

**Over Kellet Parish Council**  
**Chairman's Report for Annual Parish Meeting 15<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

As ever planning matters continue to be an important and substantial part of the work of the Parish Council and councillors have endeavoured to reflect the views of the majority of village residents. In this regard we have been happy to support development in the village provided it is appropriate in scale and location and there is evidence that it is actually needed, but we feel we have an overriding duty to protect the character of our ancient village and its surroundings for future generations. We were therefore extremely disappointed when Lancaster District Council Planning Committee ignored our objections last year to the plans for 15 new houses to be built on agricultural land between the craggs and houses on Church Bank and then again this year for the development of 55 residential dwellings on land north of Old Hall Farm. We believe the scale of these developments in proportion to the size of the village is far too large, are on land designated as open countryside and will cause problems with surface water drainage, put extra pressure on the sewage system and create potentially dangerous traffic problems on surrounding roads. We are particularly concerned at the lack of safe pedestrian access to the school and other village facilities from the Old Hall Farm site, a concern shared by Lancashire County Council Highways Department who have said that building should not start on the site until this has been resolved to their satisfaction. Let us hope this is indeed the case. Sadly it would seem that local planners are intent on filling any available site, however unsuitable, in their drive to meet what we believe are totally unrealistic housing targets for the area.

We also lodged an objection to the proposed new Porsche garage on land between the M6 and the A601M on the grounds this is designated as open countryside and there are other available industrial sites within the Carnforth area and although the Planning Officer agreed with our objection unfortunately members of the Planning Committee disagreed and permission was granted

We have contributed to consultations on the Lancaster District Local Plan and Infrastructure Delivery arguing we should be regarded as a rural village in which development should only be supported if it is clearly demonstrated as meeting proven local needs, rather than as a sustainable settlement in which there is a presumption of sustainable development. Sadly our views were again ignored and subsequently Over Kellet has been cited in the Local Plan as sustainable, to which we have lodged an objection. We hope we will have an opportunity of debating this issue when the plan goes before the Planning Inspectorate later in the year.

Moving on to more positive outcomes, we are delighted that the new shelter on the village green was greatly appreciated not only by bus users during the rainy winter months but also by passing cyclists and walkers to stop for a sit down or a sandwich; we are most grateful to the Horticultural Society for enhancing its appearance with the provision of attractive floral tubs. The new viewing area and seat in Bay Croft on Cockle Hill has also provoked some appreciative comments. We will hear later on the continuing good work of the Emergency Plan sub-committee and also of the progress of installing the B4RN hyperfast broadband in the village, both of which hopefully contribute to the attractiveness of the village as a place to live. The lighting of the Christmas tree on the village green again proved to be a popular event with over 60 people attending to sing carols around the Christmas Tree, led by students from Capernwray Hall. Church and village also came together for the Act of Remembrance on Remembrance Sunday. The information pack for new residents has been

completed and this is being distributed by the new Neighbourhood watch coordinator whom I am sure will be grateful to have news of new residents moving into the village so she can ensure a pack giving details of the various village organisations can be delivered to them.

Road safety issues have continued to occupy the Parish Council's time. It remains evident that the volume, size and speed of vehicles passing through the village, especially the number of very large and heavily loaded lorries, constitute a real danger to residents, especially to pedestrians and young children. Unfortunately Lancashire County Council will still not lower the speed limit to 20 mph as we have requested a number of times. Problems also continue to be created on occasions by inconsiderate parking by school parents and village hall users.

We were pleased that BT at last acknowledged their breach of procedure for the siting of new telegraph poles and removed the two they had placed without permission in and adjacent to the Top Green Conservation Area, in their place adopting the underground route we had originally suggested. However the satisfaction we felt in trying to get BT to behave responsibly was short-lived when to our dismay a few months later they started digging up the village green without permission to install a new green broadband cabinet. Fortunately using our previous contacts at BT we were able to get this work stopped and the cabinet re-sited near to the site of the old telephone box. However we were unable to interfere with their statutory right to lay underground ducting on the green, sadly just at the start of the daffodil season. The disturbance was further compounded by both water and gas leaks and we will now need to ensure that the three sets of contractors involved fulfil their responsibility to reinstate the ground to its former condition.

Our Lengthsman, Mike Ashton supported by our Footpaths Officer, Ron Oswald, has done tremendous work maintaining footpaths, repairing stiles, clearing ditches and blocked drains, cutting grass around the village and repairing the increasingly frequent and worsening damage to the village green caused by heavy lorries and large agricultural equipment in addition to the damage described above. We are sorry that Ron has decided it is time to retire from his role as Footpaths and Tree Officer and we do thank him for his work in this respect over a number of years. We are most grateful to Cllr Margaret Fowler and her dedicated band of volunteers, who met on a weekly basis during the summer months, weather permitting, to ensure that our village public areas remained as tidy and litter free as possible. Sadly Margaret has also decided it is time to retire as a councillor after 13 years service and we do thank her most sincerely for all her work during this time. This year's annual litter pick will take place on Saturday June 16th and we hope as many as possible will meet on the village green at 1000am on that day and spend an hour or two smartening up the village for the summer.

The Allotments continue to thrive and we are grateful to Cllr. Stephen Atkins for liaising between the Allotments Association and the Parish Council and we look forward to receiving a report on their activities later in the meeting.

It was pleasing that the Winifred Pavey Trophy was awarded in 2017 and it is hoped this competition for the most attractive garden in the village will take place again this summer.

I have continued to be the Council's representative at the Quarries Liaison meetings and bring concerns of the residents to the attention of the Quarry operators who are

responsive to issues raised. Blasting complaints have averaged just over one per month but on investigation these have been shown to be well under the permitted level. There have also been complaints at stone spillage on the motorway feeder road and both quarries are now sharing the responsibility of keeping this swept. We were also grateful again to Aggregate Industries for providing the Christmas tree on the village green. Our thanks also go to the Councillors and residents who help to erect, illuminate, and eventually remove the tree.

The Over Kellet View remains an important asset to village life and we are grateful to those who give up their time to produce the 10 copies a year. During the year Chris Pogson hung up his editing pen and we are grateful to Peter Clinch and Paul Budd for taking this on, with the continuing assistance of Jane Meadon. We also remain grateful to Gordon Galloway for continuing to maintain our village website.

As always, the Parish Council has endeavoured to manage costs and expenditure effectively whilst continuing to support and fund village activities. For the past seven years the Parish Council has held the Parish Precept (the amount of funding raised from the Parish Council's element of the Council Tax paid by residents) at the same level and this is again the case this year. Nevertheless, as can be seen from the accounts the Parish Council has continued to make a substantial contribution to the costs of producing the Over Kellet View as well as a grant to St Cuthbert's Church, to meet the costs of the maintenance of the church grounds and environs.

A topic which was debated both by councillors and residents at two public meetings was whether or not Over Kellet should embark on the preparation of an official Neighbourhood Plan under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011. Arguments both for and against were considered and it was agreed that as a first step our 10-year-old Parish Plan should be revised and updated and following the experience of this exercise further consideration could be given to expanding this to a Neighbourhood Plan. A working party of volunteers has been established to produce a Parish Plan covering the period 2019 to 2023 and as a first step a questionnaire is to be distributed to all residents with the June Over Kellet View. It is hoped as many as possible will take the time to complete this to make the exercise as representative as possible.

In China this is the Year of the Dog, in Over Kellet it has been the year of the Clerk, with our third clerk of the year taking up office at the end of this meeting. In December we said farewell and thank you to our retiring clerk Michael Watson after 12 years' service and welcomed Bob Bailey as his replacement. Bob has now been appointed Town Clerk of Carnforth and has found there are not enough hours in the day to do justice to all his current commitments and so this will be his last meeting with us. In the four-and-a-half months you have been with us Bob your input in bringing many of our working practices up to date has been greatly appreciated and we thank you for this and wish you well with your duties over the border. In his place we welcome our third clerk of the year, Derek Whiteway. Derek you are most welcome and we will look forward to working with you.

All our Councillors have worked extremely hard and conscientiously to deal with the many issues that have arisen during the past year and have continued to carry out a wide range of responsibilities and commitments in different areas of village activity. We continue to benefit from the helpful advice, information and guidance given by our Lancaster City Councillor, Roger Mace, and our County Councillor Phillippa Wilkinson, for which we are most grateful. We have also appreciated the regular attendance of

some of our village residents, whose presence and contributions have been most welcome.

So what about the year ahead? No doubt we will continue to fight unsuitable proposals for further housing development, support B4RN as it spreads out around the village, join with the church for what will be a special Remembrance Sunday again this year on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War I, celebrate the start of the Christmas season around the Christmas Tree on the village green, and having hopefully completed our new Parish Plan by the end of December start with implementation of some of its proposals. The Parish Council can only work for the best interests of the village if there are residents who are prepared to take on the role of councillors. At the moment we have 2 vacancies and we do hope before too long we can find volunteers to bring us up to full strength. If you might be interested, or prepared to have your arm twisted, please come and talk about it to one of us.

*Nick Ward*

*Chairman, Over Kellet Parish Council, May 2018*