

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

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

184/24 CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

185/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Gilmour. Cllr Minshaw, Ward Councillor, had also sent his apologies due to a family commitment.

186/24 DISPENSATIONS & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that Cllr Sim had a pecuniary interest in the setting of allotment rents as part of the budget for 2025-28, as his wife was an allotment holder. It was agreed that he be given a dispensation to allow him to take part in the discussion as his interest was deemed to be minimal.

Cllrs Millington and Benedicic declared an interest in drainage issues on Sea Mill Lane to be discussed under Cumberland Council issues.

187/24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present.

188/24 MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 18 NOVEMBER 2024

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting on 18 November 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

189/24 CUMBERLAND COUNCIL MATTERS

Cllr Minshaw had provided a written report on a number of ongoing matters:

- There had been no update from Highways following the site meeting to look at safety issues at the Abbey Vale junction. The issue of construction vehicles parking on the pavement opposite the junction had been raised with the PCSO who would monitor the situation. Any further problems could be reported to the police.
- Highways officers had indicated that the work to line the new drain on Sea Mill Lane was due to be done shortly but he would continue to follow this up. Whilst the news that the pipe lining was to be completed was welcome, there remained the issue of deep cavities in the garden of one property. These posed a significant safety risk and needed to be filled as soon as possible.
- There had been management changes within Cumberland Council and it had not been possible to get any positive assurances on improving access to the beach.
- The consultant's report on the groynes had apparently concluded that the groynes were serving no useful purpose and therefore no work would be done other than essential safety work. The Clerk was asked to contact Cumberland Council to request a copy of the consultant's report.
- The Boundary Commission was reviewing councillor numbers and ward boundaries of Cumberland Council and was inviting comments by 24 February.
- Resurfacing of Main Street was included in plans for 2026/27, although it might be done earlier if the budget/time allowed.
- Cumberland Council was consulting residents on changes to refuse service to make arrangements consistent across all areas. The consultation was open until 8 January but no changes were proposed in the Copeland area.
- A public consultation was also taking place on budget priorities for 2025/26.
- Cllr Minshaw had attended a recent meeting organised by Cumbria Tourism to discuss expansion of the Cumbria Coastal 200 tourist route which passed through St Bees.

190/24 FINANCE & RISK MANAGEMENT**(a) Monthly Financial Report**

A summary of the accounts at 30 November was received and noted. Expenditure to date was below the expected figure due mainly to late invoicing of play area repairs and delays with projects. It was noted that Cllr Mellor had completed his checks of the Qtr 2 bank reconciliations with no issues identified.

(b) Budget & Precept 2025/26

A draft budget for 2025-2028 had been prepared for discussion. There were a number of additional costs anticipated in the next financial year with increased expenditure on the beach toilets and higher staffing costs as a result of changes in national insurance and national salary award. Discussions were also continuing about a continuation of the Lengthsman Scheme from April 2025 which could involve higher costs. Delays with projects which were outside the Parish Council's control made it difficult to predict the timing of expenditure. It would be necessary to increase the precept and also draw down funds from reserves to balance the budget, whilst still retaining the recommended level of general reserves.

It was RESOLVED that the budget be approved and the precept for 2025/26 be set at £64,000.

(c) Payments

It was RESOLVED that the following payments be approved:

- Npower- electricity Nov £31.88 + £1.59 VAT Total £33.47
- Village Hall Committee– room hire Total £70.00
- YNH Ltd – website hosting Total £212.00
- Cumberland Council– annual independent play area inspections £130.00 +£26.00 VAT Total £156.00
- CALC- course fees Total £162.00
- J Donaldson – salary Dec Total £741.53
- J Donaldson – reimbursement for printer ink charges £9.99+ £2.00 VAT, key cutting £16.67 + £3.33 VAT, postage £2.55 Total £34.54

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

- St Bees PCC – contribution to parish magazine £1300.00
- 1st Beckermeth/St Bees Scouts -donation £150.00
- St Bees FC – donation £250.00
- Cumbria Rungwe Community Link- donation £100.00
- Royal British Legion – donation £225.00
- Friends of the Priory – subscription/donation £50.00
- FLAG – subscription/donation £50.00
- Firpress – signs for Priory Paddock £55.00 + £11.00 VAT Total £66.00
- D Sim – reimbursement for fixings for signs £19.81 +£3.96 VAT Total £23.77
- Pagan Trust - donation to cover Trustee indemnity insurance Total £100.00
- Water Plus – water/wastewater £116.67 (direct debit 18/12/24)
- Answer 4 U – answering service £23.99 + £4.80 VAT Total £28.79 (direct debit 18/12/24)
- S Kelly – toilet service charges £240.00 (payments 29/11, 6/12, 13/12)
- St Bees Over 60s – donation Total £75.00 (chq 002947)

191/24 LIAISON WITH MP

Correspondence had been received from Lesley Graffin, caseworker for Josh MacAlister MP offering to attend meetings of the Parish Council to help with local issues. It was agreed to invite her to a council meeting early in the new year to discuss areas where the MP's office might be able to offer help and support.

192/24 CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

Cllr Linton had provided a written report on progress with the bus survey. So far there had been 91 responses and the survey would be running until 20th January. Paper copies were still available in the Post Office for anyone without online access.

193/24 PROJECT REPORTS**(a) Community Events**

The Santa Parade on 26 November had been very successful with large numbers attending to watch the switch-on of the tree lights. The collection for the RNLI had raised a sum of £292.24.

(b) Beach & Play Area

The Art Department at St Bees School had forwarded some initial designs for art work to be displayed on the beach toilets. It was agreed that Cllrs Linton, Benedicic and Sim would review the designs and provide feedback to the school.

(c) Upgrading of Outrigg Play Area

There had been no further progress following Cumberland Council's offer to begin discussions on a lease. The Clerk would ask Cllr Minshaw to follow this up.

(d) Station Car Park/Transport Hub

Cllr Taylor reported that Network Rail and Cumberland Council had agreed the way forward to resolve the land registration issues and it was now a case of waiting for formalities at the Land Registry to be completed before further progress could be made with drafting leases. With the land issues resolved in principle, the next stage would be to seek a pre-application assessment from planning officers. This would indicate whether there were any specific requirements which would affect the designs and costings and a full discussion would then take place at a parish council meeting to decide whether to go ahead with the project. Cllr Taylor was also investigating the costs of employing a professional company to manage the project if it was decided to go ahead.

It was RESOLVED to request a pre-application assessment from Cumberland Council.

It was hoped that the historic St Bees sign from the station could in the future be installed at the station car park. It was currently in safe keeping at the railway museum. It had been established that the sign had belonged to the Heritage & Tourism Group which had disbanded some time ago and had transferred its assets to the Parish Council. It was now being added to the council's asset register.

(e) Valley Link Cycle Track

Cllr Taylor reported that Josh MacAlister MP was supportive of the plan for a new cycle link and was organising a meeting in February to discuss this and other cycle schemes. Cllr Taylor would attend on behalf of the Parish Council.

(f) Office Improvements

The office refurbishment was complete. The only remaining task was to order a small table for the room.

(g) Priory Paddock

The Friends of Priory Paddock were completing the formalities of opening a bank account for the group. The donation agreed by the Parish Council at the last meeting would be paid into the account as soon as the account details were available.

(h) Interpretation Boards

Cllr Sim had completed the design for a new interpretation board at Sea Mill to replace the old sign damaged in the recent storm.

It was RESOLVED to go ahead with manufacture of the interpretation board at a cost of approx. £150.

194/24 PLANNING**(a) New Applications**

The Planning Advisory Group reported on the following application:

Ref 4/24/2094/0F1 Erection of five new dwellings – amended & additional information

Land to the south of Holly Mews, Abbey Road, St Bees

The amendments included proposals for a permissive path to improve pedestrian safety on Abbey Rd which would link to the Dandy Walk (a public right of way). However, the path did not run within the development site but on land adjacent to the site owned by the Trustees of St Bees School. The proposal also included some upgrading of the Dandy Walk. Councillors believed that the council's original objections to the development remained unchanged and expressed concerns about the proposed footpath on several grounds:

- The proposed path and gate was only 1m wide and was not wide enough for wheelchairs, push chairs and mobility scooters.
- The path would have an access/exit point onto Abbey Road close to a bend with limited visibility, raising further safety concerns.
- The permissive path and upgraded Dandy Walk would not have a bound surface and would deteriorate over time. The plan did not specify how the path would be maintained in the future and the permissive nature of the path did not guarantee its long term availability for members of the public.
- The lower part of the development site where there would be a link to the Dandy Walk was very wet, as there were several natural springs in that area. The Dandy Walk was often flooded and boggy, making it difficult to use especially with a pushchair. The proposal gave no indication of how this would be addressed.
- The developers had rejected the recommendations from Cumberland Council's Countryside Access Team on the grounds that a contribution of £20,000 was disproportionate for a development of five dwellings. However, the five new dwellings were part of the same development as the eleven dwellings already approved under a previous application. All the houses were to be family sized houses so were likely to be occupied by families with children. Assuming an average occupancy of four persons per house, this would be a total of 64 people, a significant number in the context of a village.

It was RESOLVED to object to the proposals on the grounds outlined above.

(b) Other Planning Matters

- Several councillors had joined the online meeting with planning officers organised by CALC on 19 November. It was hoped to arrange a further discussion between parish council representatives and Nick Hayhurst.
- Cllr Graham suggested that, with the Local Plan now adopted and further building likely to take place in the village, the Parish Council should agree its policy on solar panels and other green energy measures with the aim of improving the quality of design of new developments. It was agreed to discuss this further at the next meeting.
- Cumberland Council Planning Committee would be visiting the site of the proposed pods on Nethertown Rd on the morning of Monday 6 January. The Parish Council had been invited to send an observer to the visit and Cllr Taylor agreed to attend on behalf of the council. The application would be decided by the Planning Committee at its meeting on Wed 8 January in Carlisle. The Planning Officer's recommendation was that the application should be approved but Parish Council had the right to speak at the meeting to explain its objections. It was RESOLVED to ask John Groves of Groves Planning Consultants to speak on the Parish Council's behalf at the meeting on 8 January.

(c) Applications approved by Cumberland Council

4/24/2354/DOC Discharge of conditions 7 & 8 of approval 4/24/2096/0F1 – Mellendene, High House Road

4/24/2329/0F1 Change of use of utility room in existing detached garage into dog grooming studio – continuation of use granted under approval 4/21/2419/0F1- 2 Solway Rise.

195/24 FOOTPATHS

The report from Cllr Hale was received. It was noted that the flooding of the ECP just over the bridge at Seamill (Prow 423012) was causing concern and had been reported to Cumberland Council.

196/24 REPORTS FROM MEETINGS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Taylor reported on a meeting he attended with Cumbria Tourism and other stakeholders to discuss the expansion of the Cumbria Coastal 200, a travel route designed originally for camper vans. The aim was to attract more tourists to the coastal strip and spread the economic benefits more widely.

197/24 CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's report on ongoing matters was received and noted.

198/24 CORRESPONDENCE

(a) Whitehaven & Coastal Community Panel had organised a Meet Your Councillor event at Rosehill Theatre on 12 December 5.30 -6pm. Details had been circulated.

(b) Correspondence had been received from the organisers of Railway 200 encouraging local councils to organise activities and events to mark the 200th anniversary of railways in 2025. Noted.

(c) CALC had forwarded details of its training programme for Jan – July 2025. Details had been circulated.

(d) ACT was gathering views on access to, and affordability of, rural housing and transport. They were also interested in views on opportunities and challenges around rural poverty. The survey was available on the ACT website. Noted

(e) CALC had forwarded information from Cumberland Council on help available during the winter months. Noted.

(f) The Local Government Boundary Commission had provided details of its review of the number of councillors on Cumberland Council, proposing an increase to 55 councillors, and was seeking views on ward boundaries and names. Details had been circulated by email.

(g) Clear Councils insurance had confirmed that it would be joining with Ecclesiastical. This would not affect existing policies and any long term arrangements would be honoured. Noted

(h) Letters of thanks had been received from a number of organisations who received donations including the PCC, Friends of the Priory, Scouts, Football Club, Cumbria Rungwe Community Link, Royal British Legion and Over 60s. Noted.

(i) The road closure on Abbey Rd had been extended to 31 January. Noted

(j) A letter had been received from the Open Spaces Society seeking donations to help them fund legal action. Noted.

(k) An email had been received from CALC urging councils to check their websites to ensure that they are not breaching copyright rules when using photographs on their websites. Noted.

(l) A local resident had provided a copy of an email to the MP raising concerns about water quality at St Bees following a number of sewage overflows. Noted

(m) Workington Transport Heritage Trust would be providing a free bus service to/from Whitehaven on Boxing Day. Flyers were being distributed through appropriate locations. Noted.

INFORMATION ITEMS

NALC Newsletters & Chief Executive's Bulletins

Rural Services Network Newsletter

Cumberland Council newsletters

Connecting Cumbria Newsletter Nov

ACT Update

Northern Gas Networks Stakeholder Update

Open Spaces Society News

Cumbria Local Nature Partnership News

Cumbria Police newsletter – Whitehaven & District

Cumbria Police newsletter – Egremont, Cleator Moor & Rural

1558

199/24 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION /FUTURE AGENDA

(a) The owners of the Post Office had reported problems with dog waste bags and other rubbish since the litter bin had been removed after being damaged by a vehicle. A possible site for a bin had been identified which was not close to any door and would not cause inconvenience to property owners. The Clerk would confirm with Cumberland Council that they were willing to resume routine emptying before a new bin was installed.

200/24 DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was RESOLVED that the next Parish Council meeting take place on Monday 20 January 2025 at 6.30pm.

Signed.....

Date.....