

# LEVENS PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER – FEBRUARY 2018

## Chairman's Musings

Hopefully the worst of the winter weather is now over and we can look forward to Spring and how we want our village to look. There are some parts which the Parish Council own and other parts which we try to keep reasonably tidy. There are some areas where neighbours jointly keep the grass cut etc. and I hope we are all grateful – the Parish Council certainly is. Perhaps we can all do a bit to keep our village looking clean and attractive.

Road safety in Levens is an ongoing issue as most of us know. What the solution(s) is/are not so easy, but again we can all do our bit to help. Whilst writing this piece, a villager telephoned me to say that the other day as they were driving down Levens Lane a vehicle coming up was going so fast that the car going down had to swerve left and almost hit a female walking up. Fortunately the pedestrian, correctly walking to face oncoming traffic, was not hurt, but it must have been a terrifying experience. Travelling at 20 rather than 30 is not going to greatly increase our journey times but could greatly improve our safety when walking. Just a thought...

Lastly can I please remind you that the Annual Parish Meeting will be at 7.30pm in the Institute on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> March. We hope to see you there with any comments or suggestions you may have.

**Roger Atfield**

## Annual Parish Meeting – 20 March

The Parish Council always welcomes its duty to host the annual meeting for Parishioners and this year's event will be held on **Tuesday 20 March at 7.30p.m.** in the Levens Institute. A particular feature of the Annual Meeting is the opportunity it provides for residents to hear from local societies and clubs as they showcase and celebrate their recent achievements.

A guest speaker is invited to give a presentation on a particular area of interest and following the Lake District National Park boundary extension to include part of the Parish, together with the recent designation of the Park as a World Heritage Site, Steve Ratcliffe, who is Director of Sustainable Development at the Park Authority has kindly offered to provide an update and take any questions from Parishioners. Other items on the Agenda include a report from the Chair of the Parish Council, together with a financial update, a report from the Police and a public forum to receive comments and questions from residents on village matters.

**Please make it a diary date - refreshments provided!**

## **Levens Community Project**

Agents have not yet secured offers for any of the three plots at Cotes which will be the focus of renewed market activity in the early Spring, but direct negotiations with an interested party for the sale of Sizergh Fell Quarry have taken place and are continuing. The developer is currently refining his plans prior to discussion with the planning authority. In the meantime, we continue to work closely with SLDC and are grateful to it for the award of a capacity building grant from the Community Led Housing Fund to cover the current phase of activity. We have prepared a detailed bid to this Scheme which will be submitted when finalised. A bid has also been submitted under the Locally Important Projects initiative and if successful this will provide resources to enable initial groundworks on the new Village Hall site. Discussions on arrangements for the management of the recycling site and its future location are underway with SLDC.

### **Allotments Available.....Allotments Available.....Allotments Available.....**

One of the most tangible outcomes of the project so far has been the creation of 10 new allotments in the old Kitchen Garden at Levens Hall, courtesy of an agreement with the Estate. The allotments were started in the early summer of last year and are on good ground for the growing of fruit and veg. The site is developing well, but for personal reasons, two of our allotment holders have recently had to give notice on their agreement and we therefore have allotments available to interested parties. The plots are approximately 15m<sup>2</sup> with running water laid on and there is good vehicular access with parking available. This is an exciting opportunity for anyone wishing to grow their own produce and the Parish Council would welcome enquiries which should be made to the Clerk (contact details at the rear of the Newsletter).

## **Woodland and Roadside Verge Management**

As promised in our last Newsletter, work commenced on the plot of land on Brigsteer Road, which was donated to Levens Charity by the W.I. The site has been tidied and some tree work completed. A length of roadside dry-stone wall is in need of re-building and plans are in hand to address this. The aim is for this well-placed site, with its long and attractive views towards Morecambe Bay, to develop into a valued and quiet recreational space for the benefit of residents and visitors alike. These plans include the planting of a tree to be donated by the local W.I to commemorate their centenary and this will take place by the spring. On other woodland matters, details of all the Parish Council woodland sites have now been lodged for registration with the Rural Land Registry – an essential pre-requisite to applying for grant aid from the Forestry Commission. This will enable the preparation of a Woodland Management Plan which will provide the basis for us to bring our numerous, small plots into integrated management.

In his introduction, the Chairman referred to the important matter of verge management and the Parish Council is still looking to prepare an up to date work schedule to help the overall tidiness of the village and road safety. On the latter, and with that near miss to the pedestrian in mind, do please try to wear some piece of reflective clothing when walking the village roads at night.

## Parish Finances

Winter is of course the time of year when the Parish Council prepares its budget for the forthcoming financial year and this exercise of estimating income and expenditure allows it to make its bid for support (Precept) from South Lakeland District Council. For 2018-19, it has estimated overall expenditure (to the nearest £100) of £15,500. This includes administrative costs (such as insurances, audit fees, salary, room hire and office costs) of £7,910; grants of £3,000 and Operational Costs such as maintaining the website, woodland and verge maintenance costs, rents and lighting costs of £4,600 – a total of £15,500. Against this, the Council has an income of £2,005 from rents, VAT refund and grants from elsewhere, leaving a bid to SLDC for a Precept of £13,495. Although the Levens Community Project and its finances are managed by the Parish Council, the costs of the Project are financed from external sources and its impact on core Parish resources therefore is relatively slight.

## Levens Village Community Website

The Village Webteam works together to keep our website and Facebook pages up to date, current and relevant. The Team is always looking for news, events and pictures to post so please feel free to send items or post yourself (the Team will monitor contributions) or join in by commenting, liking and sharing some of our news. Contact details are:

Website.....<http://www.levens.org.uk/>

Facebook.....<https://www.facebook.com/levens.org.uk/>

## **B4RN** (Broadband for the Rural North – high speed internet connection for the village)

A big development for the B4RN Project is the recent submission by the Parish Council, of a bid to SLDC's Locally Important Projects (LIPs) initiative for a grant of over £20,000. This is specifically to purchase the necessary central control and distribution cabinet which will serve both Levens and forward links to adjoining parishes not yet connected. The bid, containing a wealth of detail about the Project, was prepared by the local B4RN group and submitted by the Parish in January. If successful, the Parish will purchase and retain ownership of the cabinet, but enter a long-term agreement with B4RN Ltd for them to manage and maintain the facility into the future. For further updates on progress:

Follow / Like: <https://www.facebook.com/LevensB4RN/>.

**AND, on a recurring theme,** the Parish Council thanks all those responsible local dog owners who are clearly doing their bit to tidy up after their pets around the village. Please do remember the risks to livestock from dog waste in open country as highlighted in previous Newsletters – please bag-up and take home with you. And on that subject, we, like many other places however, still suffer from that remarkable characteristic whereby some dog owners do go to the trouble of taking dog bags with them and collect the waste – only then to hang it in an adjacent tree. This is at least as unpleasant, if not more so, than leaving it in situ – for the sake of the village and residents, please do neither!

