

Beetham Parish Assembly

ANNUAL PARISH REVIEW 2021/2022

1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of the Annual Parish Review is to review the main activities and issues which have concerned the Parish Council over the past year. Because of the variations in population density within the parish, the parish area is divided into two Wards - East Ward represented by 4 councillors and West Ward represented by 5 councillors.

We have all been affected by the terrible coronavirus pandemic and its devastating consequences. Life has changed significantly, but due to the successful vaccination campaign, the end may now be in sight. Covid restrictions resulted in the 2019/20 Annual Assembly being cancelled. The subsequent 2020/21 Annual Assembly was held as a Zoom meeting following relaxation of the Covid restrictions and included reports on activities in 2019/20 and 2020/21. As a result, this is the first face-to-face Parish Annual Assembly to be held for three years. Since June 2020, the parish council has met via virtual meetings using Zoom software. Clearly, this did not provide parish residents with a satisfactory opportunity to express their views at a face-to-face meeting such as this. However, following recent Covid relaxations, parish council meetings have been face-to-face since January 2022

2. EAST WARD ISSUES

2.1 BEETHAM

The potential for flooding in Beetham has again been a major concern during the past year. Winter is here again with a resultant increase in the threat of flooding. Progress towards resolving this problem has been disappointing, hindered partly by Covid-related issues, but a face-to-face follow-up meeting between BPC representatives and the Environment Agency was held in October 2021. The meeting between BPC members and Environment Agency (EA) proved useful and the subsequent EA report – for a more intensive survey and to include historic issues – was welcomed. What final recommendations, and more importantly what action, comes out of this remains to be seen. Regrettably, all these things take time. Meanwhile seasonal flooding will, alas, continue.

2.2 SLACKHEAD

The issue of suspected leachate from the Hale Marble Quarry defunct refuse tip has been resolved. Samples taken by the appropriate authority proved to be toxin-free, although the site continues to become visually unattractive after heavy rains. However, BPC had felt the need to bring this situation to the attention of the Environment Agency, which gave visual improvement of the site a low priority.

3. WEST WARD ISSUES

3.1 CARR BANK

Despite the urgency attributed by BPC to extension of standing room at the B5282/Carr Bank bus stop, actual progress here has been disappointing. Contractors interested in the job proved difficult to find, although this has now been resolved. The next hurdle is to obtain the necessary permissions from Cumbria CC Highways to place traffic controls on the B5282. The application to Highways has been delayed until the identity of the contractor and details of their work procedures are confirmed. A contractor has now been identified, but the work cannot start until the application has been submitted to Highways and the plans for traffic control at the site are approved.

3.2 STORTH

The badly damaged seat at Four Lane Ends has been replaced by a new outdoor seat.

The Storth parish council noticeboard had to be removed following a collapse of the stone wall to which it was attached. The owner of the adjacent property was not prepared to allow the noticeboard to be refixed to the wall so an alternative solution was required. A project to replace the noticeboard (and the adjacent Village Hall noticeboard) on a vertical stand at a similar location to the previous one is in progress.

Plans are being developed for creation of a wildflower verge near the Storth Road/Cockshott Lane junction. A two metre grass verge adjacent to Storth Road will provide a pathway for pedestrians.

Local residents will be aware of the continued closure of The Ship Inn at Sandside. The owners assure us that this is necessary for major repairs/improvements and that serious investment is underway to ensure the future of this important facility for both local residents and visitors.

4. PARISH ISSUES

4.1 SPEEDING

Traffic speeds and public safety are always uppermost in the minds of parish councillors. Speeds on the A6 at Beetham and the B5282 at Sandside/Carr Bank are a constant worry. Modern technology provides new methods of dealing with this and the parish council have attempted to reduce traffic speeds by installing Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) at key points on these roads. Unfortunately, many of the worst affected and preferred sites are unacceptable to the Police Authority for a variety of reasons. Alternative locations are being sought and the purchase of an additional SID device is likely in the coming year.

4.2 TREE MANAGEMENT

The cost of tree management continues to dominate the parish council's budget. With literally hundreds of trees on parish land, controlling their growth is occupying more parish council time and consuming increasingly significant amounts of cash. Priority must, of course, be given to those trees which represent a danger, or potential danger, both to people and to property, and professional specialists are employed to advise on and deal with these priorities. Enclosing the two sizeable plots of parish council-owned land, at Slackhead and at Sandside, are often boundary fences or walls and these too require regular attention – and consequent expense.

4.3 QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE CELEBRATION 2022

The planting of new trees is to be the theme of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebration in 2022. Progress has been made in identifying suitable sites for this in Beetham parish and specifying preferences for tree species. Young trees for this specific purpose are currently available free-of-charge and will be ordered in the near future.

4.4 PARISH WAR MEMORIALS

Commemorating the fallen in military conflict, and war memorials in particular, are traditionally an optional and unofficial responsibility for parish councils. BPC has agreed to take over responsibility for the parish memorials in Beetham and Storth to ensure a continuing high standard of upkeep.