

Garsdale Parish Council

Website: garsdaleparishcouncil.com

Chairman's Annual Report May 2018

Parish Council developments

The Parish council today has 7 of the same members as last May, and the same clerk. All members stood for re-election two weeks ago, and as there were no further residents standing for election, the current council was automatically re-elected without contest. Since 2015 we have managed to keep a full council, with just enough influx of new members with fresh ideas, interests and vigour to keep the council enthusiastic, and I look forward to continuing with a full council for years to come.

In the 2018 elections two weeks ago, Kevin Lancaster (Con) was re-elected to South Lakeland District Council, together with Ian Mitchell (Lib) and Sheila Capstick (Con). Congratulations and we look forward to seeing these councillors regularly at our Parish Council Meetings. In 2018 we did not have any elections for the Cumbria County Council, so our representative is still Cllr Nick Cotton (Lib).

Communication with the public

The regulations require that the Parish Council put up agendas for meetings and other information on a parish notice board. As you probably know already, our notice board is at the village hall, but in Garsdale, most people don't walk past this on a regular basis, so since 2014 we have also been publishing the information on the Parish Council website www.garsdaleparishcouncil.com.

Phil Johns also writes a regular column in the Lookaround, but I should point out that this is Phil's personal summary as a resident and does not represent the Parish Council's views. As a council we cannot justify increasing the tax to pay for the clerk's time to also write an official summary, when the full minutes of each meeting are available to everyone on our website and by email.

We are encouraging all residents to sign up to receive Parish information by email instead of by letter; this uses less paper, printing and volunteer fuel so is both better for the environment and helps keep the parish council expenses down. Either go to www.garsdaleparishcouncil.com and enter your email in the box at the bottom right of the page, or just send an email to the clerk at ps.johns@btinternet.com

School Transport for 16-18 Year Olds

In 2014 Cumbria County Council decided that they would no longer arrange school transport for 16-18 year olds, even though it is now compulsory to stay in education until 18. This has caused a lot of problems for students in some very rural areas, who now have no public transport options to get to the nearest sixth-form or college which is often quite a distance away – from Garsdale it is 16-25 miles to either Kirby Lonsdale, Kendal or Kirkby Stephen. This is not a satisfactory solution, so the Parish Council have supported objections to the County council on several occasions. Our District Councillor Kevin Lancaster has been especially helpful and taken the lead on this. There are now busses from Sedbergh to Kirkby Lonsdale and Kendal, but our 16-18 year olds still have to get to Sedbergh and back.

Broadband

A local Dent & Garsdale Hyperfast group was set up in 2016 as a B4RN partner. The first link coming up from Casterton and Barbon through Barbondale to reach Dent was completed in autumn of 2016.

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The Garsdale B4RN is now gradually getting going; funding is in place, wayleaves are pretty much agreed in principle and just waiting for people to walk the route and decide the exact location on the ground. At the last meeting, the Parish Council gave permission for the installation of a B4RN cabinet at Garsdale Village Hall, and authorised the signing of wayleaves on any sections of land under control of the Garsdale Parish Council. Please note, Garsdale Parish Council does not own any significant parcels of land, but there are a few small areas, such as verges and areas between a stream and the road next to it, which are not officially part of any other land parcels and hence is controlled by the PC.

If you are interested in helping with the project – organising, digging, fundraising, or cake baking, then please contact Gavin Keeble at gavin@secondnatureuk.co.uk, Richard Dickinson at richard.jill@talktalk.net or if you prefer to phone just call Phil Johns, the PC Clerk, on the number below for further details.

Village Hall

In early 2017 The Parish Council was awarded a grant of £4687.50 from the Sustainable Development Fund of the Yorkshire Dales National Park for improvements to the village hall.

The grant has now been spent, and matched by far more than the required £1562.50 in labour contributions from volunteers. As you can all see and feel, the Village Hall is now freshly painted, with paint that reflects heat and certainly makes it look much nicer, we have had new windows, new low-energy heaters and fans to blow the warm air back down from above, and lots of other repairs have been carried out. You may also notice the absence of the smell of sulphur; last summer the village hall committee in collaboration with Graham Lant managed to secure another significant grant, and hence the water treatment system has now been updated and completed.

On behalf of the Parish Council I would like to thank Richard Dickinson who has spent a lot of time first on the grant application paperwork, and later on painting the hall, and also Graham Lant for the work on the grant for the water system, and the rest of the volunteers who gave their time to help

Highways

After a long wait, three long stretches of the A684 were finally completely resurfaced in March/April 2017. Unfortunately, we are now seeing further potholes emerge mainly on the stretches that were not resurfaced last year. In addition, the A684 is now closed on the river side with traffic lights in two places at Garsdale Village and Dandra Garth. The Parish Council has contacted the Highways Dept several times to ask about what work is planned and when, but has not yet received a definite answer. The back road has also been in a bad state ever since storm Desmond, and just got worse after this winter's flooding and frost. Both Cllr Nick Cotton and the highways Department have been contacted and promised to do something, but unfortunately, it needs far more than just the patching up that Highways are likely to find the money for.

During the recent "Beast from the East", Garsdale was cut off on the Friday due to a fallen tree at Whitbeck, and due to the snow back lane was not passable either. Unfortunately, the Highways department had no one available that day to remove the tree, so the Parish Council would again like to thank Stephen Labbate, John Park, Edward Lord and Jodie Mitchell who went out and cleared the road that morning.

We are also still asking the Highways department to let the Parish council know by email whenever they plan any roadworks in the area or change previously arranged dates, but with little success so far.

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Post Box and Phone Boxes

In 2016-17, BT gave notice that they were planning to close down the phone box in Garsdale Village, and the one near Garsdale Station. The Parish Council objected to the removal of both, on grounds that they are a safety feature in a remote area where mobile phone coverage is patchy on some networks and non-existent on others.

Last spring, the post box at Rackenthwaite suddenly disappeared with no prior notice. It took some time and effort to find out who to contact about this. Apparently, the post box was initially removed for repair, and it was then decided to not replace it due to being in a dangerous location for the postman to stop. The Parish Council has objected to this and asked to have the post box reinstated, on grounds that Royal Mail did not give any notice of their intent to remove it or give residents the opportunity to comment.

Motor Bikes

Towards the end of last summer there was concern that the motor bikes had started a new practice: racing down the road three abreast in places.

Last year the Parish Council has sent a letter to the police requesting better policing of motor bikes, and pointed out that they need to be out on Sundays, in unmarked cars, to see what is going on. Our Community Officer Mandy Coleman has been out several Sundays and now has a much better idea of the situation. Mandy Coleman was invited to attend the Parish Council meeting in March and gave the Parish Councillors a useful briefing on the measures they plan this spring.

Unfortunately it is difficult to do anything that is effective on more than one small section of road at a time; as soon as the first biker is stopped, he'll call and spread the word at Devils Bridge and the rest will of course be careful on that stretch of road. But, at least we are now getting some policing of this issue so that hopefully our road will be safer for all users.

Finally, this last bank holiday Monday several police motorbikes were spotted heading up from Devils Bridge to Sedbergh, and also in the other direction from Garsdale towards Sedbergh. These police bikes doing the "loop" might actually be more effective than most other strategies.

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