.....

Date.....