

Annual Report for the Year 2010/2011

Chairman's Statement given by Councillor Francis Mason-Hornby

2010/11 has been a year of stability for the Parish Council with no changes in membership resulting in less for me to report than in previous years.

After the somewhat inconclusive General Election in May, which resulted in no one party holding an absolute majority, we have entered a new era of coalition politics. Voter turnout across the Westmorland & Lonsdale Constituency was 76.98% against a UK average of 65.1%. Residents were urged to turn out again in large numbers for the Referendum on the voting system for the UK Parliament on Thursday 5th May 2011.

The Government has announced major budget cuts but how this will affect our community is still unclear; if we as citizens try and be more responsible we can all help with cost cutting. If for example one sees litter in the street pick it up or even better try and stop someone from throwing it down in the first place; if you see a vehicle parked on the pavement a quiet word with the driver might encourage an end to this anti-social practice and obviate the need for the pavements to be repaired so frequently. To quote from President John F Kennedy's inaugural address of 20th January 1961 "ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country."

An excellent example of a "can do" attitude was the response to the heavy snow before Christmas when pavements and roads were cleared by parish councillors and residents with the minimum of fuss without the need of specialist training or a formal risk assessment.

Following the problems of the 2009/10 winter the Parish Council has obtained an emergency supply of grit and two spreaders. As predicted, no snow has been seen since their delivery but no doubt they will be useful in the future. This grit is for use on public pavements and the public highway only and is not to be used on garden paths, private drives and private roads.

We have much to be thankful for living in Burton-in-Kendal and as I write this the horrific drama of the Japanese earthquake and the resultant tsunami and nuclear accident is playing out in front of our eyes on the TV screens. The Parish Council approved a Parish Emergency Plan at the August meeting and it was subsequently published at the beginning of December; we can only hope that we could rise to the challenge if a major incident took place here.

The two Planning items that raised the most excitement this year have been the plans to re-develop the Royal Hotel site off Main Street which is still in the planning process and the proposed wind farm at Longfield Tarn between Hutton Roof and High Biggins for which no plans have yet been submitted.

The proposed Longfield Tarn wind farm is of particular concern to some residents but the Parish Council has little influence on the proposed development as the site is not only in an adjoining parish but is over the county boundary in Lancashire. In light of recent events in North Africa and the Middle East, the so called "Arab Spring", we need to reduce our dependency on oil and gas from such an unstable region and allied to the fact that we all live in the shadow of the ageing Heysham nuclear power station perhaps we should re-

evaluate our position on wind farms and other sources of renewable energy.

Our local roads have benefited from a much needed and much welcomed maintenance programme this year with repairs and surface dressing carried out on Tarn Lane, Vicarage Lane and Dalton Lane and major resurfacing works to Main Street.

Road safety in particular the problem of drivers speeding through the village is of course a perennial issue and over the year we have discussed it on numerous occasions both in our meetings and out on site with expert highway engineers. Improved road markings and the promised regular appearance of a speed indicator device are the result of our deliberations but our requests for a 20mph zone outside the school and funding for a school crossing patrol were turned down.

The Parish Council is a consultee for many bodies and over the last year we have been asked to comment on various issues too numerous to itemise. Probably the most important, relevant and contentious is the "South Lakeland Local Development Framework Land Allocations – consultation on emerging options". This is seeking community views on new sites for homes, jobs and community facilities to meet the needs of communities in South Lakeland (outside the National Park) to 2025. According to the Council between 2010 and 2025 some 60 hectares of new employment land has to be found and around 6000 new homes built across the district.

Despite what views that we the Parish Council take on this issue I urge residents to make their own opinions known to South Lakeland District Council who will ultimately take the decisions that will affect us all. The consultation period is only the first stage of the process and when the final draft plan is published residents will again have an opportunity to make representations. These will be considered by an independent inspector when assessing the 'soundness' of the document. The final document is not likely to be adopted until mid to late 2012.

The Parish Council finances are in a healthier position than we had planned but this is not due to the setting of an easily achievable budget but mainly because some of our regular expenditure has been considerably lower than estimated and some planned for items have not occurred. It is the Parish Council's long term objective to hold reserves of approximately 50% of our gross annual expenditure.

We are always keen to increase public involvement in parish council matters and whilst everyone has a pet project or gripe many suggestions are not within the parish council's remit and others we are unable to fulfil due to lack of available funds; we do however listen and all councillors are keen to hear your views.

I yet again take this opportunity to urge those residents with access to email to register with the Clerk to get the monthly Agendas and Minutes sent directly to their inbox; they are also available online at www.burton-in-kendal-pc.gov.uk For those without internet access these documents are always available on the Parish Council notice board on the wall of the Memorial Hall. These well produced and succinct documents give the only accurate and true record of what is due to be discussed and what was decided at our monthly Parish Council Meetings.

Most minor complaints made to the Parish Council are dealt with by the Clerk who then chases up the relevant department of South Lakeland District Council or Cumbria County Council by 'phone or email. General maintenance is carried out by our hard working Parish

Lenghman, David Holmes. There is a parish "complaints / suggestions book" held at the village shop for your comments.

We are fortunate to have the regular attendance of County and District Councillor Roger Bingham, District Councillor Brian Cooper, and Police Community Support Officer Jessica Bullock and her colleagues at our meetings and I am grateful for their support over the year. I must also thank Callum Graham of Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service for the reports he sends in.

Thanks must go to all who take the time and trouble to attend our meetings and in particular the members of the press and their understudies whose reports, however colourful, I always look forward to.

I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their commitment during the year; they give generously of their free time to serve the people of this parish; they also represent us at various other organisations whose activities have an impact on village life.

Despite recent aspersions cast in letters to the council about the Land Allocations consultation I am proud that all Parish Councillors operate without fear or favour and are scrupulous in declaring an interest in any agenda item being discussed at our Parish Council Meetings; Burton-in-Kendal Parish Council has recently had it's Quality Parish Council Status renewed so you may have confidence that we serve you to the highest professional standards.

All that remains is to thank Peter our Parish Clerk for all his hard work and good advice and without whom none of what we decide would happen.