

Over Kellet Parish Council

Chairman's Report for Annual Parish Meeting 14th May 2019

When I reported on our plans for the forthcoming year at last year's Parish meeting I said that we would no doubt continue to fight further unsuitable housing development in the village, support the expansion of the B4RN network, join with the Church for a special Remembrance Sunday service on the village green to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of World War 1, celebrate the start of the Christmas season around the Christmas Tree on the green and, hopefully, complete, and start to implement, a new Parish Plan. I am pleased to say that during the course of the year we have managed to achieve all of this, plus a bit more besides.

As ever planning matters have dominated all our meetings, considering 42 applications of one sort or another during the course of the year, and commenting on all those we felt would have a significant impact on the village. We were pleased that two of these have not gone ahead – the application for two houses on land adjacent to the Eagle's Head was refused and this decision was upheld by the inspector on a subsequent appeal and the application for 43 houses on land to the east of Winder Garth was withdrawn. We will await with interest the result of our appeal to the Inspector of the District's Local Plan that Over Kellet should not be classified as a sustainable community – which, if successful, would mean future development would only be supported where it is clearly demonstrated that it is meeting proven local needs. If we have been unsuccessful then it is likely we will need to continue to fight the plans of opportunist developers intent on ruining the rural character of our ancient village and its surroundings for future generations, as well as exacerbating the existing problems with excessive traffic and inadequate drainage. One positive step by Lancaster City Planners was to invite us to participate in a pre-planning meeting for the development of the land between the M6 and A601(M) on which a new Porsche garage and industrial estate are proposed. We have been pressing for sometime to be consulted at an early stage when large scale developments are being considered and it is to be hoped this will become a more regular occurrence in the future.

On a positive note we have been pleased to support the expansion of the B4RN hyperfast fibre-optic broadband network, with over 60% of the village now having the potential to access this and it is hoped the whole village will have this capability by next year's annual meeting. The special Remembrance Service in the parish marquee on the village green was attended by over 200 people with £284 collected for 'Help the Heroes' and the Royal British Legion'. Over 80 people celebrated the start of the Christmas season with carol singing around the Christmas Tree on the

Green and it is to be hoped this popular event has now become a permanent fixture in the village calendar.

The main project for the year was the publication in December of an updated Parish Plan, based on the results from a questionnaire delivered to all households during the previous summer. Although it would have been good if more people had taken the trouble to respond to this, nonetheless the responses received gave a clear indication of where the Council's priorities should lie over the next few years. Of prime importance is to preserve the character of the village by resisting any large scale development on surrounding agricultural land, allied to this is to ensure open spaces and footpaths and other amenities are maintained in good order, including the Dub, and to try and address the potential hazards caused by traffic through the village. To explore ways of fostering community spirit was also considered important. In taking these forward the Council has agreed to purchase a second SpiD, for installation on the Nether Kellet Road, the possible erection of pedestrian style gates at the four entrances to the village (Goosegate, Moorgate, Kirkgate and Millgate) bearing appropriate signage to make drivers more aware they are entering a village environment and encourage volunteers to take part in the Community Roadwatch scheme. Contact has been made with Lancashire Wildlife Trust with a view to working in partnership with them to improve the Dub; work will commence shortly on the repainting of the seven kissing gates around the village and plans are being drawn up for renovation of the bus shelter by the village hall. It has been agreed to enter the Best Kept Village Competition again and as well as giving an incentive to keep the village looking well cared for it will also be good in fostering community spirit. Another community event planned for the autumn is a trial of Cine North performances in the village hall, which have proved particularly popular in Carnforth and other local villages.

As well as these longer-term policy decisions, over the course of the year councillors have considered concerns from residents including problems to footpath users of overgrown hedges, unsafe walls and leaking drainpipes; potholes, traffic queuing on Capernwray Road or parking inconsiderately around the village, damaged benches and flytipping. We also seemed to have at last tamed BT into consulting us before they start digging up the village green or erecting additional apparatus around the village and to make -good in a satisfactory way when they have completed work. We were pleased to again support the Wynn Pavelyn Award and to at last erect the promised panorama display by the Baycroft seat; we look forward to the erection of the sign commemorating the position of the ancient Goosegate adjacent to the village drinking trough.

A great asset to councillors this year has been the appointment of our clerk Derek Whiteway, who has now completed his first year of service. Not only has his

efficiency of servicing our meetings been greatly appreciated but he has worked hard to bring us up to date and compliant with various statutory regulations. These have included ensuring we are compliant with HMRC and pension regulations, Information and Data Protection Policy, Risk and Asset registers, Privacy, Publicity and Complaint procedures. A major step forward has been the establishment of a separate Parish Council website, to complement the official village website, and as more and more information is added to this it is to be hoped it will become a valuable asset to the village.

As well as being the end of another parish year, it is also the end of the 4 year term of the 2015-2019 council and as the old council stands-down and the new one takes office it is perhaps apposite to dwell briefly on developments that have taken place over the last four years. Throughout this time our main focus has been on planning matters and although generally supporting small-scale infill developments we have successfully managed to oppose the proposed wind turbine on Birkland Barrow and the houses planned adjacent to the Eagles Head and, for the time being, the development east of Winder Garth. Sadly we were unsuccessful in our opposition to the developments behind Church Bank and Hall Garth Gardens. Let us hope potential developers decide the conditions imposed on both these sites will make them sufficiently unattractive to develop. A bus shelter has been erected adjacent to the village green, a new noticeboard on Top Green and a seat to commemorate the Queen's 90th birthday, and associated viewing area, on Baycroft. We promoted the B4RN project in the village and also established the Emergency Plan committee, supporting the adaption of the village hall as a refuge with emergency lighting and heating should the village suffer power loss as it did in Storm Desmond. We are grateful to Leapers Wood Quarry for the provision of a Defibrillator at the Hall and to Lesley Gee for overseeing this project. The now thriving Allotments Association has also been put on a firm administrative footing.

It is hoped that the Information Pack for new residents, Christmas Tree lighting and Remembrance Sunday services on the village green in conjunction with St Cuthbert's Church, 2016 Autumn Fair and Ceilidh and subsequent B4RN ceilidhs have all helped to promote an inclusive and welcoming community spirit within the village. We have also strived to keep the Parish Precept, the amount included in the annual Council Tax bill for parish expenditure, at the same level for the last 8 years, maintaining our annual contribution to the funding of the Over Kellet View and the maintenance of the village churchyard.

All these things do not just happen and I do thank and pay tribute to all those who have been responsible for them, in particular our clerk, Derek Whiteway, our Lengthsman Mike Ashton and my fellow councillors, in particular to Margaret Fowler who retired earlier in the year after 13 years service and to Rebecca Lauder

who stands down today; I do wish our new councillors Graham Agnew, Jean Metcalfe, Martin May and Stephen Atkins every success for the next 4 years and hope they will soon be joined by a further 3, co-opted, councillors to bring them up to full strength.

Someone else who has retired this year after 20 years service, is our District Councillor, Roger Mace. I do thank him for the huge support he has given to Over Kellet during this time and welcome his successor, Michael Mumford. Thank you also to our County Councillor, Phillipa Williamson and to all those residents who have regularly supported our meetings and, indeed, to all those who work hard to provide such a range of activities within the village, the reports from whom we will listen to shortly. I have enjoyed my 12 years as a parish councillor and I do wish you all continued success in the future.

Nick Ward, 14 May 2019.