

**Draft Minutes of the Meeting of St Bees Parish Council held on
Monday 17 March 2025 at 6.30pm in the Village Hall**

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

In attendance: Cllr G Minshaw, Ward Councillor, Egremont North/St Bees

Also present: 1 member of the public

39/25 CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The Chairman reported the sad news that Tom Milburn had died in the last few days. He had looked after the beach toilets for the Parish Council for more than 10 years, stepping into the breach when the council had taken over management of the toilets at short notice after CBC had decided to close them. His charges had never increased and he had cleaned and maintained the toilets daily until last November. He had always been supportive of the Parish Council and would be greatly missed.

40/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Linton.

41/25 DISPENSATIONS & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs Bettinson & Sim declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Village Hall agenda item as Trustees of the Pagan Trust. Cllrs Taylor & Hale declared an interest in the same item as members of the Village Hall Committee.

Cllr Benedicic declared an interest in discussion of drainage issues on Sea Mill Lane as the owner of a property affected.

42/25 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A member of the public raised the matter of the very low broadband speeds available to properties in Rottington. Fibrus had confirmed some months ago that the properties would be part of the government funded project to provide full fibre broadband but there was still no definite information on when the connection would be provided. The government funding was due to end in 2026 and residents were concerned that this might mean that that Rottington would not get the promised connection. The matter had been raised with the MP but so far there had been no further information.

It was agreed that a representative of Fibrus would be invited to come to the next Parish Council meeting to explain the plans and timescale for providing a connection to Rottington. In the meantime residents would press the MP's office for an update.

43/25 MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 17 FEBRUARY 2025

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting on 17 February be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44/25 CUMBERLAND COUNCIL MATTERS

Cllr Minshaw reported on a number of ongoing matters:

- He would be meeting the Highways Network Manager later in the week to discuss the issues raised at the site meeting with Abbey Vale residents some months ago. Road markings had been repainted including those around Abbey Vale.
- A meeting had taken place at the main beach with a senior officer to look at various issues including access to the beach. Consideration was being given to providing improved access and new signs would be provided requesting that, wherever possible, pedestrians should use the small ramp and avoid use of the lifeboat ramp. Councillors pointed out that the smaller ramp was not suitable for anyone with mobility issues and suggested that improved access should be the priority before signs were put up.
- The graffiti at the beach area had been removed and the beach shelter repainted.

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- The problem of parked vehicles preventing bin collections at the bottom of Sea Mill Lane had been raised with officers at Cumberland Council. No immediate solution had been identified but a review of collections would take place over the summer and the use of a smaller vehicle would be considered.
- The results of the St Bees bus survey had been passed on to be considered with the results of the wider Cumberland Council survey.
- A member of the public had raised concerns that dogs were permitted to be off their leads on the beach, frightening young children playing there. The matter had been raised with officers but they had replied that there was no evidence of widespread problems which would justify any change in the current regulations.
- The Whitehaven & Coastal Panel would be holding its next meeting on 20 March at Kells.

Councillors raised several issues:

- The work on the drainage issues affecting properties on Sea Mill Lane was still not complete. The lining of the drain was yet to be done and the deep cavities in the garden of one property had not been filled in. There were signs that the ground close to one cavity was subsiding and there was a serious risk of further collapse. Cllr Minshaw agreed to follow this up.
- Concerns were expressed about litter issues at the main beach as the number of visitors increased and the Bakehouse reopened. The Clerk was seeking information from Cumberland Council about replacement of bins on the promenade before the start of the season. The situation would be kept under review.
- There had been a minor accident when a visitor tripped on an uneven paving slab by the beach toilets. This had been reported to Cumberland Council.
- Trail bikes had been seen on the grassed areas at the main beach.
- The fence alongside land at Coach Rd was in need of repair. It was believed that the land belonged to Cumberland Council.
- There were signs that a section of tarmac near the entrance to Station car park was subsiding where there had been an earlier repair. Cllr Minshaw agreed to follow this up.

45/25 SHORELINE MANAGEMENT/COASTAL EROSION

Cllr Benedicic had circulated detailed comments on the consultant's report. The report had considered a number of options and several of these noted the importance of access to the beach. The report recommended option 12 which proposed maintaining the line for the coming 50 years but beyond this there would be managed realignment. It was noted that there was no consideration of carbon balance in the chosen option.

It was RESOLVED to forward the detailed comments to officers at Cumberland Council and to send a summary to Josh MacAlister MP.

46/25 DEVOLUTION

The government had launched a public consultation on the proposal to create a joint mayoral authority covering the Cumberland Council and Westmorland & Furness Council areas. The consultation document explained that the proposed new authority would have powers devolved from central government and would be led by an elected mayor. The consultation was seeking views of local residents and organisations but it was clear that the government's intention was to introduce joint authorities as part of the policy of devolving decisions to a more local level.

Councillors expressed a range of views on the proposal. It was noted that CALC had arranged a briefing session for town & parish councils on 2 April with the opportunity for councillors to ask questions of the Leaders of Cumberland and Westmorland & Furness Councils.

It was agreed that councillors would respond individually to the consultation before the deadline of 13 April.

47/25 MEETING WITH MP

Cllrs Argyle, Benedicic and Taylor had attended a meeting organised by the MP on 13 March to discuss improvements to the local area. The attendees had included a number of local businesses and organisations. A range of topics had been discussed including access to the beach and various tourism initiatives.

It had been a productive meeting and it was clear that the MP was keen to support local initiatives and press for improvements to local services such as public transport. The Parish Council would continue to liaise with Josh MacAlister on issues where he might be able to offer help.

48/25 FINANCE & RISK MANAGEMENT

(a) Monthly Financial Report

A summary of the accounts at 28 February was received and noted.

- An invoice had now received for play area repairs and for monthly inspections for Qtrs 3 & 4.
- A quotation was being sought for a new hand drier for the beach toilets and for some other minor electrical work.
- The insurers had paid the claim for the noticeboard at Rottington which had been damaged beyond repair during storm Eowyn.
It was RESOLVED that a new noticeboard be purchased in recycled plastic board.
- One quotation had been received for repair of the potholes at Station car park. A second quotation would be sought.
It was RESOLVED to await the second quotation and then proceed with the repairs within a maximum cost of £1650 excl VAT
- The lock on the accessible toilet at the beach had been damaged, apparently by vandalism. A price had been obtained from a local locksmith for replacing the lock and handles.
It was RESOLVED to approve expenditure of £325 to replace and fit the lock.
- It had only been possible to obtain one quotation for clearing the old boat and undergrowth from the former boat park.
It was RESOLVED to accept the quotation of £825 from Braystones Handyman Services.
- The financial year 2025/26 would be the final year of the 3 year grass cutting contract with Works 4 You Ltd. The agreement allowed for a mutually agreed price increase to reflect inflation. Taking into account the increase in the NMW and employer's NI from April the proposed cost was £582 per month (April- October), an increase of 8% on the current year.
It was RESOLVED to approve the increased price for 2025/26.
- The level of reserves in hand at the end of the financial year was reviewed. It was likely that expenditure would be under budget, mainly due to delays with the Station car park project and play area repairs.
It was RESOLVED that £9K be transferred to the earmarked reserve for the car park project and £6K be transferred to the Major Asset Repair/Replacement reserve.

(b) Payments

It was RESOLVED that the following payments be approved:

- Npower- electricity Feb £28.83 + £1.44 VAT Total £30.27
- Village Hall Committee– room hire Total £70.00
- Cumberland Council – play area repairs £1220.83 + £244.17 VAT Total £1465.00
- JRB Enterprise Ltd- dog waste bags £244.50 + £48.90 VAT Total £293.40
- CALC – course fees Total £50.00
- Cumberland Council – beach play area inspections £458.16 + £91.63 VAT Total £549.79
- Cumberland Council – Outrigger play area inspections £186.78 + £37.36 VAT Total £224.14
- J Donaldson – Salary March Total £741.53
- J Donaldson – reimbursement for printer ink charges £9.99+ £2.00 VAT Total £11.99
- HMRC – PAYE Qtr 4 Total £713.52

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

- Water Plus – water/wastewater charges Total £166.81 (direct debit 17/03/25)
- Answer 4 U – answering service £15.99+ £3.20 VAT Total £19.19 (direct debit 17/03/25)
- Groves Town Planning – professional fees Total £550.00
- Unipar LLP – recalibration of speed gun £310.00 + £62.00 VAT Total £372.00
- Firpress Ltd – Sea Mill interpretation board £240.00 + £48.00 VAT Total £288.00
- S Kelly – toilet service charges £240.00 (SO payments 21/02, 28/02, 07/03, 14/03)

49/25 VILLAGE HALL

Cllr Taylor explained that the position with the new sub lease remained unresolved but a decision would be made by the end of April on whether the new lease would go ahead. The Village Hall Committee was working hard to arrange events and increase income and was advertising events as widely as possible around the village.

Cllr Hale reported that there were a number of events planned in the coming weeks including a cabaret evening on 22 March, a flower arranging demonstration on 12 April and an event featuring local musician Anne-Marie Sanderson at the end of April.

50/25 POLICIES

The Health & Safety policy and Risk Management policy were due for annual review. Recent legislation required every employer to have a Sexual Harassment policy. CALC had provided a template which could be adapted for each parish council.

It was RESOLVED that the Health & Safety & Risk Management policies be approved without amendment.

It was further RESOLVED that the draft Sexual Harassment policy be approved.

51/25 CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

Cllr Linton had reported that the group had not met since the last meeting and was waiting to hear the results of Cumberland Council's bus survey.

52/25 PLANNING

(a) Applications received for comment

- **Ref 4/24/2334/0F1 Removal of existing wind turbine & erection of replacement with turbine up to 76m blade tip height with associated development- additional & amended information - Highfield Farm, Bigrigg**

Additional information had been provided in support of the application for a replacement of the existing wind turbine. It was noted that the proposed replacement was substantially larger than the existing turbine and was close to the maximum size allowed. There was no explanation of why such a large turbine was required and it would have a greater visual impact on the area. The application referred to the benefit to the local community but it was not clear what benefit there would be.

It was RESOLVED to object to the application on the above grounds.

- **Ref 4/24/2071/0R1 Application for approval of reserved matters relating to appearance, layout & scale for a detached dwelling and detached garage - additional & amended information – Plot 5, Land to the south of Southrigg, Nethertown Rd**

The deadline for comments was before this meeting so it was noted that the Clerk had submitted comments under delegated authority.

- **Ref 4/24/2356/0B1 Variation of conditions 2 (plans), 9 (materials) & 17 (materials) of approval 4/23/2120/0B1 – amended description and additional & amended information – Land adjacent to School House with access from B5345**

The deadline for comments was before this meeting so it was noted that the Clerk had submitted comments under delegated authority.

(b) Ongoing Applications**Ref 4/23/2394/0F1 Application for holiday pods- Nethertown Rd**

Cumberland Council's Planning Committee had considered the application at its meeting on 19 February. John Groves had spoken on behalf of the Parish Council and John Benedicic had spoken in a private capacity. However, the Planning Committee had decided to approve the application with a number of conditions.

Following the meeting Cllr Benedicic had written to United Utilities with concerns about aspects of the proposed drainage arrangements which appeared to contravene building regulations. The response from United Utilities was that the drainage plans referred to in the application were out of date and had been superseded and the proposed arrangements were compliant with regulations. United Utilities confirmed that they had no powers to refuse connection to an adopted sewer and any restrictions were a matter for Cumberland Council. Cllr Benedicic explained that overflows during heavy rain remained a serious concern and he would speak to property owners who had previously experienced problems to ensure that all leaks were reported to United Utilities. It was agreed to make Cumberland Council aware of this information.

(c) Applications approved by Cumberland Council

4/24/2419/0F1 First floor extension to provide additional bedrooms – 2 Quarry Cottages, Bank End

4/23/2394/0F1 Change of use and alteration of land for siting of 5 holiday pods – Land at Nethertown Road

53/25 VILLAGE IN BLOOM COMMITTEE

The draft minutes of the meeting of the Village in Bloom Committee on 17 February were received and noted. Cllr Benedicic had prepared some posters for the noticeboards to recruit more volunteers.

54/25 PROJECT REPORTS**(a) Community Events**

It was noted that the Village Hall would be holding an event on 10 May to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

(b) Beach & Play Area

Pupils at St Bees School were continuing to work on possible designs for a mural.

The Clerk had met officers from Cumberland Council to review the position with repairs to the play equipment. Cumberland Council would provide a price for a routine maintenance programme including repainting, greasing bearings etc

(c) Upgrading of Outrigg Play Area

There had been no progress with the draft lease since the last meeting.

(d) Station Car Park/Transport Hub

There was no progress to report. A further meeting had taken place with Network Rail, Cumberland Council and the Community Rail Partnership but it seemed that the solicitors for NR and Cumberland Council were still to agree on how best to resolve the land registration issue. Cllr Minshaw was asked to speak to the Legal Dept at Cumberland Council to establish the position.

(e) Valley Link Cycle Track

The Chairman reported that he and Cllr Taylor had attended a meeting organised by Josh MacAlister MP to discuss plans cycling projects, including the proposal to create a cycle track between St Bees & Whitehaven. It had been a constructive meeting with representatives from various agencies involved. There had been support for the St Bees – Whitehaven project and the Parish Council had been offered help from two local organisations in taking the project forward to a point at which it could be implemented if funding became available. A further meeting was to take place in a few weeks.

(f) Priory Paddock/Tree Planting

Cllr Bettinson reported that annual maintenance had been delayed as the lengthsman had been on sick leave. There had been some antisocial behaviour in the Paddock with wood being thrown into the pond.

A number of trees had been donated and it was planned to plant these at the allotment field on 23 March (weather permitting).

(g) Interpretation Boards

The new interpretation board for Sea Mill had been ordered. Signs were also being ordered for the beach toilets and for the reserved parking spaces at Fairladies footpath.

55/25 FOOTPATHS

The report from Cllr Hale was received and noted.

56/25 REPORTS FROM MEETINGS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Benedicic reported that he had attended the recent Health & Wellbeing event organised by CALC and Cumberland Council. A number of local organisations had taken part to show the range of activities available across the area including arts events which might be of interest to the Village Hall Committee. He would pass contact details for Rosehill Theatre to Cllr Hale.

57/25 CLERK'S REPORT

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

The Coast to Coast Passport project had now been launched and a link to their website was available on the St Bees website. The organisers would be visiting St Bees later this week and would provide posters for the noticeboards.

58/25 CORRESPONDENCE

(a) The government had launched a consultation on proposals to create a Mayoral Combined Authority for Cumberland and Westmorland Councils. The combined authority would have powers devolved from central government but could also take over some powers currently exercised by the two unitary authorities. The consultation document was available on the gov.uk website with responses required by 13 April. Noted.

(b) Correspondence had been received from the organisers of Project Collette, a project to create an off-shore wind farm off the Cumbrian coast. A number of stakeholder and community engagement events would take place in 2025 and the organisers were offering to meet local councils to explain their plans. Noted.

(c) Cumberland Council had adopted a Statement of Community Involvement in the planning process following public consultation a few months ago. Noted.

(d) The Monitoring Officer at Cumberland Council had issued a reminder to all councillors of the need to notify any changes to pecuniary or other registrable interests within 28 days. Noted.

(e) Cumberland Council was seeking views of residents on car parking in towns including Whitehaven. Noted.

(f) A resident had raised concerns about vehicles parked for long periods on Main Street making it difficult for residents to park there. The concerns were noted but it was unclear what action could be taken.

(g) A resident had raised concerns about rubbish at the Adams Recreation Ground. The Clerk had reported the matter to the Adams Ground Committee which had taken prompt action to clear the litter.

(h) Cumberland Council had completed its review of waste services. Services would be harmonised across the whole of Cumberland but there would be no change to the frequency of collections in the former Copeland area. Noted.

(i) Cumbria in Bloom was introducing a new award for parish councils to recognise to recognise the work and commitment of volunteers who help to enrich and enhance their local communities. Noted.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

NALC Chief Executive's Bulletins

Rural Services Network Newsletter & Funding Digest

Cumberland Council Newsletters

Northern Gas Networks Stakeholder Update

Cumbria Police Newsletter Feb – Whitehaven & District

Cumbria Police Newsletter Feb – Egremont & Rural

Connecting Cumbria Newsletter Feb

59/25 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/FUTURE AGENDA

Cllr Graham reported that he had been co-opted as a community representative on the Whitehaven & Coastal Community Panel and would be attending his first meeting this week.

60/25 DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was RESOLVED that the next Parish Council meeting take place on Monday 14 April 2025 at 6.30pm.

Signed.....

Date.....