

Colton Parish Council

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Clerk: Ms Mandy Lane Lilac Cottage Oxen Park

Ulverston LA12 8HG

Chairman's Annual Report for 2014/2015

Changes to the Council

In terms of the Council itself, there have been two important developments: one is our transfer from Quality Parish Council to a parish council with 'Foundation Status' and the other is the new ruling that allows members of the public to make audio or visual recordings of our meetings. We have not seen the consequence of either of these changes so far.

Turning to membership, Anne Robinson tendered her resignation after seven years on the Council; her local knowledge, practical skills, and engagement with local people have all been invaluable to the work of the council and will be hard to replace.

In July, we also said a formal farewell to Tony Atkinson who had been our hard-working lengthsman for two years before succumbing to an old back injury. We are very grateful for all the hard work he carried out on behalf of the community.

Activities of the Council

Some successes.

We have had made some real progress in the last year, as well as coping with ever increasing amounts of bureaucracy (the Clerk has brought a total of 382 items of correspondence to our attention).

A major breakthrough has been in the much-improved level of communication with Cumbria Highways; we now have regular communication with their local area staff. This has resulted in a better response to road surface issues, not only potholes but some major drainage works. Issues remain, as outlined below. Similarly, along with local residents, we have had some success with the District Council in getting litter cleared in the area of Bouth Road-ends.

The Community-led plan, complete with Action Plan, is being laid out and produced and will become available shortly on the Council's website. Our now official lengthsman, Archie Workman, continues to do great work in the parish, alongside dealing with his new-found international celebrity status! Finally, we seem to have seen off pig-related problems in the Finsthwaite area although a similar issue briefly surfaced at Colton.

Thanks largely to Mike Postle's persistence, the prospect of fibre-optic cable, providing Superfast Broadband, is now on our doorstep, although Mike has also been organising demonstrations of alternative technologies, should the need arise.

Challenges ahead

Along with the modest successes must go some issues which still need to be resolved. Although some aspects of the work done by Highways is improving, other responsibilities, particularly with signage and road markings, remain stubbornly unaddressed.

On a positive note, we look forward to implementing actions from the Community-led Plan, including priority areas such as an Information and Communication strategy, highway issues and Village Halls.

The Parish Council also looks forward to working with the Rusland Horizons scheme where there will be opportunities for residents to become involved in relation to traditional skills, archaeology, history and sustainable transport. We are currently discussing a 'Parish Path-watch' scheme with the National Park.

Liaison and consultation

The Council has produced two editions of its own newsletter this year, hand-delivered to every member of the community. We have also contributed to the three local newsletters every month, and maintain a parish council website. It is proposed that more use is made of our newsletter to promote the actions coming from the new Community-led Plan.

The Council received 11 formal consultations covering topics ranging from North-West Coast Connections Project to motor boat racing on Windermere. It responded to those which had relevance to our Parish.

The Council was represented at 20 external meetings during the year, nine of these attended by Cllr Dean. In the year ahead, we must make sure that this task is shared more equitably among Councillors.

Planning

This year the Council reviewed 29 planning applications. We raised objections to four of these, supported four, and raised concerns about two. Of the four objections, one was granted, another refused, one we are waiting to hear about; the fourth was re-submitted as amended plans to which we then submitted a 'no objection' response. All planning applications and their outcomes can be views on our website.

Meetings

The Council held nine scheduled meetings during the year and two additional meetings to consider specific planning applications; member attendance averaged 84%. A public meeting was also held to clarify parking arrangements for the Oxen Park Cinema.

Our County and District Councillor, David Fletcher, attends meetings when he can and has provided us with some useful support. Cumbria Police have attended four of our meetings and sent reports to others. The level of crime was seen as relatively low but some more unusual reports covered 'change-raising', damage at Colton Church and even suspected arson. Our thanks go to PCSO Diana Wilcock who has recently resigned; we welcome her replacement, PCSO Paul Harris.

We received presentations from Environment Agency staff on 'Flood Risk Awareness' and from Sara Spicer, introducing herself as the new Area Ranger for the LDNPA.

Budget for the coming year

Our Finance Working Group has continued to oversee our formal budgeting procedures and has recommended a precept increase of 10% which the full Council has approved. The gradual withdrawal of services from rural areas in Cumbria has meant that the local community through Parish Councils have had to step in to fill the gap. Funds for the precept increase will be allocated to projects that are emerging from our Community Plan Action Plan. One key example is Highways: our Lengthsman has become an essential service for clearing drains, now that County can only sending a gully-sucker to some of our roads once a year. Verges are no longer cut back and woody vegetation overhangs the roads. Green roads are no longer maintained at all. A summary of the accounts is attached.

Chairman's thanks

I would like to thank Alan Lovegrove for his continuing and unprompted monthly inspections of Bouth Village Green and Playground, Mike Postle for his excellent work on Broadband, Bobbie Dobson for carrying out the internal audit, and John Osborne and colleagues for their continuing excellent work on Bouth Village Green and Playground. I would also like to thank my fellow Councillors for their help and support over the last year, picking out in particular Cllr Vanessa Champion for her wise words and help as Vice-Chair, Cllr Ken Dean for representing us at the LAP and at many other meetings, and for his role in the work of the Finance Working Group, together with Cllr Chris Potts

Finally, as ever, heartfelt thanks are due to our Clerk, Mandy Lane, who continues to battle with the mountains of 'paperwork', persists with pursuing our long list of highway issues, and will be wrestling with the consequences of Foundation Status, whatever they may be.

Cllr Colin Barr May 2015

Officers of the Council 2014-2015

<u>West Ward:</u> Cllr Colin Barr (Chair); Cllr Katherine Patterson; Cllr John Milburn

<u>East Ward</u>: Cllr Chris Potts; Cllr Vanessa Champion (Vice-chair); Cllr David Hoyle

Central Ward: Cllr Anne Robinson (resigned during the year); Cllr John Watson; Cllr Ken Dean

Clerk: Ms Mandy Lane: Lilac Cottage, Oxen Park, Ulverston. LA12 8HG

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Summary of Accounts 2014/2015

Balance brought forward	8188
RECEIPTS	
Annual Precept via SLDC	10986
Council Tax Grant	286
Finsthwaite Flood Measures grant from SLDC Cllr Fletcher	400
·	2000
Rusland Horizons grant from LDNPA Claife Parish Council share of travel expenses for meeting in Penrith	19
	185
Fund-raising for Defibrillator from residents of Oxen Park and Bandrake Head	100
High Furness LAP - Lengthsman grant	97
VAT returns for 12/13 and 13/14	1200
Total Income	15173
Total income	13173
PAYMENTS - summary	
Annual Fees for services:	
CALC Subscription	207
Council Administration Costs:	
Audit fee	120
Information Commissioner fee (Data Protection)	35
Clerk's office supplies and postage	252
Clerk's standard home office allowance	150
Web hosting fee and domain name renewal	63
Insurance	565
Room Hire and refreshments for events	123
Clerk's Travel	141
Councillors' Travel	170
Training course fees	10
Bouth Village Green & Playground management:	
RoSPA H&S Annual Inspection	209
Clerk's salary	5303
PAYE services	48
New notice-board for Bouth	770
Lengthsman services	2707
Drain rod attachments for Lengthsman work	61
Poppy wreath for Remembrance Service	17
Finsthwaite Clock Maintenance	174
Charitable donations (NW Air Ambulance and CAB)	100
Defibrillator for Oxen Park and Bandrake Head	1775
(grant of £1700 received in FY 13/14)	
Commons Registration Information Fee	10
Rusland Horizons contract for film-making	2000
Total Payments	15010
BALANCE	
Brought forward	8188
+ Total income	15173
	15010
- Total payments Balance carried forward	8351
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Note: The balance to carry forward of £8351 is larger than the 10% contingency normally planned for and the projected year-end balance of £6826. The apparent under-spend of £1525 is due to a number of factors, principally: i) Additional grant income of £1075 not budgeted for, ii) Lengthsman under-spend due to limited time, iii) Projects not yet started this year, notably website redevelopment and Community Plan projects.