



New Land Purchase

Swells Wood



Approximately three years ago Lathom South Parish Council (LSPC) was approached by Lancashire County Council (LCC) with a view to the purchase of a small area of woodland within our parish (approx 11 acres in total). Negotiations took longer than expected due to Covid restrictions requiring LCC staff to work from home with limited access to the necessary maps and legal paperwork but the purchase was finally completed in February 2022.

The land is situated to the east of Plough Lane and includes a stretch of the disused railway line which Lancashire County Council may, at some time in the future, wish to reacquire if the long-mooted linear park ever becomes a reality. A clause to this effect was a condition of the sale to LSPC. The area also includes Swells Wood which was roughly cleared and replanted by LCC in 2013, some clearance/thinning works have also recently been carried out - though not to a very good standard. LSPC have yet to decide what, if any, work should be carried out in Swells Wood and also in the wider area of land that has been acquired. The initial thought is that it should be maintained as a "wild wood" and wild life haven. We will take advice and consider the associated costs and benefits but do hope to be able to make suitable improvements.

There is no formal access or public right of way through this area but we are aware that the disused railway line appears to be regularly

walked. We do not intend to prevent access but kindly ask that anyone walking this route respect the fauna and flora and please do not leave litter. Please also be aware that there are several obstacles and the ground is very uneven with many fallen trees and several others leaning precariously which could fall at any time. We have already identified a large amount of the invasive giant hogweed - the sap can cause a nasty acid-like burn if it comes into contact with skin. It will be high on our priority list to try and eradicate this weed, which is so far limited to the eastern edge of the land, before it spreads even further.

We will bring further updates when more information is available.

Great British Spring Clean 2022



Make a difference

Join the Great British Spring Clean
25th March - 22nd April 2022

Every Springtime Lathom South Parish Council pays for an annual litter pick to be carried out along our roadsides. We know that many of our residents also regularly litter pick outside their own homes.

This year we're asking our residents to join in the essence of the Great British Spring Clean and to take a walk along our footpaths to collect litter there too.

We'd love to hear how many bags of litter you've collected and pictures of all your hard work so we can report back in our next newsletter.

Bluebells

Swells Wood is home to the native English Bluebell which we hope will continue to thrive in that area. They create an amazing blanket of colour when in flower. Well worth a visit!



Bluebells are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) so please don't pick or uproot the plants in the countryside and be careful not to trample over the woodland flowers.

Trees and hedges

We need your help to identify areas which would benefit from some tree planting and hedge filling. If you have any suggestions for where trees could be planted, please let us know. Likewise, if you see any gaps in hedges which need filling, get in touch. Our contact details are on the back page, or come to one of our monthly meetings.

Look out for future information on our summer Tree Walk run by Cllr Andrew Beeston. Date to be announced on the website.

A plea from local landowners

When out walking on our public footpaths, please:

- Keep to the route, avoid straying onto the crops.
- Dog owners, please pick up after your dog.
- Take litter home with you.
- Remember it is prohibited to cycle along a Public Footpath.

Help your Parish Council to help you

The following letter was published around fourteen years ago in the Ormskirk Advertiser newspaper:

Lathom's Lovely

I felt compelled to write after coming back to Lathom after a few years away.

My first impression was that the old place seemed to have come alive and it bothered me to read a copy of the Ormskirk Advertiser with a very rude letter from a 'Lathom Resident'.

The first thing I noticed were the smart 'Welcome to Lathom' signs and endless rows of bright daffodils.

South Lathom Residents' Association planted these before I left and it was lovely to see so many flourishing around the place.

To note

Although disabled, it was easy to pull off the road and take a look at the notices on the stylish parish board outside the cricket club, so I don't understand the comment about accessibility.

It pleased me to note that following a long campaign Lathom residents have their parish council and their identity back.

Well done to Lathom South Parish Council, ignore the moaning odd person and keep up the good work.

True Lathom residents will appreciate the changes as much as I have.

(signed) EX LATHOM RESIDENT"



MAKE A CHANGE BECOME A COUNCILLOR

Time has moved on since then but the underlying principles that attracted this letter remain. There are many issues that need to be tackled but your Parish Councillors need help in keeping the area looking nice and improving facilities for residents of the area. It will not be achieved by sitting back and leaving it up to no

more than seven Parish Councillors to carry out voluntary work. Nor is it possible to pay for all the work that needs doing without increasing unacceptably your precept (Parish Council component of your Council Tax).

What South Lathom Residents Association achieved was to involve numbers of residents working together to, for example, clear litter and plant many of the daffodils that still decorate the area in Spring.

We continue to press the Borough and County Councils to do their jobs but it has been getting much harder to persuade them to allocate sufficient funds because their revenue has been reducing



steadily while the demands on them have been increasing hugely. They have been looking in desperation to Parish Councils to take over responsibilities but Parish Funds that can be spent on such services are in short supply. This Parish Council has been able to fund purchases of woodland to help in protecting the local ecology and environment by using Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds. However, there are legal restrictions on the use of such funds.

While the gift of Jacobs Wood was relatively easy to follow through (thanks to the generosity of Mr and Mrs Jacobs) it still cost substantial amounts for legal fees, clearance and planting work and for the kissing gate to keep out motor cyclists, while allowing access for pedestrians and most disabled people. Two benches of our normal type have been ordered for construction locally and they will appear there soon.

By contrast, it has taken three years of frustrating negotiations with the County Council to conclude the purchase of Swells Wood. So please, if you are able, volunteer to help via our Parish Clerk, whose contact details appear on the back page.



Kissing gate at Jacobs Wood



The Queen's Green Canopy

The Queen's Green Canopy is a tree planting initiative in honour of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 in which people are invited to **"Plant a Tree for the Jubilee"**.

Everyone, from individuals to groups, are encouraged to take part to enhance our environment by planting trees. The official tree planting season is October to March.

Lathom South Parish Council are funding a **Jubilee tree** for planting at Lathom St James Primary School.

Time to get walking again!

At this time of year we start to think about the mud drying up and getting out to walk in the beautiful English Countryside again, but where to find new and interesting walks? Walking in Lancashire * <https://www.walkinginengland.co.uk/lancs> has hundreds of walks to download and print for free.

John Harris (the custodian of the website) said, 'There is so much walking information on the web but it is difficult to find. Walking in Lancashire (part of the Walking in England website) has brought it together in one place so whether you are walking from home, or away on holiday, you will be able to find a walk suitable for you.'

With walks from half a mile to twelve miles plus long, and a note of suitability for pushchairs and wheelchairs, everyone can find a walk to enjoy. So home or away, check out the websites and get walking!

John Harris

*LSPC assumes no responsibility or liability for the content of the walking in England website



Working with Highways

Lancashire County Council Highways Department are aiming to work closer with Parish Councils to address local highway issues for local people.

In this new initiative, if the Parish wishes to add to any highway infrastructure, such as traffic calming measures then LCC Highways may share the cost with the Parish Council.

Please get in touch with us if there are any projects you would like to see undertaken to enhance the area we live in.

Council Tax

When you open your Council Tax demand you will find that it has increased again. This is because demands have risen again whilst Government support has been falling, even allowing for some Councils getting one-off payments to support certain Government initiatives.

Your Parish Council's component of expenditure has again been frozen at the previous year's level but the good news in this area is that we have been able to avoid increasing individual households' contribution towards the "precept" again. Reductions in the two preceding years have been retained and there will be a very small reduction again this year (2022-2023).

We have continually to absorb inflation in order to achieve such a situation but we also have to admit that favourable conditions in this area have helped the situation substantially. This will not be the case in many Parishes, where precepts will be rising once again. In setting the budget, we have taken a chance on the rate of inflation and we have been able to do this because we have reserves to fall back on, if

necessary. However, there are limits and we have to keep a close eye on our regular commitments if we are to continue holding down our demands on household budgets.

One area in which we have substantial money to spend is with Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds. What we have to consider though is whether spending on particular CIL initiatives will place an unacceptable burden on future non-CIL budgets. For example, it was suggested that we could buy street located litter bins from CIL funds but that would impose significant annual costs of emptying the bins. Such bins would also necessarily be placed where they could be emptied easily, thereby excluding most of our network of public footpaths. We are considering other initiatives that would meet the restrictions associated with CIL spending, without placing an unacceptable burden on our precept.

Elsewhere in this newsletter we report spending which we have committed to CIL projects which we consider to be of huge benefit to our area and also provide an opportunity for community involvement. Please become a volunteer if you are reasonably fit and have a practical attitude.

We have only seven or fewer Parish Councillors, some of whom are well into pensionable age. We have a real need to involve more residents in volunteering and in serving on the Parish Council if we are to continue having a Parish Council. No special qualifications are needed to become a Parish Councillor, beyond a willingness to attend most monthly meetings, to represent the whole Parish, not just a particular locality, and to act as a member of a co-operative team. Other attributes can be trained and acquired over time.

We meet, usually on the second Wednesday of every month, at the cricket club; all residents of all ages are welcome to attend (and to speak, by prior arrangement with the Clerk). Our next election will be held in May of this year.



Have your say on cycling & walking in your area by taking part in a short survey for @LancashireCC and @BpoolCouncil. Your feedback will be used to shape long term plans for

future cycling & walking networks for each area of the county.

Find out more & complete the survey at:-

www.lancashire.gov.uk/activetravel

The 2022 Edition of the Highway Code

This document became official on the 29th January this year and it is now available to download on line. Just search for 2022 edition of the Highway Code. A print version will be available to buy in April. The status of the code is explained as:

“Many of the rules in the Code are legal requirements, and if you disobey these rules you are committing a criminal offence. You may be fined, given penalty points on your licence or be disqualified from driving. In the most serious cases you may be sent to prison. Such rules are identified by the use of the words ‘MUST/MUST NOT’... Although failure to comply with the other rules of the Code will not, in itself, cause a person to be prosecuted, The Highway Code may be used in evidence in any court proceedings under the Traffic Acts (see The road user and the law) to establish liability. This includes rules which use advisory wording such as ‘should/should not’ or ‘do/do not’.”

The code sets a new hierarchy of road users, with pedestrians at the top and heavier vehicles towards, or at, the bottom. The whole

purpose is to make the roads safer by treating more vulnerable road users with consideration, while expecting all road users to respect the situations of others. So, while cyclists must be given safe road space they, in turn, may ride two abreast but only when road conditions are suitable. At a junction, as drivers or riders, you should give way to pedestrians crossing or waiting to cross a road into which, or from which, you are turning.

One particular aspect of the code relates to pavement parking and it states:

“244. You MUST NOT park partially or wholly on the pavement in London, and should not do so elsewhere unless signs permit it. *Parking on the pavement can obstruct and seriously inconvenience pedestrians, people in wheelchairs or with visual impairments and people with prams or pushchairs. Law GL(GP)A sect 15”*

There have been many examples of inconsiderate pavement parking in West Lancashire, including Lathom South Parish, for years but now we have a clear statement that it should be avoided. In some circumstances a compromise seems sensible but that does not mean that any driver can ignore the safety of other road users simply to use the pavement as their own vehicle’s personal parking space. Not only can pedestrians be seriously inconvenienced, and even put in danger by pavement parking but where vehicles are parked wholly on a wide pavement or partially on a narrow pavement they obstruct the view of oncoming traffic for drivers of cars leaving their own driveways. It is particularly irritating when people park on the pavement alongside their driveways when the driveways themselves have space to park. So please consider others.

The new Highway Code is long but it is not difficult to read and understand, so please get a copy when you can and read it.

Contact Details

Clerk: Mrs Jane Smith
Oakdene, 1 Vale Lane, Lathom, L40 6JH
Telephone: 07495 970005

Email: lathomsouthpc.clerk@yahoo.com

Website: www.lathomsouthpc.co.uk

Your Parish Councillors are:

- Andrew Beeston
- Carol Blackledge (Vice-Chairman)
- Andrew Chanter
- Roger Clayton (Chairman)
- Ian Moran
- Richard Neale

All contact via the Clerk

**Meetings held at 7:30pm the
Cricket Club, Blaguegate Lane, Lathom, WN8 8TY**
Meetings are usually held on the second Wednesday of
the month but please check the website

www.lathomsouthpc.co.uk

**Please contact the Clerk (details above) to raise any items
you wish your Parish Council to discuss.**

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