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INTRODUCTION

This new 2024 Parish Plan reflects the significant changes to our Parish. As well as global issues, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the climate emergency, many people’s lives have been affected by the cost-of-living crisis, increased digitalisation, and changes to public services.

Locally, we have a new Unitary Authority in Westmorland and Furness Council (W&F) and an updated Local Plan issued by the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA).

There have also been changes in the makeup of the Parish in terms of age profile and housing ownership as can be seen in the summary table below. More details of the [data from the 2021 Census](#) can be found on the CPC website plus a [summary of key trends](#)

	2001	2011	2021
Resident population: in decline	765	672	653
Ageing population:			
Increase in those aged 65 and over:	199	210	243
Decrease in children aged 15 and under:	92	68	60
Number of resident households: in decline	326	321	310
Households with no usual residents: increasing	94	152	No data
Economically active population: in decline	379	351	301
Work mainly from home: increase 2001/2021	104	80	129

This review is based on consultation with the local community, including young people, businesses, and other key partners. For full details of all information used please refer to the [attached link](#)

For this plan to be useful and successful the Parish Council will need to work with individuals and groups across our local communities. We will need your support and participation. Our consultations demonstrate local belief that this is a special place to live and work and we need to harness that enthusiasm to ensure our communities continue to thrive.

Colton Parish Council takes its duties and responsibilities very seriously and we are committed to using our powers and opportunities to progress local priorities. For full details on our powers and duties please see [Legal Powers and Duties](#).

Our plan has four themed sections, the contents of which are structured as follows:-

- Our relevant and available powers
- Our identified priorities based on what you told us
- What we can support the community to do and how
- Where we will seek to influence other agencies

1. COMMUNITIES, WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE (CW&R)

Respondents told us that the provision of local services, such as buses, shops, post-offices, GP surgeries and schools, is extremely important, especially to meet the needs of families and the ageing population.

They also said that protecting the special character of our area, our local heritage, the local landscape, and the area's peace and quiet are extremely important for the community and its wellbeing. See section 2 for more detail regarding CPC's environmental priorities.

Respondents expressed concern about weaknesses in the infrastructure resilience, including reliability of power availability, mobile signal coverage and broadband speed. All of these are particularly important for the safety of our residents and visitors as well as for supporting remote working, reducing social isolation, and retaining a viable percentage of permanent residents.



Rusland Show at the heart of the community

A. Our relevant Powers

- i. To provide financial assistance via our community grant fund for work that is for the benefit of all parishioners.
- ii. Acquire and maintain land for the benefit of the community and
- iii. Acquire, provide, and furnish community buildings, such as village halls.

B. Our priorities based on what you told us:

- i. To approve community grant applications that enable our communities to thrive, that reduce social isolation, that enable communities to develop resilience (e.g. for the development of community hubs to support local people in the event of extreme weather)
- ii. Work proactively with other local bodies and forums where resources allow (e.g. adjacent Parish Councils, transport action groups etc.)
- iii. Provide insurance and maintenance funds for defibrillators located across the Parish.
- iv. Support appropriate applications for farming diversification to keep our farming heritage vibrant and sustainable.
- v. Continue to work closely with schools to ensure that the Parish is inclusive and attractive to young families.

C. What we can support the community to do and how.

- i. Work to promote community resilience during extreme weather events via use of public buildings and village halls that can act as support hubs during extreme weather and other emergency conditions.
- ii. Support local broadband champions to work proactively on behalf of the community in expediting fibre to the property (FTTP) connectivity in the Parish.
- iii. Join with the community in campaigning for the preservation of crucial local services, such as care support for those with special needs and maintaining a doctor's surgery in this rural catchment area.
- iv. Encourage more local groups to make full use of village halls for activities by assisting the individuals and community groups that use these to promote the available facilities and events to aid community cohesion and help to reduce social isolation.
- v. Support the installation of additional defibrillators where needed.
- vi. Promote courses to enable residents to increase their range of communication and computer skills.
- vii. Promote local activities and events to encourage community participation and reduce social isolation.
- viii. Work with the community to identify Assets of Community Value (ACVs) and where appropriate apply to register (or apply to renew the registration) these for the benefit of the community

D. What we can seek to influence other agencies to do and how:

- i. Lobby our Unitary Authority Councillor, relevant industry bodies and our local MP for:
 - improved fibre to property (FTTP) broadband access across the Parish and improved and reliable 4G mobile connectivity
 - Planning controls on the volume of second homes, Airbnb properties and holiday lets to prevent the hollowing out of our community (also see the section on housing below)
 - Improved public transport links.
- ii. Proactively maintain direct discussions with North West Electricity regarding issues over the reliability of our power supply

2. THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND OUR ENVIRONMENT (CE&E)

You told us that nature recovery and enhancing biodiversity are extremely important, including improvements to water quality. Our [schools' manifesto](#) demonstrates just how important this is to the young people who will shape the future of our Parish.

We have a duty to consider nature recovery and biodiversity in our decision-making, including the impact on water quality and pollution in rivers, lakes, and waterways.



Colton Church in winter

A. Our Relevant Powers

We have a duty to consider biodiversity in our decision making. However, the nature recovery 'powers to act' reside with W&F Council and the LDNPA.

CPC can issue fixed penalty notices for litter, graffiti and offences via dog control orders and can repair and maintain public footpaths and bridleways, plant trees and maintain verges.

B. Our Priorities based on what you told us:

- i. Alongside our *Declaration of a Climate Emergency* (October 2019), declare a 'Nature Emergency' and put both of these declarations at the heart of our decision making and activity.
- ii. Consider the environmental impact of all planning applications. Record both in our minutes and our responses any concerns about impact on the landscape, dark skies, the special nature of the area and on wildlife and biodiversity.

- iii. Work with National Highways, W&F, and the Parish Lengthsman to ensure verges are maintained in a way that is beneficial to nature recovery.
- iv. Support local projects that will enable nature recovery, including through our community grants scheme.
- v. Analyse the carbon footprint of the Parish Council, identify steps to reduce it and report back on our success in doing so.

C. What we can support the community to do and how

- i. Support local activities, events, initiatives, and partnerships that are focussed on protecting the landscape and natural environment including renewable energy initiatives.
- ii. Use our Community Grant fund to support practical nature recovery activity and environmental initiatives by local people and/or conservation groups.
- iii. Disseminate information through our news outlets, our website and Green Sparks e.g. renewable energy initiatives, local nature-based projects and available public grants including via organisations such as CAFS.
- iv. Provide litter picking equipment for local community events and initiatives.
- v. Where appropriate and within our available capacity, represent our community at events, and on partnership initiatives including inviting representatives to present at CPC meetings.
- vi. Support the installation of car charging points at village halls and other local amenities.

D. What we can seek to influence other agencies to do and how:

- i. Consider the special nature of our local area in every planning decision and record this in our minutes and responses to LDNPA.
- ii. Hold both W&F Council and the LDNPA accountable for their published targets for Local Nature Recovery and Net Zero as well as protection of greenfield sites.
- iii. Ensure that our MP and local Cllrs and Representatives are informed about the environmental priorities in our plan and lobby them on behalf of our community.
- iv. Add our support to local campaigns to tackle degradation of the local landscape, natural environment, and special character of our area.
- v. Lobby our Unitary Authority Councillor, relevant industry bodies and our local MP for:
 - a. Improved public transport links to reduce car usage.
 - b. Safe cycleways and pedestrian routes to reduce car usage.
 - c. Affordable and effective replacements for oil and LPG boilers which a large percentage of the community relies on

3. HIGHWAYS (HW)

Colton Parish covers an area of approximately 20 square miles, with 50 miles of mostly class B and C roads with a significant number being single track. Access is mainly from the south by the A590. You told us that safe and reliable access via the A590 trunk road, potholes, lack of gritting on B and C roads and speeding on minor roads were your major concerns. Extreme weather events are exacerbating the deterioration of our road network due to increased flooding, road blockages and road damage.



Using horse-power in daily life

A. Our Relevant Powers

Whilst we have no formal powers for the maintenance of the road network, gritting, verge management or speed limits, we do employ a part-time Lengthsman. This role supports the safety of all road users by undertaking drain clearance, minor road repairs (on C and U roads only), sign cleaning and verge clearing at junctions, where it is safe to do so.

B. Our priorities based on what you told us:

- i. Continue funding our Lengthsman through the precept to maintain our roads including clearing drains, keeping signposts in good condition, and tidying roadside verges.
- ii. Work with W&F Council to support the development of contracts with local farmers to grit and clear key access roads of snow.
- iii. Subject to budget constraints, use our Highways' powers to repair and maintain public footpaths and Bridleways and provide litter bins.

- iv. Maintain an active list of key highways priorities and link with our local W&F Councillor and Highways contacts to expedite repairs.
- v. Communicate with parishioners so they know how to report potholes or other highways issues on the W&F Council Highways Information and Management system ([W&F Council](#))
- vi. With the support of Cumbria Police, we utilise speed indication devices in speeding hotspots with the aim to support revised speed restrictions.
- vii. Monitor local grit bins (and where appropriate, grit heaps) and take report the need for replenishment to W&F Highways.

C. What we can support the community to do and how:

- i. Support local communities that wish to apply for appropriate 20 mph speed limits in their neighbourhoods.
- ii. Publicise any consultations relating to highways maintenance, speeding restrictions or other highway safety issues.
- iii. Support the community in applying for any appropriate TRO's to reduce damage to unclassified metalled roads.

D. What can we seek to influence other agencies to do and how:

- i. Lobby the National Highways agency who are accountable for the A590 to improve its safety for road users.
- ii. Lobby Westmorland and Furness Council to improve their highways maintenance, particularly potholes, gully clearing and the need to improve their management of verges, hedges, and roadsides.
- iii. Work with highways to identify gaps in the provision of salt bins and salt heaps and their winter maintenance plans.
- iv. Lobby to achieve speed restrictions where there is evidence of the need.

4. HOUSING AND PLANNING (H&P)

You told us that high house prices and the lack of affordable housing is an extremely important issue as is the increase in holiday lets, short-term lets (e.g. Airbnb and other platforms) and second homes.

We strongly believe in the importance of encouraging a diverse, vibrant community, with a resident population including young and old. Those on low incomes, including most care workers and those in the hospitality industry, have to travel significant distances to work in the Parish, despite providing essential services to residents and being critical to the success of many local businesses.

The presence of permanent resident communities increases the sustainability of local businesses and services. The provision of more affordable housing, particularly housing for local occupancy, is central to this.



Dry-stone walling in action

A. Our Relevant Powers

As statutory consultees, CPC responds to all planning applications. Our responses are based on this plan though decisions rest with LDNPA and are subject to appeal to Government.

Where CPC objects to an application, and where we have available capacity, a Councillor can attend and present for a maximum of five minutes at the Authority's Planning Control Committee meetings when these are convened.

B. Our Priorities based on what you told us:

- i. We consider all planning applications carefully and encourage public participation in the planning process.
- ii. Subject to environmental suitability, we support limited housing developments that will provide affordable housing for people living and working locally.
- iii. We object to applications for new holiday homes or change of use to holiday letting where the impact on the local community and/or local environment does not align with our Community Plan priorities.
- iv. We lobby and actively communicate the views of our community on housing matters with the National Park Authority, Westmorland and Furness Council and other public bodies.

C. What can we support the community to do and how:

- i. Where not in conflict with our environmental priorities, we support planning applications to build smaller, affordable homes, suitable for young working families.
- ii. Encourage residents to attend Parish Council meetings and participate individually in the local planning process to add weight to the Council's responses to the LDNPA.
- iii. We will only support plans for holiday-lets, and campsites in situations where there is;
 - a. Demonstrable support from the local resident community
 - b. Demonstrable benefit to the local economy
 - c. No impact on the availability of homes for permanent residents.

D. What can we seek to influence other agencies to do and how.

- i. Lobby our Unitary Authority Councillor, relevant industry bodies and our local MP to:
 - a. raise the profile of rural housing poverty issues with the government.
 - b. ensure holiday lets pay appropriate commercial charges for using local services such as waste disposal.
 - c. increase the Council Tax Charge imposed on second homes.
 - d. change the local tax on short term holiday lets and similar from business rates to council tax. Currently small business rate relief results in these properties not contributing to local authority costs of services.
- ii. Hold the Lake District National Park Authority to account in adhering to their published planning guidelines.

COLTON PARISH COUNCIL AND OUR ACCOUNTABILITY

We aim to be open, transparent, and accountable and to encourage feedback from the public and our partners. We will feed back on our decisions, activities, and progress towards priorities via:-

- The Annual Parish (open) meeting
- Themed/focused open meetings where appropriate
- Public Participation in our regular meetings
- Agendas and Minutes shared on our website and local noticeboards.
- Adapting our agendas so that each heading is a standing item on the CPC agenda.
- Publishing information on our website, Colton Link and through local Community Newsletters
- Reviews of actions taken, and decisions made under each heading feedback in the Annual Chair's report, which are published on our website.
- Where problems arise, we will seek to work with you to resolve them as soon as we can and where this is not satisfactory, we will follow our complaints procedure.

WE WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS, PLEASE GET INVOLVED:-

- Talk to your local Councillor
- See our website [Welcome to Colton Parish Council](#)
- For up-to-date PC and community news, sign up to Colton Link (see the bottom of the home page of our website)
- Come along to a meeting – for dates, agendas and minutes of previous meetings see [Parish Council Meetings](#)
- Consider becoming a Councillor. Come to a meeting to find out more or contact the Parish Clerk: clerk@coltonparishcouncil.org.uk
- For queries, requests for support from a Councillor or the Parish Lengthsman, or complaints, contact the Parish Clerk or speak to your local Councillor
- Please remember we are part-time unpaid elected Councillors, and we aim to respond to you as quickly as we can, but this may take time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The production of this plan has only been possible because of the hard work and support we have had from many members of the local community. We would like to thank all those who have come along to our meetings, taken part in our consultations, prepared, edited and offered feedback on the drafts and continue to work to make our area a very special place.

Particular thanks go to the children in Year 5 and 6 at Leven Valley CE Primary School and Penny Bridge CE Academy for their inspiring enthusiasm to making our area a better place for both us and nature and whose input enabled us to draw up Our [Young People's Manifesto](#) And, to Mandy Lane for her work on the ONS Data to enable us to use it in the development of this Plan and David Kidwell whose photographs have added colour and life to our Plan.