Hedley Parish Council – Chair’s report 2024-25

As always, I begin my report again with resounding ‘thank you’ to all those who serve their community as members of the Parish Council and who freely give of their time and energy for the betterment of Hedley. We were lucky to be able to co-opt Councillor Kathryn Curran last year and Councillor Chris Whitton this year, to bring us to 6 councillors, something we haven’t been able to proclaim for some time! This significantly eases the job list and shares around the actions needed to help us function efficiently. Bearing in mind four of the councillors work fulltime, we have to have many hands to make light work and this is great news! We are also grateful to County Councillor Colin Horncastle who is a great supporter of Hedley at NCC level and often helps to resolve issues for us or put us in touch with the appropriate listening ear!

We have said goodbye to our long-serving clerk, Monica Anderton, who has been a great help over the 10+ years she has written our minutes and paid our bills. She is still going to clerk for the local East Tynedale Forum so we will no doubt keep in touch. We are very lucky to have seamlessly handed the clerk’s baton (pen?) to Sarah-Jane Moffat who lives locally and came very highly recommended. She has now received all of the village information and paperwork from Monica and is up to speed on our accounts and regular spending. We are sure she can update all of our practice and procedures very quickly – no pressure!

Of course, all of the PC information is in the public domain, but we are getting a new website, which Sarah-Jane is devising and going to regularly upload to, so do check in every now and again to see what is happening with the day-to-day running of our small piece of Northumberland. As always, we are so privileged to have kind hosts at The Feathers Inn who allow us to meet in their premises and without whom we would be homeless. We meet – at present – on the second Monday of each month (except August and December) and everyone is warmly welcome to attend. We are always aware of our financial state and the rising cost of living which impact on all services so if you are curious to see how our precept is spent, do look at our details online or come to a meeting and talk to us. We are always happy to receive suggestions or ideas for improving village life or for events to gather together so your councillors’ details are online or you can contact our clerk: parishclerk@hedleyparish.org.uk who will contact us all accordingly.

We continue to use the very efficient newsletter, compiled by Cllr. Wolters to keep villagers abreast of events and information. (Do get in touch if you would like to be added to the mailing list!) This is well-received and has been very useful in conveying important information - like road closures or broadband upgrades – and for circulating dates of occasions to celebrate. Again, we have enjoyed carol concerts and choir performances, a VE day lunch (teas and coffees were paid for by a successful bid to NCC by Cllr. Curran), makers’ markets, Hallowe’en trails and trick or treating, Easter events, our annual litter pick and several coffee mornings too.

We continue to keep the village looking spick and span, thanks mostly to our gardener Simon Ogg and his team and the litter pick volunteers. This takes up the majority of our precept. We have also pollarded the oak tree on the village green, near the bench, which will keep that in shape for the next few years. We also are embarking on a tree survey across the village and then a programme of works, to trim or prune as necessary, can follow during the dormant season.

In closing, I would also like to mention that whilst we work really hard to help residents and invest a lot of time in following up queries, researching, answering NCC questionnaires, emailing to help move things on, we are also at the mercy of the next ‘layer’ of local government and this can prove to be hugely frustrating. Often our attempts to seek advice, ask for action or request work to be done falls on deaf ears – or doesn’t even reach them. It is often a bit of a thankless task! There is a group of PC chairs, across Northumberland, who are currently sounding out the possibility of us all meeting to potentially strengthen our voice at regional level.

As always, if I have omitted to include anything, that is my memory’s error, rather than a deliberate exclusion!

Cllr. Thea Watkins, Chair of Hedley Parish Council,

July 2025