



Neasham Parish Council Newsletter - February 2019



Chair's Overview - John Weighell

2018 has proved a very active year for the Council. You will see brief reports following on how we care for our village, our involvement in Planning processes, and our commemorations marking the centenary of the Great War Armistice.

During the year Tina Murray resigned from the Council. She has been instrumental in modernising the Council's policies and procedures, and ensuring that we are fully compliant with recent legislative changes. I am pleased to record our thanks for the excellent work she has contributed during her time as a parish councillor. In the summer we welcomed to the Council Mr Geoffrey Conlin, who has been co-opted in Tina's place and look forward to his input into parish matters.

The Council tries to be responsive to the views of its electorate, and will be installing speed warning signs in the village in the next few months. More information follows. We always welcome new ideas and requests for consideration, and also reports on defects or maintenance issues. If the latter are not our responsibility we will pass on any report to the appropriate authority.

The Annual Parish Assembly

The Assembly provides an opportunity for all residents to discuss how to improve our Parish - remembering that our parish now incorporates the whole of the Sockburn peninsula, Low Dinsdale village, Brass Castle, and the whole area up to the boundary of Middleton St. George at Thorntree. This year's assembly will be held at Neasham Reading Room at 6.30 pm on Thursday 16 May 2019. We hope to welcome you as part of a good turn-out of electors. Refreshments will be available

Christmas Lights

Whilst we have tried during the year to "spruce up" the old spruce tree by the roadside of Teesway, we thought that the illumination of the Millennium Garden was a more fitting way to celebrate Christmas. The results have been much admired



A new power supply was installed for this purpose, which includes some permanent floodlighting of the Garden. Our thanks go to Councillor Keith Sandick for managing the project, to him, John Alderson and others for trench-digging and groundwork, and to Tony Ireson for connecting and certifying the electrical installation.

Speed Signs

We have been urged both in discussion at the last two Assemblies, and by residents individually, to take action to mitigate speeding through the village. We know from our informal contact with the Highways Department there is no prospect of any traffic calming measures or speed limit reduction being approved. We have therefore researched a number of different speed sign products, and agreed with the Police and the Highways Authority the locations for west and an east bound signs.



These locations have to be chosen both for their visibility, and to enable the beam to pick up the speeding motorist sufficiently in advance of the warning sign. The Borough Council have kindly agreed to install the necessary posts and electrical connections. The remaining cost (approx £4,250 excluding VAT) together with necessary insurance, servicing costs, and contingencies, will be met from the Parish's Council Tax precept. We expect that the signs will be erected and commissioned some time during April 2019.

Planning matters

A few years ago, in a planning appeal, Darlington's Local Plan was adjudged out of date. This led to a "flood" of planning applications for residential developments, large and small, pending the establishment of new planning controls for Darlington. Many of these applications are very detailed, running to several hundred pages, and involving a significant number of technical matters. As a "statutory consultee" the Parish Council has a duty to consider each application. There have been a number of such applications affecting Neasham, the latest being for a very large-scale development on the boundary between Neasham and MSG. This is now proceeding through a planning appeal process with a public inquiry in Darlington in May 2019. Planning matters now take up a significant amount of parish councillors' time, and form one of our major activities. This includes being involved not only in scrutinising and considering lengthy applications, but also learning the processes and something of the technical information which has to be digested.

Environment Agency

We have continued to liaise with the Environment Agency as regards the maintenance of the flood protection works around Neasham village, and you will have noticed that significant work has taken place over the last year or so. The steps on the village green over the floodbank have been substantially improved (as well as two sets of steps being removed to contain maintenance costs).

Uneven flagstones on the crest of the floodbank have been re-laid, and work has been done to maintain the penstock at the outflow of the Kent Beck. The Parish Council has renewed its general signage concerning use of the village green, and also installed cautionary signs concerning the care needed when using the footpath and the green, particularly in times of flood.



Discussions have now concluded with the EA as regards further signage, which will be available shortly. We have also reached agreement with the EA as to future maintenance responsibility for their "assets", including the steps to residents' rear gardens, and the use of the northern floodbank. On this last point we are grateful to residents for respecting the EA's wishes that the line of the public footpath around the hedgeside is used rather than the crest of the floodbank.

Whilst not an EA matter, we have received representations about the unevenness of the temporary footpath diversion during the new housing development in New Lane. We are aware that the developer has made some improvements, but we must stress that although this is a public right of way, there is no legal obligation on anyone to maintain its surface – so please do take care when using it!

Trees

Many of the trees on the Village Green and on Teesway have received attention over the last couple of years – including the cutting down and replacement of the old cherry tree (which was found to be rotten "to the core") at the western entrance to the village. Because the Parish Council does not have any responsibility for trees in the parish in general, a register has been compiled of all those trees for which the Parish Council does accept responsibility. We record our thanks to Helen Crute for photographing all the trees both in leaf and out of leaf to illustrate the register.

This register is publicly accessible, on application to the Clerk. A programme of bi-annual inspection has now been introduced, together with a rolling maintenance programme. Residents in the village will have seen the work which has taken place, but if you do notice any trees which you think do need attention, please report this to the Clerk.



Volunteers

The appearance of Neasham Village is frequently the subject of compliments from residents and visitors alike. Whilst we know that everyone likes to take pride in the appearance of their own property, we would like to say a big "thank you" to the many villagers who willingly assist with keeping the grass verges cut, carrying out and maintaining the annual flower planting, and litter picking. There are also many "unseen" jobs which many of you help with. Our volunteers are too numerous to mention here, but we do keep a register of our helpers, and if you would like to offer some skill or interest for the benefit of the parish, please contact the Clerk or any Councillor.

Defibrillator

After many requests from residents, NPC was able to arrange for the supply and installation of a defibrillator in the village. This is clearly sited as centrally as possible on the front wall of the Fox and Hounds. We are grateful to Alex McKee, the Landlord, for agreeing to this. We are also grateful to Tina Murray for managing the project, Dr. Stevens for providing training on the use of the machine, Tony Ireson for electrical installation, and the British Heart Foundation and Agnes Spencer Charitable Trust for their "in kind" and financial assistance respectively.



L-R: Alex McKee (Fox and Hounds) John Walker (Clerk) Cllr E Miller, Cllr D Dodwell, Cllr J Weighell (Chair) Tina Murray, Cllr K Sandick, Cllr G Crute, and Elizabeth Conlin, Defib Guardian *Image by Jane Miller*

Local resident, Elizabeth Conlin, (on the right above) has volunteered as "Guardian" of the installation, and undertakes weekly inspections, cleaning and formal reporting to the health authorities.

Information cards have been "mail-dropped" to all households in the parish. Please keep them handy – just in case! – but if you've mislaid yours or need another copy, please apply to the Chairman by email (john.weighell@btinternet.com).

This information could be life-saving.

Neasham Remembers

Between 4-10 November the village commemorated the centenary of the Great War Armistice with an exhibition of photographs and memorabilia in the Reading Room. The exhibition showed how we "remember" in our own way and learn from mistakes of the past

Photographs taken during 2015-16 by Helen Crute in the Somme Valley and elsewhere, archive images from the Imperial War Museum and items kindly loaned by Sir Mark Wrightson were on display. Local artefacts and a range of books and pictures relating to the war were loaned by local people.

Children from Hurworth Primary School visited. They helped to prepare poppy tributes and plant them in the Field of Remembrance on the village green. Art work from the children's own exhibition commemorating the war were supplied by the School. The preparation of their exhibition, and the hands-on involvement with ours (planting poppies, girls looking at the books and boys trying on gas masks) are things they will remember in future.



An Evening of Remembrance in the presence of the Mayor, included a talk by Chris Lloyd of the Northern Echo on local WW1 history and an Act of Remembrance with the Last Post played by Keith Sandick. At the end of the week a short ceremony dedicated the Field of Remembrance on the village green paying tribute to all those from the village who served during the Great War. We are grateful to Rev Adrian Thorp for presiding, Keith Sandick for the Last Post, and to our Chairman and Mr Peter Barron, Deputy Lord Lieutenant, for the wreath-laying.

The sale of poppy tributes during the week raised the sum of £278.36 for the British Legion. The images from the Exhibition will shortly be on the website www.NeashamRemembers.co.uk



Neasham Parish Council

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Parish Councillors 2018-2019

Chair: John Weighell

Vice Chair: Derek Dodwell

Councillors:

Geoffrey Conlin (appointed 3 September 2018)

Geoffrey Crute

Janette Rumney

Pam Dunn

Keith Sandick

Eric Miller

Tina Murray (resigned 3 April 2018)

Ward Councillors

Cllr Joe Kelley

Cllr Lorraine Tostevin

Clerk

John Walker tel: 07915 611456

