

Draft Minutes

Blawith & Subberthwaite Annual Meeting Village Hall, Water Yeat 17 May 2021

Cllr I Jones opened the meeting.

Christine Adams is acting as interim clerk.

1. There were no members of the public in attendance.
2. The minutes of the Parish Meeting held on 13 May 2019 were confirmed as a true record. It was noted that there was no annual meeting in 2020.
3. There were no updates or amendments to those minutes from 2019.
4. The Chairman read his report out as follows:

Due to COVID 19 it is two years since my last report. Whilst many things happened in the first 10 months of that period, since COVID first began its deadly advance in March 2020 things have been bogged down. Our last face to face meeting was in February 2020 and it has been difficult to move forward on many issues as public bodies have closed their offices and moved to remote working, making it harder to move specific issues forward. Nevertheless, we have made some progress and I am pleased to say that this report was submitted to our first face to face meeting of the council since the COVID restrictions began to be relaxed.

In reviewing the council's work, I will start with planning issues. Dealing first with the major issues mentioned in my last report, the proposal for a nuclear power station at Moorside seems to have collapsed following a lack of appetite from new investors after the financial collapse of the original sponsor. This also appears to have dampened enthusiasm for the electricity transmission line which is also in abeyance at present. There was less good news on Kirkby Moor wind farm. Innogy were given permission by a government inspector to continue to operate the aged wind farm until the exact date that the government subsidy expires. The inspector's key ruling was that despite the farm being opposed by local people since the start, they would not be allowed a say as they had not been given a say in the original decision to build the wind farm. (It was imposed on us by the John Major government, against the recommendation of the then planning inspector). So much for Localism. I was disappointed but not surprised to note that the Green Party supported the applicants, even though to many of us this was clearly a case of an overseas financial consortium and local landowner hoovering up hard earned tax payers' money arising from a highly regressive tax at the expense of a SSSI. Going forward the proposed extension of the national park boundaries and the reorganisation of local government in Cumbria, which will result in the abolition of South Lakeland District Council and the other five districts as well as Cumbria County Council itself, will be happening in the near future. Of the options going forward, the Parish Council favoured the bay option, with South Lakeland combining with Barrow and Lancaster City to cover the Morecambe bay region, much like our existing health authority.

At a more local level the Council dealt with a number of planning applications. As I said two years ago the council is committed to supporting applications which contribute to the maintenance and sustainable development of the parish. We recognise our obligations under world heritage status for the large portion of the parish which lies within the Lake District National Park, and the maintenance of the shore of Coniston Water. We have supported many applications but also felt it necessary to recommend refusal where they did not meet these criteria. We also continue to support the National Park in its pursuit of those residents who refuse to comply with planning decisions or indulge in development without planning permission.

The development of the Parish Plan, which had reached a draft review stage, had been halted by the pandemic. This should resume shortly. The council has expressed support and will be involved in a number of initiatives from SLDC relating to the environment in our area.

The budget of the Parish Council remains largely focussed on the need to comply with constantly changing rules and standards set by government including, insurance, GDPR, training and the services of a clerk to administer the council's business. These account for about 80% of our costs. The remainder is set aside to cover other expenditure, such as the use of a lengthsman, to carry out works such as verge maintenance, much of which was carried out by county councils in the past. It is clear that Cumbria, like other authorities, is struggling to find money to protect even the most vulnerable in our society. We therefore have to accept that Parish Councils such as ourselves will have to pick up these activities, as long as it is legal and safe for us to do so. Highway's maintenance remains a major concern and we would encourage you to continue to ensure that necessary repairs are brought to the attention of Highways using their website, or directly to the council who liaise with the Highway's authority.

Finally, I would like to thank the clerk and my colleagues on the council for their continued commitment and support for what has been a trying time for all of us. In particular I would like to thank our former clerk Beth Workman, who stepped down during the last year, for her service and professionalism over several years of service to the Parish. You have been missed. I would like to thank Cllr Rutherford for taking over most of the clerk's duties whilst the search for a new clerk takes place.

I myself am standing down from the council after nearly eleven years, including nine as Chairman. It has been an interesting experience and one that I would recommend to anyone interested in the health and wellbeing of their local community. I will continue to undertake public service as a school governor and member of the management committee of The Ulverston Resilience Group which grew out of the Ulverston Self Isolation Group, formed during the pandemic, and is committed to help people in the Ulverston and Crake Valley area. Please see our Facebook page for details.

Here's looking forward to a productive and enjoyable year.

Ian Jones
12 May 2021