

# NATLAND PARISH COUNCIL

## REPORT for the year ending 31 March 2022 and invitation to the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING on Thursday 28 April 2022 in the Village Hall at 7.30 pm

**Back to Normal** After a two-year break because of Covid, this year there will again be an Annual Parish Meeting, and the Annual Report and Accounts will be delivered to each household instead of merely appearing on the notice board and blogsite.

**Annual Assembly of the Parish Meeting (APM)** The Annual Assembly is an opportunity for all parishioners and those interested in the welfare of the community to come and air their views about Natland. Natland Civil Parish has an adult population of about 830, all of whom have the right to submit motions for discussion at this meeting. These must be with the Clerk, Kevin Price (01539 821596 or [kevtherev7@hotmail.com](mailto:kevtherev7@hotmail.com) or home address – see notice board or [natlandnews.blogspot.com](http://natlandnews.blogspot.com)), seven clear days before the meeting, so that they can be publicised on the Parish Council's notice board outside the Village Hall, and on the blogsite. No motions were submitted in 2019. This year there may well be matters of ongoing concern that electors might seek to influence through an APM resolution. You could find them in this report. Natland's County Councillor, its three District Councillors and a member of Cumbria Police have been invited to speak and answer any questions.

**An Election Year** On Thursday 5 May there will be elections for the full Parish Council and for the new unitary Westmorland and Furness Council acting initially as a shadow authority then coming fully into being on 1 April 2023 when the present councils (SLDC and CCC) will cease to exist. Candidates for either of those elections may wish to speak to the APM.

**Invitation to Natland-based Organisations** All community organisations within the Parish are invited to send representatives to the APM to give a brief report on their activities during the year. Eleven reported in 2019. There is always a section of the meeting allocated for this important exchange of information; please ensure your organisation is represented or sends a written report.

## 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. Named months are from 1 April 2021.

The Council has held ten meetings, the first five remotely by Zoom, including an extra meeting solely to discuss the Home Field planning application, then five physical meetings in the Village Hall when Covid risk seemed less. Most meetings were attended by at least one of Natland's three district councillors. So things may at last be back to 'normal service' with meetings usually 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 blogsite.

**Business as usual under Covid - or not?** Last year's comments about walking having increased but litter and dog fouling staying manageable because of responsible owners and public-spirited volunteers still apply. In the hope that ad hoc picking would continue to control the year-round problem of litter, there was no Spring Litter Hunt again this year. If anyone wants to 'have a go', David Peters has a stock of bags, gloves, high visibility jackets and picking tongs. Of course, most such volunteering work takes place in the highway, so

sensible precautions must be observed, such as wearing highly visible clothing and keeping a lookout for traffic.

**Closure of Post Office and Shop - the aftermath** Two years ago I reported that the Post Office had closed on 4 April 2020 because of Covid. In July 2021 James Harkness informed the Council that it would not be reopening because it was no longer economically viable, that the building would be returned to full residential use, and that arrangements would have to be made to re-site the postbox, the community notice board and the Council's own notice board. The question then arose of whether change-of-use planning consent was required and in late 2021 James confirmed there were no specific plans yet for how to use the internal space, but when they were decided on the Council would be kept informed and the necessary planning procedures followed. Post Office Limited still refers to the closure as 'temporary' and is seeking alternative ways of providing a service to Natland. The Council heard indirectly that Royal Mail had notified SLDC in October of its intention to seal the postbox and install a 'lamp pedestal box' on the Village Green, opposite the Church gate, under its statutory powers to place postboxes on streets. In November the Council wrote to Royal Mail suggesting that the south-west corner of the Green might be a better location, and also pointing out that, in its view, the Village Green was not a 'street' and that permission should be sought from both the Council and the landowner. Royal Mail did not respond. The postbox was sealed and painted black in mid-January, but without the requisite notice about nearby alternatives. The new postbox was installed on 15 March on the Green where Royal Mail had originally intended.

**Memorial seats in the village** The Council is replacing the wooden Inglesfield memorial seat on the Green (by the oak tree) with a low-maintenance seat in recycled material that should be more inviting to sit on. The Council is facilitating the installation by the Taylor family of a seat in memory of their mother by the bus stop adjacent to Charnley Fold.

**Highway matters** The road over The Helm was surface-dressed in April, but the Council's request to CCC that it be stopped up to through motor traffic continues to be disregarded. Between June and November Cadent carried out a phased cast-iron-to-plastic renewal of gas pipes through much of the village. Roadworks caused considerable disruption to movement. Although affected private customers were kept well informed, and workmen communicated openly when approached, despite requests from the Council Cadent did not provide an overall description of their programme that could be shared with the wider community. Emergency road closures for repairs to water supply pipes became more frequent, particularly on Oxenholme Lane where the Council considers renewal of the water pipes and of the surfacing are urgently needed, hopefully in that order. Although CCC has failed to find a solution to flooding along Helm Lane and on the Green, investigations have begun which might alleviate flooding in the Abbey Drive cul-de-sac, possibly by an improved soakaway. In March Natland Road was resurfaced from Watercrock into Kendal. The Council requested the removal of the grit/salt bin on Helm Lane because it had become an eyesore and wasn't used, but CCC refilled it instead. As ever, 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.

**Countryside Access and Rights of Way** The Helm remains unmanaged and grows wilder. The many recreational users were added to by mountain bikers excavating unsightly cycle tracks which the Council regards as unacceptable and dangerous to more lawful users. The landowner does not authorise cycling or horse riding on Helm Common but lacks the resources to prevent it. A meeting of the Commoners was held in February, hosted by the Lord of the Manor, and it is hoped this might lead one day to a body with the right resources, expertise and motivation taking on the management of the Common to the benefit of the wider community. In May a study into the feasibility of the Towpath Trail was announced,

beginning with a questionnaire to which the Council and individuals responded, but nothing has been heard since. But much-needed surfacing work was done in February at the northern (Kendal) end of the canal footpath - part of National Cycle Route 6. This right-of-way was temporarily blocked by several fallen trees during Storm Arwen in November.

**Planning and Development** The Council was notified of nine planning applications during the year and passed its comments to SLDC as the Local Planning Authority. The only one of major significance was SL/2021/0383 from Jones Homes for 29 dwellings on land west of Sedgwick Road – the ‘Home Field’. This land had been allocated for residential use in 2013 under the South Lakeland Local Plan. At a special meeting on 7 June, attended by nine members of the public of whom five spoke, the Council confirmed it was not opposed in principle to the land being used for housing but asked for the application to be refused until its many unacceptable elements were satisfactorily resolved. Then the application underwent a series of alterations (on which the Council commented as appropriate) mainly aimed at persuading CCC (as the Highway Authority and the Lead Local Flood Authority) to withdraw its objections. In November CCC relented and recommended approval with conditions. So the application came before SLDC’s Planning Committee on 16 December. The Council, amongst others, made its submission to the Committee under the ‘public participation’ rules. The Council’s submission focussed on road safety, in particular the arrangements for visibility splays onto Sedgwick Road and the safety and convenience of pedestrians. Other aspects were covered by the other participants. The Committee resolved to approve the application, but with several conditions, some requiring further prior approval - including for visibility splays and surface water drainage. Full details of the application’s progress, including the Council’s submissions and the Committee’s deliberations, can be found on SLDC’s website. Jones Homes have recently applied to display a range of banners and advertisements, and work on site started in March.

As reported last year, progress with SLDC’s major review of the South Lakeland Local Plan 2025 (to take it to 2040) is proceeding slower than expected. The Council responded online to the ‘Issues and Options’ consultation in October, including commenting on ongoing ‘Call for Sites’ feedback. The first opportunity to comment on the crucial ‘Land Allocations’ document is expected soon. SLDC is confident that the new Local Plan will remain valid through the transition of authority from SLDC to the Westmorland and Furness Council.

**Finances and Admin** The Council’s accounts for 2021-22 are on the back of this report. The precept for 2022-23 will be unchanged at £10,000. The Council has begun to use some of its accumulated CIL funds (Community Infrastructure Levy - paid by developers of new housing and restricted to spending on infrastructure which benefits the community) before the 5-year deadline is reached. They will pay for the replacement Inglesfield memorial seat on the Green and the two new notice boards on the outside wall of the Village Hall. The Council’s thanks go again to Marion Thornton who acts as the Council’s independent internal auditor.

**Natland Parish Council and Clerk 2020-21** Richard White resigned in January as he was leaving the area, so the present Council comprises Michael Clark, John Houghton, David Peters (Chair), Rhian Peters, and Sarah Roberts, with two vacancies. There will be elections for the whole Council on 5 May 2022, coinciding with elections for the first Westmorland and Furness Council (shadow authority until April 2023). David and Rhian Peters will not be standing for re-election, so more new councillors are needed. At the beginning of March the Council distributed a flyer to all households encouraging candidates to come forward. The list of persons nominated will be published by 6 April. Details of how to contact councillors are on the notice board and blogsite, or they can be contacted via the Clerk, Kevin M. Price.

# NATLAND PARISH COUNCIL

## Interim Receipts and Payments Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2022

	£	£	£
<b>Balances at 01.04.21</b>			
Community (current) Account		4361.12	
Business Bonus (deposit) Account		4621.04	
Restricted Funds (CIL)		<u>6629.39</u>	15611.55
<b>Receipts</b>			
Precept - SLDC		10000.00	
Interest		<u>0.36</u>	<u>10000.36</u>
			<b><u>25611.91</u></b>
<b>Payments</b>			
Clerk's salary & PAYE (including holiday pay)		4417.15	
Street lighting		985.37	
Grass cutting		1200.00	
Donations			
North West Air Ambulance	100.00		
Great North Air Ambulance	100.00		
Kendal Mountain Rescue Team	100.00		
St Mark's PCC - churchyard	700.00		
South Lakes CAB	100.00		
Christmas tree – Village Green	<u>85.00</u>	1185.00	
Internal Auditor remuneration		70.00	
Insurance		631.05	
Subscriptions			
Cumbria Assn of Local Councils	231.23		
Society of Local Council Clerks	27.68		
Information Commissioner's Office	35.00		
Share of ZOOM Licence	<u>9.59</u>	303.50	
Meetings		79.06	
Deposit – notice board (from CIL funds)		545.00	
Clerk's expenses		189.78	
Clerk – use of office		312.00	
Payroll administration		90.00	
VAT paid		<u>240.00</u>	10247.91
<b>Balances at 31.03.22</b>			
Community (current) Account		4358.21	
Business Bonus (deposit) Account		<u>4921.40</u>	
Total Non-Restricted Funds		9279.61	
Restricted Funds (CIL)		<u>6084.39</u>	<u>15364.00</u>
			<b><u>25611.91</u></b>

Kevin M. Price – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer