

Beetham Parish Assembly

ANNUAL PARISH REVIEW 2018/2019

Sadly, Beetham Parish Councillor Ian Stewart passed away during 2018. His sudden death on 21st October, at the comparatively young age of 65, came as a great shock to everyone. Ian was, of course, also a District and County Councillor and, more recently, Deputy Leader of Cumbria County Council. Ian will be remembered for his tireless work on behalf of his local and the wider community. He always had time for everyone and would gladly take up their issues, however minor, with the appropriate officials – never resting until the issues were resolved. Ian was definitely someone to have on your team, formidable to the opposition and relentless in exposing their shortcomings where their action, or lack of it, fell below his own high standards. His contributions will be sorely missed at parish council meetings.

Following the resignation of Beetham Parish Councillor Pru Jupe and the passing of Ian Stewart during 2018, two new councillors have joined the parish council. David Crayston of Whassett replaced Pru Jupe and has not wasted any time in becoming involved and playing an active part in parish council affairs. More recently, Peter Griefenberg from Storth has filled the vacancy left by Ian Stewart. We wish both new members a long and rewarding association with our parish council.

The potential for flooding in Beetham has been a major concern during the past winter. In particular, residents of Parsonage Fold, Beetham live under constant threat of a recurrence of the dreadful consequences of Storm Desmond in 2015, with other areas in Beetham and the wider parish apprehensive of their ability to withstand a recurrence of such and even less extreme conditions.

Another flooding issue in Beetham is frequent surface water flowing across Leighton Beck Road, in the area of the double bend about 400m west of the junction with Stanley Street, Beetham. This flow is almost constant at certain times of year, emanating from springs on private land to the north (and higher) side of Leighton Beck Road and making its way across the road into what was known as the school's sports field. The water flow causes two separate problems :

(1) Leighton Beck Road is relatively steep, narrow, twisting and with poor sight-lines - dangerous at all times both for vehicles and pedestrians. When the surface water freezes, the road becomes a serious health and safety matter. In January/February 2019 the road became too dangerous even for Cumbria County Council's own school bus to use. As a result, children had to walk along this same road on their way to and from school, a clearly unacceptable situation.

(2) Serious flooding problems for residents in Stanley Street, Beetham below, where the water ends up after flowing over the school field. Upon reaching Stanley Street, the water flows to south along Stanley Street where it has the potential to reach the nearby A6.

Unsurprisingly, the joint presentation of a study of the subject by Cumbria County Council and the Environment Agency in October at the Heron Theatre was well attended by parishioners. This study, whilst impressively thorough, could offer little hope of an early solution to the problems, mainly due to cost constraints. The conclusion was that one way forward might be for the local community to form its own Flood Resilience Forum to take whatever self-help measures might prove feasible. Beetham Parish Council would actively support the establishment, funding and running of such a group. Is there a Beetham resident able and willing to take the lead here?

The Beetham Crematorium is now in full operation. Beetham residents have expressed concern regarding the parking arrangements as cars overflow onto the A6 when the car park is full due to large numbers attending the crematorium. A meeting between the Fishwick management and parish council representatives has been arranged on 28th March to discuss possible solutions to this problem.

At last, the defibrillator project for Beetham village appears to be moving towards a conclusion. Confirmation has been received from BT for adoption of the Stanley Street phone box by the parish council. A fully automatic defibrillator and a lockable cabinet are on order. These will be installed by the Community Heartbeat Trust (CHBT) electrician.

Earlier in 2018, the wrecked bus shelter at Carr Bank was replaced by a smart new one; the full cost being met by the third party responsible for the damage. We are pleased with the effect that the new 'smiley' speed indicator device (SID) on Sandside promenade is having on traffic speeds and arrangements are now almost in place to recover the valuable statistical data recorded by the equipment. This will then be passed to Storth School for analysis under the supervision of Mrs Jessica Harvey, a former BPC member, who is keen to promote awareness amongst the children of how this information can be used to reduce traffic accidents – and, of course, to save lives.

Users of the B5282 at Sandside will have seen that the so-called orchid triangle at the end of Quarry Lane is now protected by boulders provided free-of-charge by the Sandside Quarry and worked into position by AONB and parish council volunteers.

The new information panels are now in place at the three nominated sites in the parish – Storth Village Hall, Four Lane Ends crossroads and Beetham village centre. A fourth panel was installed at Beetham Caravan Park by the site owners. We are sure that residents and visitors alike will find them both attractive and informative.

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Interest in the commemoration of the end of World War grew as the one hundredth anniversary approached. The schools at Beetham and Storth, and Wings School at Whassett, all produced plans for what form this commemoration might take. For its own part, the parish council was happy to join in to help with any such plans. The parish council purchased two 'silent soldiers' and these life-size silhouettes of WW1 soldiers were placed at the war memorials in Beetham and Storth. They are now in store and available for use in 2019.

A survey of the trees in Sandside Cutting was done early in 2018 and many identified for attention – some urgently. However, it proved surprisingly difficult to find specialist workmen willing to undertake the job and the contract was not placed until mid-2018. The first stage of the work has been completed with additional work scheduled for end-March 2019.

Superfast broadband has finally reached the parish. A cabinet carrying the main cables was installed in Storth two years ago, but final connection of the optical fibre cable link was delayed by difficulties with a local landowner. The problem was only resolved by utilising the BT optical fibre system to make the final connection into the optical fibre network. I understand that the first 30 Storth users have now been connected.

That is the end of my review of parish council activities during 2018/19. I'll be glad to answer any questions on projects in progress or completed during the past year.