

THIRSTON PARISH COUNCIL

At the Parish Council Meeting held at Northumberland Crematorium, Bockenfield on Thursday 1 February 2024.

Present: Cllrs L Clarehugh, J Day, E Davidson, D Green and J Marshall
The Parish Clerk in attendance – Mrs L Hamlin
One member of the public

Cllr John Marshall took the Chair in Cllr Allans absence.

88 Apologies for Absence – Cllr S Allan and CC Glen Sanderson

89 Declarations of interest in items on the Agenda – Cllr John Marshall, item 97, 23/04081/FUL - High Park Farm

90 Colin Hall, Flood Resilience Engagement Officer – Northumberland – Apologies given he will now attend the March meeting.

91 Public Questions (max 5 mins per person) – None

92 The minutes of the meeting 14 December 2023 were agreed as a true record after minor amendments in relation to Felton and Thirston WI and bulb planting to change residents name to volunteers.

93 Matters Arising therefrom:

1) Matters arising there from (excluding outstanding actions in relation to NCC)

- a) Lighting on The Peth – despite the increase in lighting on existing posts there is still a black spot with no lighting on the pathway – Clerk has reported to NCC and they will look to see what can be done here. Clerk
- b) Missing Weldon Bridge signage – still not replaced and roadworks here completed. Clerk has again contacted National Highways to request the sign is reinstalled and this is on their report queries twice now. Clerk
- c) Land beside powergrid building – this land is owned by Northern Powergrid so any further works on vegetation to be reported to them. Clerk to contact the resident who has undertaken work here already to see if he is happy to continue – the PC are keen to keep it tidy but aware of “wilding”. Clerk
- d) Footpath resurfacing request (02/11/23) – NCC has taken no further action to date with this footpath running toward the garage but has requested the farmer cuts back the hedging along this route. Parish Council to continue to pursue via requests and LTP. Clerk
- e) Bus stop repairs – Delayed due to weather.
- f) ROW issue (02/11/23) – The NCC Countryside Officer has taken a look at the route of 422/006 between West Thirston and High Park. The riverbank erosion is close to the route of a permissive path, he has put up signs to keep walkers away from the edge. There is plenty of room for walkers to avoid getting too close to the edge. NCC will keep an eye on the footpath. The Clerk was informed that the sign has blown away so will contact NCC to inform them. Clerk
- g) Footpath extension request into 30mph zone (02/11/23) – NCC state they have no plans to extend the footpath or to reduce the speed limit in this area, the area in question is in effect open countryside and as such doesn't meet the criteria for a reduced limit. This was forwarded to the resident who has responded to the Parish Council to thank them for their efforts and that to streamline the process and to save the PCs further involvement, he will contact NCC direct. The PCs support thus far has been invaluable, and he hopes to find a resolution that enhances the safety of all pedestrians, particularly the children in our area. Additionally, while we recognise the challenges and limitations inherent in maintaining grass near such a high-speed road, aesthetically and environmentally, a well-kept grass verge would be far more preferable. However, given the persistent safety concerns, he would still like to explore the feasibility of constructing a tarmac path along the east side of the road. This could provide a safe, permanent walkway for pedestrians, avoiding the risks associated with crossing the 60mph zone.
- h) Repointing of stone wall on the Peth (14/12/23) – this has been reported to NCC for action and they have responded to state they will investigate. Clerk
- i) Blackbrook Farm road pot holes (14/12/23) – A further report has gone into NCC but holes still not filled, it is the same with Bockenfield Layby where the holes are very deep. Clerk

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j) Water running down the Narrow Bank (14/12/23) – The Clerk reported this problem again which was exacerbated by the recent cold weather where the water turned to ice and there were at least four pedestrians who fell. The Clerk suggested the footpath be closed until the matter was resolved for peoples safety but this was not done. NCC stated they would look to fill in the area again but it was pointed out the water leaking needs to be resolved first. The Clerk has also requested a grit bin be placed at the end of the footpath. NCC are now looking into this. It was agreed as there are a number of linked issues at The Peth that the Clerk contact all those involved and CC Sanderson to see if NCC teams can work together to get all issues resolved at one time. Clerk

k) A1 resurfacing complaints – Just after the December PC meeting the Clerk spotted the National Highways workers along the A1 and verbally raised concerns about the surface of the A1 and the site being untidy. Following this conversation an email response was received.

“The new surface is made up of different layers. To keep the road open during the day, we allowed traffic to run on the lower layers before we placed the final surface course, that is why it may have felt uneven and be why potholes were noted. The scheme was completed on the night of Monday 18 December. If you still feel there is an issue with the surfacing then please do let us know. The contractors have closed down for the Christmas break as is normal in the construction business. The Project Manager for the scheme has been advised of the issues with Bockenfield layby and how it was left and this will be bought up with the contractors upon their return. They should have of course ensured it was cleared once the work was completed and any damage caused by them repaired. We do apologise for the issue this caused.”

The Clerk was aware that repairs to the newly resurfaced road were going to be undertaken in January, which they duly were, and at that time the layby would be cleared of National Highways debris. There is a lot of debris in the layby along with a heap of sandbags but it is not certain these were left by Highways. Cllr Clarehugh is to take photos of the layby to include the mess and damage to the layby and request that either NCC or National Highways clear this area up. Clerk

2) Long-term Outstanding issues being addressed by NCC for information

 Clerk

a) Manhole cover at Wintrick (12/2021) - pending

b) Road from A1 to Longhorsley has raised iron works and the edges of asphalt badly broken away both of which can cause damage to cars (01/2022) – no response from NCC to date. Clerk

c) Pathway improvements at riverside (03/2022) – the PC had requested gravel to be installed at the entrance to this footpath. NCC Countryside Officer has reviewed this and stated at present there is no issue but will continue to monitor.

d) Road at Bywell Shooting Ground in need of repair (11/2022) – due early 2024.

94 Report by County Councillor Sanderson –

An update since I came in December - Budget consultation is almost done - we aim to protect the frontline services and boost the money put into roads and pavements yet again - it will be around £30 million this year and the same next - but we are not alone with the effects of all the flooding and frosts - most other County Councils have the same issues.

We will also continue to invest in the County - in our school building programme, the Northumberland Line, and all the regeneration projects that we are running.

We have just had the Peer Review - a group of 7 leading people from top Councils took four days on site to "hold the mirror up to us" and give us an impartial review of how they think we are doing - that report will be published next month but it will note the change in the Council.

I was a bit disappointed in the dirty state of the road past Burgham so I have asked that we keep an eye on this.

95 Report back from Meetings and Representations on behalf of TPC

Cllr Day reported that he has been involved with CRAG (Coquet River Action Group) and testing kits for the river are being sourced from Environment Agency. The Clerk and Cllr Day have discussed insurance details and risk assessments for volunteers are probably going to be covered by Felton PC and this will be discussed at their next meeting.

96 Potential Projects

a) Footpaths/Rights of Way – need to trim where picnic table has been installed. Cllr Davidson offered to do this in the spring.

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- b) Landscaping – Quote has been received for rockery and verge for next two years with a slight increase. It was agreed to continue with this contractor.
- c) Short term / Medium term / Long term projects – Village gateways, bus shelters. Clerk has taken photographs of potential sites for gateways coming into West Thirston however on viewing the locations the Clerk is concerned as to who would actually care for the plants due to being so far out from the village and felt locations should be discussed further before approaching NCC with potential locations. It was agreed that a small group of Councillors review the possible locations to include Clerk, Cllrs Allan, Clarehugh and Marshall. Clerk
- It was agreed to contact Pumpkin Pie to see if they would be keen to be involved in designing something that could be painted on the wall of the bus stop. It was suggested that the Council look at the last bus stop out of Longframlington where they have a system of handing art which is changed on a regular basis. Clerk to take some photos. Clerk

97 Planning

To report on any planning decisions:

23/00601/S106A - Land East Of Greycroft West Thirston - Modification of S106 agreement dated 07-10-2020 on approved application 19/05017/OUT in order to change tenure of the 2 Affordable Homes from Rented Units to Discount Market Value Houses - WITHDRAWN

23/03579/VARYCO - Land North West Of Burgham Park Golf Club - Variation of Condition 2 (Approved Plans) on approved application 20/02094/FUL - to allow variation of approved layout to substitute Violet House Type H502 with Rose Type H504 on plots 15 and 17 and to change single garage provision to double garage provision for those houses - APPROVED

23/03887/FUL - Burgham Park Golf Club - Erection of stone wall to form entrance feature to new housing development – APPROVED

23/04341/AGTRES - Notification of Prior Approval for change of use from agricultural building to residential Location Land North West Of Blackbrook Farm

Planning applications pending:

20/04177/FUL - Land North East of Felmoor Caravan Park - Extension to existing holiday comprising 139 no. pitches for holiday lodges plus ancillary features including water feature, play area and vintage vehicle museum – objections based on Neighbourhood Plan

22/04112/FUL - Northumberland Arms Construction of first floor rear extension to provide 1no. additional en-suite bedroom and store room, and ground floor rear extension to provide covered goods reception area

22/04113/LBC - Northumberland Arms Construction of first floor rear extension to provide 1no. additional en-suite bedroom and store room, and ground floor rear extension to provide covered goods reception area

23/01921/FUL - Bockenfield Aerodrome Ltd Eshott Airfield - To allow amended operating hours to 07:00-23:00, training and fuelling of military and emergency services aircraft, provision of temporary structures and retrospective café – The Planning Officer has recommended this application be refused on a number of grounds and this has been sent to the Chair of Referral for a decision.

23/04075/VARYCO - Burgham Park Golf Club - Variation of condition 13 (occupied for holiday purposes only) on approved app 11/00938/VARYCO in order to remove planning condition 13

23/04081/FUL - High Park Farm Change of use of agricultural building to a facility to dry paper pulp to produce animal bedding to include feeder, drum, burner, stack installation and control room – a number of objections have been submitted from residents and consultees.

Planning Issues:

Bockenfield Caravan Park – blue lights illuminating entrance - The case is currently on hold pending the outcome of application 23/04705/CLEXIS.

Felmoor Park – Entrance lighting and signage – no response from NCC to update request.

Felmoor Park – Not complying with planning approval for timber cabins – no response from NCC to update request.

Email complaints re muddy water from new housing development, early starting and parking.

Muddy water was being pumped off site down The Peth. This was resolved and the road cleaned.

Complaints have been received about early working with generator starting at 7.20am along with flashing vehicle lights. This was reported to NCC to ascertain what the rules are as there are no specific conditions attached to the application and so the Clerk assumed it would be “standard” construction working hours of 0800-1800 Monday to Friday and 0800-1300 on a Saturday and no

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work permitted Sunday's and Bank Holidays. NCC stated the Inspectorate did not condition the site operating hours, which NCC are seeing more and more of so therefore the standard hours apply. Where planning conditions don't cover the issues raised, NCC Public Protection/Environmental Health have to investigate those matters as potential statutory nuisances, ie the noise has to exceed 60dB (around the volume of a normal conversation) in a dwelling for it to be considered a 'nuisance' under the above legislation. The Enforcement Officer has spoken to the contractor and since then no noise issues have been raised.

Vehicles are parking on the grass verge outside the site which is a breach of their planning and photographs have been sent to NCC for action. Complaints have been received re mud on the highway which maybe from these vehicles or that the wheel washing facility is not being used/not working. Clerk has reported to NCC.

98 Requested Agenda Items:

- Budget Approval – It was agreed to set the precept at £10,500, an increase of £500 from last year despite the uncertainty of the forthcoming Cemetery contribution. Clerk to complete the relevant forms for NCC who has given an extension on the deadline for submission of precept request. Clerk
- Field of Hope update – the area has been topped and now ready for new bulbs to be planted which will take place towards the end of February. CC Sanderson has agreed to use his members scheme to purchase replacement plaque for the bench and a plaque for the Field of Hope. Paperwork has been received from NCC to agree to the offer and enable transfer of funds to the PC which the Clerk will complete. Plaques have been ordered. Clerk

99 Correspondence:

- National Highways response to issues raised with A1 resurfacing works (see 93k above)
- NCC Town and Parish Council Spring Conference will take place on Thursday 14th March 2024 at County Hall.
- Email re water leak on narrow bank and danger from ice (see 93j above)
- Email re field run off at Eshott Village – this issues was reported to NCC. Cllr Green reported that ditches had been dug out half way down but then stopped. The clearing of ditches needed to be taken all the way down to the burn so the road is flooding again. Also the pot holes on this road were filled but when they were full of ice so the road is a mess. Clerk to report to NCC. Clerk
- Email re issues around parking and u-turns by Pumpkin Pie users – The Clerk has contacted Pumpkin Pie about this issue with no response to date. Clerk
- Emails re breaches at Eshott Airfield – police helicopter landing out of hours, early start up and early taking off of plane.
- Email re BOAT at Blackbrook Farm – 4-wheel drive vehicles have been accessing this green lane and making a mess of the Blackbrook Farm road and the green lane. Clerk has requested a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order put in place to close road to vehicular traffic on U6002 Eshotthrough Junction to Blackbrook Farm Junction. This can only be in place for 6-month so it is just a short term resolution, if at all as people tend to ignore it. Clerk
- Email re access between Bockenfield Country Park and Felmoor Park – concerns have been raised about the bridge between the parks potentially blocking the burn. NCC planning has stated they have no powers to resolve this. The Clerk has investigated and the Environment Agency may be interested as they have stated in response to the recent CLEXIS (item 97) that species present in this burn may include Atlantic salmon, brown trout, sea trout, European eel, brook lamprey and river lamprey. This area is being heavily disturbed. It was agreed the Clerk inform the EA of this situation. Clerk
- Email re sick sheep – The Clerk was contacted in relation to a sick sheep in a field beside the river. Clerk informed farmer and situation was resolved.
- Emails re flytipping in Bockenfield layby and by bottle bank – bottle bank area cleared, Bockenfield has had seats removed but there is more flytipping in the area. Clerk
- Emails from Police with information on crime in area – it was agreed to put relevant information on Felton and Thirston Matters. Clerk
- NALC news

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100 Finance

(a) **Financial Summary** was reviewed with no issues and the current balance stands at £13,294.62 TPC funds and £4,929.97 FCJC Funds totaling £18,234.59. The balance was reconciled with the bank statement and agreed by the Councillors.

(b) **Payments** - The following list was put before members and was approved:

Payments this meeting:		
IB182	L Hamlin Salary and Expenses 35 hours at £17.58 (£615.30) Home working allowance of 7 weeks (£7.00) Plaques for Field of Hope (£246.60)	£868.90
IB183	LA Brown Topping Service (Field of Hope)	£60.00
IB184	Complete Weed Control	£150.00
IB185	John Hood Landscaping	£528.00
DD	Information Commissioner's Office	£35.00
SO	Mr & Mrs Bates (Electricity for Defib Machine)	£50.00

(c) **Income** – None

101 Urgent Items –

- Speed sign maintenance contract – a three year contract is the minimum contract. It was agreed to proceed with this on the basis that the Parish Council are invoiced annually and not to pay the whole amount upfront. Clerk
- Kings Garden Party Invite – it was agreed to nominate an individual from the parish and all Councillors were in agreement with the proposed resident due to the input they have had into the community on a number of areas. This issue was raised as the deadline date is before the next PC meeting. Clerk

102 Items for next agenda –

Colin Hall, Flood Resilience Engagement Officer
West to East Thirston Road – sightline on the corner of Thirston Mill.

Chairman closed the meeting at 9.15pm
Date of Next meeting: 14 March 2024