

**Draft Minutes of the Meeting of St Bees Parish Council held on
Monday 16 September 2024 at 6.30pm in the Village Hall**

PRESENT: Cllrs D Sim (in the Chair), P Argyle, N Bettinson, G Gilmour, C Hale, A Kaldos & the Clerk

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllr G Minshaw, Cumberland Councillor, Egremont North/St Bees

Also present: 2 Members of the public

133/24 CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed councillors and members of the public to the meeting.

134/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllrs Graham, Linton, Mellor, Millington and Taylor.

135/24 DISPENSATIONS & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no requests for dispensations or declarations of interest.

136/24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

One member of the public present raised issues related to road closures. It was agreed that these issues would be discussed under the Cumberland Council item.

137/24 MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 15 JULY 2024

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting on 15 July 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

138/24 CUMBERLAND COUNCIL MATTERS

(a) Safety Issues – Abbey Vale Junction

A meeting took place on site on 14 August attended by Highways officers, representatives of residents, Cllr Minshaw and the Chairman. The Chairman reported on discussions relating to signage, overhanging hedges, visibility and more effective speed reduction measures. Highways officers had agreed to look at what could be done to improve the situation and report back but some issues such as poor visibility were the result of poor design of the junction and could not be changed. Cumberland Council was considering 20mph limits in certain areas but this was unlikely to be approved close to a national speed limit section. The follow up report from Highways was still awaited.

(b) Speed limits

From discussions with Highways officers it was clear that Cumberland Council was unlikely to approve 20mph limits covering large areas but would consider introducing a 20mph limit in specific areas which met their criteria. The Parish Council had previously supported a 20mph limit throughout the village but it was agreed to obtain details of Cumberland Council's policy before putting forward a formal request.

(c) Beach Issues

Cllr Minshaw reported that Cumberland Council had now received the consultant's report on the groynes. Officers were arranging a meeting with the Environment Agency to discuss its conclusions. Cllr Minshaw agreed to arrange for an officer to attend a parish council meeting to discuss the report's recommendations.

Cllr Minshaw explained that he had taken up with officers the issue of safe access to the beach. The old steps had been removed by CBC some time ago after safety concerns and had never been replaced. The small ramp had a large drop to the beach and the lifeboat ramp was not suitable for pedestrian use. Cumberland Council currently had no plans to reinstate the steps and had suggested that the Parish Council could fund new steps and take on all ongoing liabilities. However, Cllr Minshaw was continuing to press for this to be reconsidered, as St Bees was a popular destination for visitors from across Cumbria and beyond, making a significant contribution to the local economy.

1536

Councillors pointed out that the Parish Council already funded the toilets and play area and believed that Cumberland Council, as owners of the promenade and car park, had a responsibility to provide safe access to the beach.

It was RESOLVED to write to the Chief Executive of Cumberland Council to press for better access.

(d) Road Closures

The Chairman invited a member of the public to outline his concerns about the way that road closures were managed. Signs were often put out too early or left in place long after work had taken place, diversion information on the Cumberland Council's website could be improved, better information could be provided about work outside the parish boundary which affected travel to Whitehaven, Egremont or Sellafield and there needed to be more information on how residents could raise queries with companies responsible for the road closures.

The Chairman pointed out that this had been an exceptional year with many road closures due to the installation of fibre optic cables. It was agreed that the Parish Council would ask to be notified of road closures outside the parish and would also discuss with Highways the adequacy of information provided on diversion routes. If residents were aware of signs left after work was completed, they could report these to Highways using the hotline number or online reporting system.

(e) Other Issues

- Residents affected by the drainage issues on Sea Mill Lane had still not received any details of the plans for remedial work but it was understood that a senior officer had promised to follow up the matter.
- The damaged lifebelt at the promenade would be repaired/replaced shortly.
- Work had started on Abbey Road to repair the collapsed wall.
- The Community Network Panel would be meeting on 8 October when the focus would be on community food, parks and the natural environment.
- The litter bin at the beach damaged by fire had been replaced with a standard bin rather than a bird proof bin. The Clerk would check with Cumberland officers whether this was just a temporary arrangement.
- The highways work on the Abbey Vale estate left unfinished would be completed this week.

139/24 FINANCE & RISK MANAGEMENT

(a) Monthly Financial Report

A summary of the accounts at 31 August was received and noted. The VAT reclaim for 2023/24 had been paid into the council's account. The change to the bank mandate had been approved and arrangements were being made to add Cllr Kaldos to the authorised signatories on the electronic banking system.

Viberoptix had agreed to reimburse the cost of plug plants to replace those damaged during their work on the verge alongside Beach Road and the plants had now been ordered.

(b) External Audit 2023/24

The audit had been completed with an unqualified opinion given.

The auditor had commented that the general reserve was slightly higher than recommended. This was due to delays with the Station car park project which had meant that the costs payable to Network Rail had not been invoiced before the end of the financial year. To avoid a similar situation at the end of this financial year it was proposed to set up an ear-marked reserve for the car park project.

It was RESOLVED to set up an earmarked reserve for the car park project with £20k being transferred from the general reserve.

(c) Payments

It was RESOLVED that the following payments be approved:

- Npower- electricity August £35.25 + £1.76 VAT Total £37.01
- Works 4 You Ltd – grass cutting/ground clearance £708.94 + £141.79 Total £850.73
- Moore – audit fee £315.00 + £63.00 VAT Total £378.00

1537

- Information Commissioner – data protection renewal Total £40.00
- Blomfields Ltd- filling planters £204.00 + £40.80 VAT Total £244.80
- J Donaldson – salary Sept Total £712.25
- J Donaldson – reimbursement for printer ink charges £9.99+ £2.00 VAT, postage £5.40 Total £17.39
- HMRC -PAYE Qtr 2 £676.34
- Real Christmas Trees – Norway spruce tree - £387.50 + £77.50 VAT Total £465.00
- Thomas Milburn Property Ltd – toilet service Sept £583.33 + £116.67 VAT Total £700.00 (standing order)

The following payments made/direct debits due since the last meeting were noted:

- JRB Enterprise Ltd – dispenser bags £209.95 +£41.99 Total £251.94
- St Bees Garden Society -donation £200.00 (agreed at July meeting)
- Works 4 You Ltd – grass cutting & allotment work £888.94 + £177.79 VAT Total £1066.73
- Npower -electricity (July) £34.84 + £1.74 VAT Total £36.58
- J Donaldson – salary (August) £712.25
- YNH Ltd – domain name renewal £29.95
- J Donaldson – reimb for printer ink costs (Aug) £9.99 + £2.00 VAT Total £11.99
- Water Plus – water//wastewater £61.35 (direct debit 18/08/24)
- Answer 4 U – answering service £14.50 + £2.90 VAT Total £17.40 (direct debit 19/08/24)
- Thomas Milburn Property Ltd – toilet service Aug £583.33 +£116.67 Total £700.00 (SO 26/08/24)
- Works 4 You Ltd – installation of water butt (VIB) £236.00 + £47.20 VAT Total £283.20
- D Robinson -reimb for VIB plants £96.07 +£19.22 VAT Total £115.29 (chq 002946)
- Cumbria Wildflowers – plug plants £120.25 + £24.05 VAT Total £144.30 (to be reimbursed by Viberoptix)
- Answer 4 U – answering service £14.50 + £2.90 VAT Total £17.40 (direct debit 17/09/24)

140/24 PROJECT COLLETTE

Cllr Graham had recently attended a community engagement meeting in Whitehaven when proposals for a new off-shore windfarm off the Cumbrian coast had been explained. Cllr Graham had circulated a report on the meeting together with a copy of the initial feasibility study and had volunteered to collate comments from councillors. It was proposed that the windfarm would be partly community-owned but the proposal was still at a very early stage with issues such as finance still to be finalised. It was suggested that visual impact would be the greatest concern and it was agreed to keep developments under review as the project progressed.

141/24 CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

Cllr Linton had provided a written report on progress. The group had devised a questionnaire to survey views on demand for a bus service through the village. Reports on social media suggested that Cumberland Council was planning to organise its own survey and Cllr Minshaw agreed to check whether it would help or hinder if the Parish Council undertook its own local survey.

142/24 PROJECT REPORTS

(a)Beach & Play Area

Cllr Linton had provided a report on discussions with the Art Department at St Bees School about the project for artwork on the outside of the beach toilet block.

Repair issues identified during play area inspections had been passed on to Cumberland Council for action and a quotation had been requested for replacement of the wooden stepping logs which were deteriorating. The dizzy roundabout had been fitted with new bearings and would be put back in place shortly. Cllr Sim had corrected the problem with the twisted shackle on the basket swing. It was noted that the self-closing mechanism on the gates to the toddler area was not working correctly and the Clerk would speak to Cumberland Council's play inspector about repairs/replacement.

Some volunteers had reported problems with opening/closing the storeroom at the toilets. The lock had been oiled and seemed much improved but would be replaced if problems continued.

(b) Upgrading of Outrigger Play Area

Cumberland Council was working on a new policy for asset transfers and hoped to be in a position shortly to progress discussions about the lease of the land on which the play equipment stands.

(c) Station Car Park Extension/Travel Hub

Regular meetings were continuing with representatives of Network Rail, Cumberland Council and Community Rail Partnership. Cumberland Council had provided draft Heads of Terms for the lease of land adjoining the existing car park. Further progress was now contingent on Network Rail and Cumberland Council resolving the issue of the erroneous registration of the car park with the Land Registry. Cllr Minshaw was speaking to officers at Cumberland Council to try to expedite matters. It was RESOLVED that the Heads of Terms proposed by Cumberland Council were acceptable and would be forwarded to the parish council's solicitor for comment.

(d) Valley Link Cycle Track

The Chairman reported that the High Court had ruled that the planning approval for the proposed new mine should be overturned. Whilst this might change some aspects of the proposal for a cycle track, it would not prevent discussions taking place with officers of Cumberland Council and a contractor who had offered help and advice to confirm the feasibility of the project and identify a possible route.

(e) Office Improvements

The refurbishment of the parish council room at the Village Hall was now virtually complete and the new shelving had been installed. The Chairman had offered to donate an antique desk bequeathed by his late father-in-law which had belonged to a previous Parish Clerk many years ago.

(f) Priory Paddock

The Friends of Priory Paddock had entered an RHS competition in the small woodland copse and biodiversity categories. A panel of judges had visited over the summer and representatives of the Friends had been invited to an awards ceremony next month.

(g) Storage Shed.

The shed had been erected in the yard at the rear of the Village Hall to provide storage for tree planting tools & equipment etc

(h) Interpretation Boards

There was no progress to report.

143/24 PLANNING**(a) New Applications**

It was noted that responses had been sent under delegated authority to two applications received since the meeting in July:

- Ref 4/23/2394/0F1 Change of use & alteration of land for siting of five holiday pods- amended & additional information - Land at Nethertown Road, St Bees

Comments submitted: Whilst the changes involved some scaling back of the development, this did not affect the Parish Council's main grounds for objection - the development was outside the development boundary and any potential economic gain from tourism would be minimal and would not outweigh the disadvantages of the development. The area already has a hotel, caravan park, several B&Bs and numerous self-catering holiday properties as well as log cabins at High Walton and extant planning consent for glamping pods on land at Ellerbeck Barns so the proposed development would not offer anything new.

- Ref 4/24/2362/0F1 Change of use of conservatory to dog grooming parlour – 5 Ellerbeck Barns, Egremont

Comments submitted: No objection.

1539

The Planning Advisory Group reported on applications received recently:

- Ref 4/24/2278/0F1 Installation of solar panels on rear roof of dwelling & on roof of detached barn with cabling and battery storage – Fairladies, 102 Main Street, St Bees

It was RESOLVED that there were no objections to this application.

- Ref 4/24/2277/0L1 Listed building consent for above works – Fairladies, 102 Main Street

It was RESOLVED that there were no objections to this application.

- Ref 4/24/2285/TPO Fell one ash tree and prune back one sycamore protected by TPO - 1 Fleatham Gardens, High House Rd, St Bees

It was RESOLVED that there were no objections providing that Cumberland Council's tree specialist was satisfied that the work was necessary.

- Ref 4/23/2366/0F1 Erection of roadside fence with screen hedge planting, installation of oil tank, construction of bike store & screened waste bin enclosure (retrospective) – amended & additional information – Moorleys, Egremont

It was RESOLVED that there were no objections to this application.

- Ref 4/24/2367/0L1 Listed building application for above works – Moorleys, Egremont

It was RESOLVED that there were no objections to this application.

- Ref 4/24/2301/TPO Various works to five trees within the conservation area -St Bees School

It was RESOLVED that there were no objections to this application providing that Cumberland Council's tree specialist was satisfied that the work was necessary.

(b) Other Planning Matters

(i) Cumberland Council was beginning work on a new Local Plan. The Parish Council was a statutory consultee and would be consulted as work on the Plan progressed.

(ii) A resident had provided a copy of his response to the latest consultation on the application for holiday pods on Nethertown Road.

(iii) Cumberland Council had launched a consultation on its draft Statement of Community Involvement. The deadline for comments was 25 October.

(c) Applications approved/refused by Cumberland Council

There had been no decisions on applications in the parish since the last meeting.

144/24 FOOTPATHS

It was noted that the footpath from Scalebarrow to Rottington was now clear as the crop had been harvested and it was hoped that the stile would be repaired shortly. Cumberland Council's Rights of Way team would be contacting the landowner about his responsibility to keep the path clear.

The lengthsman had cleared the section of the ECP from the Golf course up towards the cliff path which was becoming badly overgrown with nettles and briars.

The latches on two of the gates between Gutterfoot and Scalebarrow had been removed or had fallen off. This had been reported to the Rights of Way officer.

145/24 REPORTS FROM MEETINGS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports.

146/24 CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's report on ongoing matters was received and noted. Cllr Graham would be attending the Effective Councillor course in Egremont on 24 Sept. Egremont Town Council would send an invoice for a contribution to the costs of the course.

The Christmas tree had been ordered and would be delivered when the company was delivering to Egremont Town Council.

147/24 CORRESPONDENCE

- (a) An email had been received from a resident about the speed of vehicles coming down Outrigg, asking whether this location could be included in police/speedwatch monitoring. The speed gun was away for repair at the moment but this would be discussed with the Speedwatch Co-ordinator.
- (b) Information had been received from Citizens Advice Copeland giving figures for numbers of clients seen from St Bees parish. Noted.
- (c) An email had been received from a local resident concerned about the spread of Himalayan Balsam. The Parish Council did not have the resources to take the lead in organising a working party to remove the plants from the Beck but would support a volunteer initiative to tackle the problem and would facilitate contacts with landowners, if required.
- (d) An invitation was received to an event held on 4 Sept to provide information on Project Collette, a proposed large windfarm off the Cumbrian coast which would be partly community owned. Details had been circulated to councillors by email.
- (e) NALC was developing a community safety webpage and was seeking case studies of how local councils can make their areas feel safer. Noted.
- (f) Cumbria Police had circulated results of the recent inspection by HMICFRS. Noted.
- (g) The Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner had launched a survey to gain views on priorities for inclusion in the Plan for the next few years. Details had been to councillors by email.
- (h) North Cumbria Integrated Care was engaging with local communities on a new clinical strategy to improve the health of the community. Details of the online survey were available from the Clerk. Noted.
- (i) Cumbria Police was consulting on Operation Enhance and wanted to hear views on anti-social behaviour and violence. Details of the survey had been circulated to councillors.
- (j) CALC had confirmed that Doug Sim and Andy Pratt had been elected unopposed to the CALC Board to represent South Cumberland. Noted.
- (k) Details had been received of engineering work on the Eskmeals viaduct which would affect services on the Cumbrian coast rail line from 7 – 22 September. Noted.
- (l) An invitation had been received to attend a series of Climate Action webinars for town & parish councils funded by NW Net Zero Hub. Cllr Linton had arranged to attend.
- (m) An invitation had been received to the Whitehaven & Coastal Community Panel Community Network meeting on 8 Oct from 5.30pm at Whitehaven United Reformed Church. The focus would be community food, community parks and the natural environment. Details had been circulated to councillors.
- (n) Details had been received of the CALC AGM on Sat 12 October at 10.30am in Newbiggin Village Hall. Noted.
- (o) A local resident had reported issues with gates on the Gutterfoot to Rottington footpath. This had been reported to Cumberland Council.
- (p) NALC was seeking views to inform its response to the government consultation on changes to the national planning policy framework. Details had been circulated by email.
- (q) The Robin Rigg Community Fund had launched a new round of grants to support projects which contribute to reduction of the effects of climate change or otherwise benefit the local community. Noted.
- (r) An Invitation had been received for one representative + guest to attend an event at Carlisle Cathedral on 4 October to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Cumbria. Response required by 20 Sept. Noted.
- (s) Cumberland Council was beginning work on a Cumberland Local Plan to replace the existing Local Plans of the former district councils. Noted.
- (t) Correspondence had been received from a steering group looking at the possible reintroduction of white-tailed eagles to Cumbria. The group was seeking the views of local communities. Details were available from the Clerk.
- (u) Cumberland Council had announced the launch of its review of polling districts & polling stations. Details were available on the Cumberland Council website with comments required by 7 October. Noted.
- (v) Details had been received of the ACT AGM on 18 October via Zoom. Noted.
- (w) Details had been received of an event to promote inclusive cycling at Hensingham stadium on 21 Sept 10-12noon. Noted.

INFORMATION ITEMS

- NALC Newsletters & Chief Executive’s Bulletins
- Rural Services Network Newsletter & Funding Digest
- Cumberland Council newsletters
- Connecting Cumbria Newsletter
- Cumbria Police Newsletters July & August- Whitehaven & District
- Cumbria Police Newsletters July & August - Egremont, Cleator Moor & Rural
- ACT Update
- Northern Gas Networks Stakeholder Update
- CALC News May/June & July/Aug
- Hyperfast GB Newsletter
- CALC Training Programme
- Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy Newsletter

148/24 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION /FUTURE AGENDA

- (a)It was suggested that walkers would appreciate a seat being sited at the end of Abbey Wood. As this was on private land, preliminary enquiries would be made of the land agent to ascertain whether this might be possible.
- (b)It was reported that the golf club was still having problems with dog walkers depositing dog waste bags in the golf club’s bins. The possibility of providing a bin there had been raised with Cumberland Council’s Street Cleansing Dept some months ago but they were not able to commit to emptying a bin in that location. It was suggested that the golf club could contact the Clerk if they wished to discuss the matter further.

149/24 DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was RESOLVED that the next Parish Council meeting take place on Monday 21 October 2024 at 6.30pm.

Signed.....

Date.....