

Minutes of the Meeting of Hexhamshire Parish Council held on Thursday 12th October 2023
in the Malcolm Caisley Meeting Rooms, Whitley Chapel Parish Hall

10.1 Present –Marge Rastall (Chair), John Austin, Nicola Matthews, Lauren Porteus, Greg Finch, Davy Short, Roger Rutherford, Gill Whatmough; Jonny White (Clerk)

Apologies for Absence –Ed Parker, Hilary Kristensen. Colin Horncastle (County Councillor).

10.2 Minutes of the previous meeting of the Parish Council held on Thursday 14th September 2023 (There was no August meeting)

It was agreed the minutes were a true record of the meeting. A small amendment was made to note the 10-minute limit on public participation.

10.3 Declarations of Interest – Gill Whatmough declared interest in the fencing between the wetland and Mire Meadows field.

10.4 Matters Arising

- Roger gave a quote for fixing the fencing in Mire Meadows field, adjacent to the Wetlands. Attempts have been made to find another quote, but they proved unsuccessful. However, the Council has approved Roger's quote.
- It was decided that the Willow block on the Wetlands has become too large. The willow group will be consulted to see if they can make any use of the trees. They are too mature for them to use for making baskets etc., but there may be other alternatives. If not, they will need to be cut back considerably.
- Alison Tweddle's plaque has been placed on a bench in her favourite part of the Shire.
- The Hall committee will decide on where the concrete panel for the generator will be placed. It will also need some form of wire cage. Tom Kristensen to enquire with Blanchland, to see what they have done. Options for CCTV are also to be investigated.
- Fitting of the new septic tank for the school has been delayed until the Summer.

10.5 Resilience Hub

A member of Northumberland County Council contacted Gill to see if the hall was resilient-ready. She was pleased to inform them of the plans already underway.

Tom Kristensen believes that flags may provide a more sensible base for the generator than a concrete platform, as it would be both cheaper and quicker. John Austin may be able to provide the flags. Tom will contact Dan Nixon from the Hall committee and organise the installation. He will also enquire about Blanchland's cage policy, as security and insurance concerns may necessitate a steel cage around the generator.

10.6 Public Participation

There were no members of the public present.

10.7 Matters for discussion with the Unitary Councillor

Colin was not present this month.

10.8 Correspondence

None.

10.9.1 Finance

- Clerk's Expenses: £7.95 (cost of letter to county council)
- Hall meeting room cost: £45
- Bill for Alison's plaque
- Roger's quote.
- Sale of book to Nenthead error - £26.20 to be refunded to Killhope.

The above items were approved.

10.9.2 Balances as of 7th October 2023

Treasurer's Account	£19,369.25
Sportsfield Account	£2,084.33
Dukesfield Account	£5,042.20
Wetlands Account	£669.38
Resilience Account	£6,968.06

10.10 Planning

- The planning department were informed of the parish councils concerns regarding the misuse of retrospective planning, but they said there is nothing they can do. However, the government is due to increase planning application fees next year, including doubling fees for retrospective applications. Hopefully this will deter further misuse. Councillor Colin has also been notified of our concerns.
- An enforcement case has been opened regarding an extension without permission at Raw Green. (Ref. 23/01105/ENDEVT)
- An enforcement case had been opened on Guards Lane Caravan Site, however, after a visit by the council's enforcement officer, the case was closed as the gate was situated away from the highway and was less than two metres in height. Following this, the parish council passed on further evidence of the site's current condition, including photographs of two structures, causing the case to be reopened. (Ref. 23/00710/ENDEVT)
- Lilswood Caravan site have yet to paint the caravans to brown, as was agreed; some are still cream. Lighting issues seem to have been fixed, though it is unclear on whether residents are still allowed to have permanent lights up. This will be investigated.
- Demolition of existing garage and erection of recreation room, Rowley Head Farm. GRANTED.

- Construction of an open-fronted agricultural shed. Land At North Of Dukesfield Hall. GRANTED.
- Construction of 40m x 25m equestrian arena with timber post, rail fence and gate for personal use only (Retrospective). Eads Bush Steel. GRANTED.

10.11 Highways, footpaths and BOATS

Footpaths/BOATS:

Further to last month's note that a comprehensive report had been produced (with thanks to Liz Sobell), refuting the county council's intentions to convert certain footpaths to bridleways, and BOATS, within the Shire, the parish council would like to emphasise that they are not in support of any changes of designation to footpaths, bridleways or BOATS in the area. The confusing system of defining each type of track lends itself to creating BOATS, using maps from hundreds of years ago as evidence. This will be reiterated to Alex Bull of the county council, who first informed us of the changes.

The Footpath boardwalk at Moss House has finally been taken away, and a new wicket gate installed.

Roads: The Dipton Mill road was once again brought up with the county council as being a matter of serious concern in the Shire, as the lack of drainage on the hill leading from the pub into Hexham causes continued damage to the road surface. This had been described as our top priority when asked about our concerns over highways back in June, yet nothing has come of it thus far. The county council will continue to be reminded of the importance and necessity of the works needed until they are complete.

The white lines need repainting by Stotsfold Lodge. There is also no give way sign. Unfamiliar drivers do not know to stay to one side. The county council will be informed that lines and signage are needed.

The issue of a missing grit box by the school was brought to the county councils attention last winter, but never resolved. This will be brought up again, along with the condition of the roadway leading into the school.

Concerns were raised over the quantity of spoilage wagons making their way to Windy Hill Farm. The road in question is already in disrepair, and the extra volume of heavy traffic is sure to deteriorate the roads condition even further. Apparently, the Weatherly's have a license to spread such spoilage, however, concerns over the spoilage's structural integrity and fears that it could collapse into the river below, have resulted in the parish council seeking advice from the Environment Agency.

10.12 Reports

Wetlands: See above for information on the fencing. Horses to leave before the month ends.

Dukesfield Arches: The fence around the Mill race needs repairing as the corner post has come out. A new strainer needs to be put in. Roger has agreed to have a look.

Hall: No reports.

Sportsfield: Some of the render has collapsed in the tennis court. Nigel Robson has offered to fix the render free of charge. It has also been reported that the containers have been misused. Both are open and they have been filled with rubbish and covered in graffiti. New locks are to be bought. Lauren to message Rebecca Dent and see if the young farmers want/need anything inside the containers. Lines will be painted on the tennis court when the weather permits.

School: Had Harvest Lunch today raising money for Hexham food bank. Currently in the process of tidying the entrance way.

10.13 Any Other Business:

A Locality coordinator gave Gill some leaflets for the community and mentioned the possibility of getting micro-grants of up to £500 for local organisations. The clerk would contact her to find out more.

Meeting closed at 8:50pm.