

NATLAND PARISH COUNCIL

REPORT AND INTERIM ACCOUNTS

for the year ending 31 March 2021

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**, scheduled for 13 May 2021. Because of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic the Council has again decided not to convene that meeting for a second year. 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 four remote meetings by Zoom, with at least one District Councillor present at each of them, plus one ten-minute outdoor physical meeting to meet the legal requirement of agreeing the annual financial return. 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. In normal times council meetings would be 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. Until physical meetings return, members of the public can join meetings remotely using Zoom by prior arrangement with the Clerk.

Coronavirus Pandemic The community impacts of Covid-19 are widespread, historic and well-known. In addition to the obvious impact on its meetings, the Council noticed increased need for walking routes while falling demand reduced bus services. The Post Office has been closed most of the year. The annual Spring Litter Hunt was again cancelled. Occurrences of litter and dog fouling, although still a significant problem, did not escalate as might have been feared, thanks to responsible owners and voluntary picking by public-spirited but anonymous individuals. Unsurprisingly, a number of issues went 'on hold' or made very little progress: B4RN did not arrange an event to gauge public support for extending their high speed broadband network across the parish; the Canal Towpath Trail may even have gone backwards, proposing a fresh feasibility study to include the option of omitting the section between Stainton and Kendal.

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 take action 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'.

Telephone Kiosk BT removed telephony from the kiosk at the mouth of Hawes Lane some years ago. No alternative community use was identified so the Council asked BT to remove it before it became an eyesore. BT claimed that ownership had transferred to the Community Heartbeat Trust, but after growing vandalism and repeated emails from the Council and residents BT removed the kiosk in early 2021.

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. It is expected that CCC will carefully restore the demolished parapet of Grade II listed Crowpark Bridge in the Summer of 2021. The remainder (western half) of Helm Lane was resurfaced, including the mouth of Robby Lea Drive up to Abbey Gardens. CCC was advised that the next priority for resurfacing should be Oxenholme Lane, where the need to renew the water supply pipes should be borne in mind. As reported last year, there is still no highways drainage solution to the flooding on Helm Lane and the Village Green, but the recent installation of two road gullies (with a soakaway in the verge) by CCC at the railway bridge might marginally reduce the problem. The prospect of Government funding towards improved walking and cycling infrastructure prompted an invitation to contribute suggestions towards a Kendal LCWIP (local cycling and walking infrastructure plan); the physical evidence of walkers using the verge of Natland Road, and also of the A65 verge between Helm Lane and the new (opening 2022) extra care housing development, indicates a need for surfaced footways at both locations, although Natland Road would still be the Council's priority. Both suggestions were submitted towards the Kendal LCWIP (as they had been towards SLDC's "Settlement Services and Accessibility Assessment" document, mentioned below under Planning). The suggestion that spare (from Kendal) "20's plenty" advisory speed limit signs might be installed in Natland village did not meet with the Council's approval; CCC will be reminded that the Council's wish is for a mandatory 20mph village speed limit.

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 kissing gate by the railway line above Long Meadow Lane was renewed. Two excellent new gates were installed on the canal footpath south of Crowpark Bridge, and a third is expected to replace a dodgy stile. Reported difficulties on the riverside (left bank) path north of Hawes Bridge were considered, but no fresh actions were supported at this time.

Planning and Development The Council was notified of 8 planning applications during the year (compared with 10 in each of the previous two years) and passed its comments to SLDC as the Local Planning Authority. None was of major significance. Thankfully, there were no fresh confrontations with major developers.

There was little sign of progress with SLDC's major review of the South Lakeland Local Plan 2025 (to take it to 2040). The 'issues and options' document for consultation was expected in 'early 2021', but the timetable is being reviewed because of the impact of Covid-19 and the potential implications of the Government's planning white paper. However the Council did submit local information towards updating SLDC's "Settlement Services and Accessibility Assessment" document.

Local Government Reorganisation - Unitary Proposals Cumbrian principal authorities (county and district councils – the 'two tiers') responded to the Government's invitation to submit proposals for a single-tier structure in Cumbria. Although the Council's preference would be for no change to the current system at the present time, the Council expressed its

support for SLDC's 'Bay' proposal if a single-tier were unavoidable and re-iterated that support in the subsequent Government consultation about its chosen four alternatives. The Government's next move is awaited, although the 'third tier' of parish councils would stay unchanged.

Finances and Admin The Council's accounts for 2020-21 are at the foot of this report. The precept for 2021-22 will be unchanged at £10,000. The Council side-stepped the onerous requirements of the new Accessibility Regulations (mainly about the legibility of what councils publish on websites) by issuing an Accessibility Statement asserting 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. The next parish council elections in Natland are due in May 2022. In the 2018 elections only four councillors were elected; since then there have been three co-options and a resignation. 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 – 28 April 2021

NATLAND PARISH COUNCIL

Interim Receipts and Payment Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2021

	£	£	£
Balances at 01.04.20			
Community (current) Account		3713.12	
Business Bonus (deposit) Account		4319.05	
Restricted Funds (CIL)		<u>6629.39</u>	14661.56
Receipts			
Precept - SLDC		10000.00	
Interest		1.99	
HMRC – VAT reclaimed		<u>180.00</u>	<u>10181.99</u>
			<u>24843.55</u>
Payments			
Clerk's salary & PAYE (including holiday pay)		4302.16	
Street lighting		936.64	
Grass cutting		1000.00	
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>60.00</u>	1160.00	
Internal Auditor remuneration		70.00	
Insurance		624.35	
Subscriptions			
Cumbria Assn of Local Councils	225.20		
Society of Local Council Clerks	24.64		
Open Spaces Society (2)	90.00		
Information Commissioner's Office	35.00		
Share of ZOOM Licence	<u>6.27</u>	381.11	
Clerk's expenses		194.74	
Clerk – use of office		288.00	
Payroll administration		75.00	
VAT paid		<u>200.00</u>	9232.00
Balances at 31.03.21			
Community (current) Account		4361.12	
Business Bonus (deposit) Account		<u>4621.04</u>	
Total Non-Restricted Funds		8982.16	
Restricted Funds (CIL)		<u>6629.39</u>	<u>15611.55</u>
			<u>24843.55</u>

Kevin M. Price – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer