

Rochester with Byrness Parish Council

Minutes for the Meeting of Rochester with Byrness Parish Council held on
Wednesday 4 October, 2023 *At Byrness Village Hall*

1 Attendance: S Chapman (Chair), P. Scott, N. Hall, P. Softley, M. Kelly & M. Chilvers (Clerk).
Andrew Webster (Northern Powergrid until 7.55)

2 Apologies: There were no apologies.

3 Declaration of Interest: P. Softley regarding the graveyard donation request

4 Minutes of previous Parish Council meeting on 25 July 2023 – Were agreed and signed as a true record.

5 Guest speaker – Andrew Webster (Northern Powergrid – NPg). Mr Webster spoke about the successful testing of the equipment that would be installed at the substation and that it was believed NPg would be able to deliver a seamless switch over to the substation in an event of a power outage. He advised a new power cable would be installed and the old transformer and pole would be removed. It was hoped that the substation will be up and running from mid November. He spoke about the communications with residents at the appropriate time and how potentially the system may be able to link to the properties of those residents wishing to do so for possible trade of power being created such as solar. Mr Webster highlighted that NPg provided funding and that the village hall may be able to apply for a grant.

6 Opportunity for members of the public to raise matters – None was raised.

7 Matters arising

a) Maintenance of Byrness garages – There was discussion regarding the two quotes received. It was agreed to accept the more expensive quote as this was more extensive and would help preserve the wooden walls of the garages. The Clerk was asked to contact the contractor to make arrangements for the work.

b) Resurfacing of the 'Ride' at Byrness – It was confirmed that the work had been completed. It was reported that the remaining stone would be left to use for any repairs.

c) NCC roadside signage at Byrness – It was confirmed that whilst the replacement sign had been installed NCC had not as yet returned to cut the branches back that were obscuring the sign.

d) Query regarding land between burn and Old School House boundary – The email from the owners of the Old School had been shared with the Councillors and it was confirmed that the area referred to was the responsibility of the Parish Council. There was discussion regarding the points and the Clerk was asked to contact a local tree surgeon to survey the area as well as Environmental Agency to assess the burn. Cllr Softley made reference to the ecology report undertaken when the school was sold by County Council highlighting the quality of the burn and that otters were assumed present. It was agreed the Clerk would write back to the owners on the points raised.

e) Replacement of matting at slide in Byrness playing field – Cllr Scott advised the replacement matting had been received but not yet fitted as the short term repairs were currently holding.

f) Catcleugh lay-by, Bremenium Way drainage & Rochester road flooding – Cllr Scott reported that there had been no litter left in the lay-by since the broken litter bin was removed and that it generally looked tidy. The Clerk reported that Glen Harrison (NCC) had advised that there was presently no date for work on Bremenium Way.

g) Damage to Byrness church car park area – Cllr Scott reported that having spoken to the contractors the work should be completed within the next couple of weeks.

h) Drainage problems in Byrness – Cllr Scott provided details of two problems in Byrness where
1) water is seeping through the road near 32 South Greens. A water sample had been taken by Northumbria Water but results were not know. 2) apparent leaking pipes are flooding gardens at 1 Otterburn Green and neighbouring properties. The Clerk was asked to contact Northumbria Water about the matter.

i) Possible EV charging point in Rochester – The Chair reported that it had not been possible to proceed with the plan for a charging point at the cafe in Rochester however she and the Clerk

had met Keith Hooper (NCC) and there was confidence that charging points would be installed at the old garage location. The Chair advised that Lord Redesdale had given his permission for the installation to happen and it was hoped work would start in early 2024.

j) Speeding vehicles through Rochester – The Clerk provided an update from an email received from Neil Snowdon (NCC) who advised that the recent speed surveys had been shared with the Police although there had been no reply as yet. It was recognised that the 85%ile far exceeded the 30mph speed limit and action was needed. In the meantime it was believed more Police van presence would be present.

k) Rochester defibrillator – Thanks were expressed to Ray Windfunds for the £500 grant received towards a replacement defibrillator. The Chair advised that a quiz night was going to be arranged for late October to raise funds for the remaining balance.

l) Bremenium Way junction at the School House – There was discussion regarding the damage that had been caused due to large vehicles attempting to turn into Bremenium Way and driving over a retaining wall. The matter had been reported to County Council Highways but a response had been received advising that nothing could be done even though there was a risk of the wall collapsing which would lead to possible damage to the property. The Chair advised that Lord Redesdale was aware of the situation.

m) Local Transport Plan Programme 2024-25 – The Clerk confirmed he had submitted the requests that had been agreed at the July meeting.

n) Catcleugh Woodland Management plan consultation – There was discussion regarding the details received. Cllr Softley highlighted that trees were normally removed via the top end of Catcleugh that was open access and highlighted the need for safety.

The Chair reported that there appeared to be plans by the Wildlife Trust to remove livestock from Carter Bar fell and the area be left for rewilding that would include from Whitelees to the dam.

o) Liddensdale wind farm proposal – The Chair reported that she and Cllr Softley attended the public meeting regarding the scoping report for this proposal and provided details including dates of possible decisions. The Chair also advised that it had been hinted at the meeting that the catchment area for the turbines community funding may be extended and could possibly include Byrness.

8 Planning

a) 23NP0084: Demolition of existing garden room & construction of replacement garden room with porch: Ramshope Lodge, Catcleugh, NE191TZ: This matter was discussed between meetings and there was no objection.

b) 23/03361/VARCO: Variation of Conditions 2 (Approved Plans) and 18 (Habitat Mitigation and Enhancement Plan) to allow Log Cabins: reduce from 7 to 6 with no basement; 2 new building types; minor changes in placement/design; basement added to Workshop / Observatory Building; rear GF/FF extension to create display area; 2nd Floor observatory / open-air balcony with other minor amendments; minor amendments to Cafe Building: and general layout to internal track; relocate sewage treatment plant; increase site parking; upgrade existing retaining wall; amend wording of condition 18 to read "The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in complete accordance with the approved plans and documents." on approved application 16/03934/FUL: Border Park Services, Border Park Filling Stations, Rochester, NE191TR This matter was discussed between meetings and there was no objection.

c) 23/03181/FUL: Conversion of existing building to Microbrewery & eatery & creation of associated parking area: Elishaw Farm, Elishaw Moor, Otterburn, NE191JH: This matter was discussed between meetings and there was no objection.

9 Finance/accounts for payment

a) Parish finance update & adoption of the 2022-23 accounts – The Clerk advised the current bank balance was £28,277.54. There was discussion about the possibility of needing to increase the precept for 2024-25 but it was agreed to make the decision at the next meeting. The Clerk provided details of the accounts for 2022-23 and these were adopted.

b) Donation policy – Following discussion there was agreement among the Councillors to adopt the policy presented.

c) Donation request for the maintenance of graveyard for Horsley & St Francis churches – Following discussion it was agreed to seek additional information before making a decision whether to agree the further £200.00 donation requested.

d) Payments – The following payments presented were all agreed.

- M. Chilvers salary for August & September, 2023 of £376.28 was agreed.
- Payment of room hire at Byrness Village Hall for meeting on 4 October, 2023. Whilst the invoice had not as yet been received the payment was agreed when the Clerk had it.
- Payment of £502.00 + VAT to Chris Mowatt Landscaping for grass cutting in Byrness was agreed.
- Payment of Councillor training events. The payment of £30.00 was agreed for the training attended by S. Chapman, P. Softley and N. Hall
- The Clerk advised he had not as yet received the invoice for the one Remembrance wreath that it had been agreed to order.
- The Clerk confirmed the receipt of a £500.00 grant from Ray Windfunds towards a new defibrillator located at the Rochester Village Hall.

10 Any Other Business:

a) Cllr Softley highlighted that there had been a number of trips of a tractor with slurry trailer go through the centre of Byrness in recent times. It was not known whether there was a problem with the sewage plant however the Clerk was asked to contact Northumbria Water.

b) It was highlighted that there had been an attempted break-in in Byrness and local residents should be vigilant.

c) Cllr Hall asked for the terms and conditions for borrowing the telescope as the Chair had previously advised that she believed it was for use when organising a community event. It was agreed that the Clerk would investigate.

Date of Next Meeting. Tuesday 28 November, 2023, at Byrness Village Hall, starting 7:00pm.

Meeting closed 9.50pm