

NATLAND PARISH COUNCIL

REPORT AND INTERIM ACCOUNTS

for the year ending 31 March 2020

This **Report** would normally open with an invitation to all parishioners and other interested members of the public to attend the **Annual Assembly of the Parish Meeting (APM)**, scheduled for 14 May 2020. Because of the current coronavirus restrictions that meeting cannot take place. For similar reasons household delivery of the Report has also been abandoned this year and it will only be published on the Natland blogsite and on the Council's notice board.

REPORT FOR THE YEAR

In the text CCC is Cumbria County Council, SLDC is South Lakeland District Council and "the Council" is Natland Parish Council.

The Council has held nine meetings, with at least one District Councillor present at eight of them. County Councillor Brenda Gray is finding it difficult to attend the Council's meetings but remains committed to representing the parish and is happy to receive details of any issues residents may have. The Police no longer attend unless specifically requested but have re-introduced routine reporting. In normal times council meetings are held on the final Monday of each month (excluding August and December) at 7.00pm in the Village Hall, to which all parishioners are cordially invited. The Council has a procedure for electors to raise matters in person at council meetings under 'public participation'; details are publicised on the notice board and website.

When the 'lockdown' was ordered on 23 March council meetings were suspended and the Annual Spring Litter Hunt (planned for 28 March) was cancelled.

Coronavirus The effects, including the growing role of the community website (natlandnews.blogsite.com) and internet communication in general, and the closure of the Post Office on 4 April, are too recent to be satisfactorily reported here. Perhaps next year?

Health and Wellbeing This topic was given an airing at the 2019 APM. No clear ideas came forward about what practicable initiatives might be set up to address issues such as loneliness, dementia and lack of transport. But such issues are bound to need revisiting in the probably very different world after the coronavirus pandemic.

Volunteering The Parish Plan 2014 vision of organised volunteering to benefit the fabric and appearance of the parish failed to gain any real momentum, although some public-spirited individuals still act when they see something that needs doing or when requested – such as picking litter, clearing vegetation from footpaths, cleaning road signs, maintaining seats, clearing road gullies, looking after bus shelters (including graffiti removal) and anything else you can think of. Most such work takes place in the highway, so sensible precautions must be observed, such as wearing highly visible clothing and keeping a lookout for traffic. The planter provided and maintained by Sandra and Tony Heap in front of the village name sign on Natland Road is much appreciated. As mentioned above the annual Spring Litter Hunt was cancelled, but the litter keeps on arriving. David Peters has a stock of bags, gloves, high visibility jackets and picking tongs if anyone wants to 'have a go'.

Flooding – Helm Lane and the Village Green Heavy rain in February took flooding on the Green to unprecedented levels and frequency. But last year's hopes of an engineering solution involving a 'super-soakaway' under the Green were dashed when CCC announced that the high cost of such a scheme could not be justified when domestic properties were not directly affected. This followed design work based on trial pit infiltration tests reported last year. The news also means there is no solution in sight to the related problem of inadequate road gullies at the crossroads on Helm Lane.

On the plus side Network Rail, after many years' agitating by the Council, CCC and others, closed Helm Lane under the railway bridge for repairs over six weeks in Jan/Feb, including sealing the arch and thus stopping the flow of murky water which had showered onto pedestrians, cars and the carriageway.

Highway matters Defects such as potholes, blocked drainage gullies and faulty street lights continue. They can be reported by the public on CCC's much-improved website; for the less 'tech savvy' the 'highways hotline' 0300 303 2992 is still available. The footway light between the School and the Vicarage disappeared unannounced when BT replaced its supporting pole, but was restored by SLDC on a new column when asked. Part of the parapet of Grade II listed Crowpark Bridge was demolished in a collision and awaits restoration by CCC. Damage to the Green by buses (also to a verge at The Beeches) and other vehicles has abated while schools are closed; the Council optimistically requested CCC to restore sunken kerbs opposite the village hall access to their original height.

Bus Service 552 There was concern in September at the proposed withdrawal of the Arnside-Kendal service because the operator had lost its school transport contract. After much agitation by affected communities through their elected representatives at all levels, the matter was resolved by the work of CCC's Scheduled Bus Services Officer, albeit with a much reduced service running from November.

Dog Fouling After several years of being a relatively minor nuisance in the Parish, there was a shocking and daily outbreak of this offence on Helm Lane (during the road closure) and Abbey Drive. Volunteers put up notices and spoke to dog walkers, whereupon the problem abruptly stopped.

Footpaths and Countryside Access the Council keeps a watching brief on the rights-of-way network and pursues incidences of obstruction or other defects, if necessary through CCC's Countryside Access Team. The current coronavirus restrictions are having a major impact on RoWs, open access areas (The Helm), and other less official routes as more people exercise in the open air. This can be reported on next year, but the usefulness of the Natland Road verge as a walking route, with a bit of branch-lopping, is already evident.

Canal Towpath Trail Very little, if anything, seems to have been happening with regard to the length from Crowpark Bridge to Kendal since last year's Report. The new Project Manager and SLDC's liaison person met the Council in June, when the Council confirmed its wish that the section from Natland Road to Burton Road should be improved to the same standard as the rest of the canal route cycle path in Kendal, but reserved its position on whether to indicate its support for the section from Crowpark Bridge to Natland Road until details of its design are revealed.

Planning and Development The Council was notified of 10 planning applications during the year (compared with 10 in the previous year and 11 in 2017-18) and passed its comments to SLDC as the Local Planning Authority. None was of major significance. The appeal against refusal of permission for an end-of-terrace dwelling at New House (reported last year) was dismissed.

As predicted in last year's Report, Oakmere Homes appealed against SLDC's latest refusal to allow up to 26 dwellings on land north of Natland Mill Beck Lane (in Kendal parish but hugely affecting the Lane); an informal hearing was held in July; its dismissal by the Inspector was announced in September; unusually, Oakmere then sought to challenge that decision in the High Court which in turn declined to consider the matter.

SLDC embarked on a major Review of the South Lakeland Local plan 2025 to take it to 2040. Launch and 'early engagement' events were held before 'lockdown' intervened. A deadline for initial responses has been extended to 17 July, but the Council is waiting for the more tangible 'issues and options' consultation. That is due in Autumn 2020 but the timetable may need to be adjusted while still aiming for final adoption at the end of 2023.

High Speed Broadband A representative of B4RN, supported by Natland Postmaster James Harkness, spoke to a Council meeting in February. The Council supported the idea of B4RN arranging an event to gauge public support for extending their network across the parish. That is 'on hold' but the need for such technology, and the devices it serves, could move to a different level in the post-pandemic world.

Community Governance Review of South Lakeland Further to last year's Report, the outcome of the Review went in accordance with the Council's wishes when residents of The Beeches and the Natland Mill Beck Lane area expressed a preference to remain in Natland parish rather than be moved into Kendal, and SLDC respected that view. The transfer of land on each side of the A65 south of Oxenholme (the remainder of Rochester Gardens and the site of the new extra care housing development south of Fell Close) from Natland to Kendal makes perfect sense and will take place in due course. Sadly, the request by the Oxenholme Residents' Association for a separate parish council did not succeed.

Finances and Admin The Council's accounts for 2019-20 are on the back of this report. The precept for 2020-21 will be unchanged at £10,000. The anticipated (in last year's Report) final CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) payment of £7840.72 was reduced to £58.40 when SLDC belatedly realised that 54% of Rochester Gardens was in Kendal. Parish councils must spend CIL payments on infrastructure to meet the needs of new developments; the Council is minded to use it towards its top priority – a footway along Natland Road. Complying with the new Accessibility Regulations (mainly about the legibility of what councils publish on websites) could prove more difficult and expensive than last year's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR); in order to meet the September 2020 deadline the Council is considering issuing a statement that compliance would "impose a disproportionate burden on the Council". The Council's thanks go again to Marion Thornton who acts as the Council's independent internal auditor.

Natland Parish Council and Clerk 2019-20 There were no changes during the year. The Council comprises Michael Clark, John Houghton, David Peters (Chair), Rhian Peters, Sarah Roberts and Richard White, with one vacancy. Details of how to contact councillors are on the notice board and website, or they can be contacted via the Clerk, Kevin M. Price.

David Peters – Chair of Natland Parish Council – 14 May 2020

NATLAND PARISH COUNCIL

Interim Receipts and Payment Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2020

	£	£	£
Balances at 01.04.19			
Community (current) Account		2885.49	
Business Bonus (deposit) Account		4011.43	
Restricted Funds (CIL)		<u>6570.99</u>	13467.91
Receipts			
Precept - SLDC		10000.00	
Interest		7.62	
HMRC – VAT reclaimed		162.00	
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)		<u>58.40</u>	<u>10228.02</u>
			<u>23695.93</u>
Payments			
Clerk's salary & PAYE (including holiday pay)		4107.25	
Street lighting		1166.76	
SLDC elections		65.00	
Grass cutting		900.00	
Donations			
North West Air Ambulance	100.00		
Great North Air Ambulance	100.00		
Kendal Mountain Rescue Team	100.00		
St Mark's PCC - churchyard	500.00		
South Lakes CAB	<u>100.00</u>	900.00	
Internal Auditor remuneration		70.00	
Insurance		617.65	
Subscriptions			
Cumbria Assn of Local Councils	213.85		
Society of Local Council Clerks	23.92		
KADBUS	10.00		
Information Commissioner's Office	<u>35.00</u>	282.77	
Meetings		114.00	
Councillor training		104.00	
Councillor's expenses		32.00	
Clerk's expenses		203.94	
Clerk – use of office		216.00	
Payroll administration		75.00	
VAT paid		<u>180.00</u>	9034.37
Balances at 31.03.20			
Community (current) Account		3713.12	
Business Bonus (deposit) Account		<u>4319.05</u>	
Total Non-Restricted Funds		8032.17	
Restricted Funds (CIL)		<u>6629.39</u>	<u>14661.56</u>
			<u>23695.93</u>

Kevin M. Price – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer