

MINUTES OF ANNUAL MEETING OF UNDERSKIDDAW PARISH
1 MAY 2014
with Jim Wilson, Chairman of Underskiddaw Parish Council in the Chair

Eleven residents were present together with the chairman and Clerk to the Parish Council, four parish councillors, Marion Fitzgerald from Allerdale BC, Alan Bowness from Cumbria CC, and the invited speaker James Spedding of Mirehouse. Apologies were received from two parish councillors and fourteen residents.

1. **The Minutes** of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 9 May 2013 were read and the Chairman was authorised to sign them.
2. The Chairman **welcomed** those present, and introduced Marion Fitzgerald the new Allerdale Borough Councillor who was to speak first as she was going on to the APM held that night at Bassenthwaite.
3. **Marion Fitzgerald** said that she was enjoying her duties as an Allerdale Councillor since her election last year, and was beginning to understand how things worked. She was an Independent member, and therefore did not receive any support or training in her new role. Her main message was that she was always available and pleased to help and interested in feedback. Allerdale dealt with Council Tax, Waste and Re-cycling leaf-sweeping and other matters, but she was making extensive connections through networking, and if a matter was outside Allerdale's jurisdiction she would be able to make the right contact in relation to any queries. She attended most meetings and could be contacted there or through the Allerdale website.
A resident said how the purple bag scheme was appreciated.
4. **Report from the Chairman**
The report covered the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.

Membership of the Parish council had not changed in the last year; Tom Ryan represented the Council at Neighbourhood Forum Meetings, and Chris Corder maintains the link with the Village Hall Committee. The Chairman was a Member of Derwent 7 and of its transport sub-Committee. Non-members also contributed to public life in the village and in particular Maggie Climie was the parish representative for Broadband. Maggie also had done much of the preparatory work for Information Board and had contributed the art work, wording and layout and liaised with the graphic artist to ensure its realisation.

Meetings take place on the third Tuesday of alternate months (January, March ..) at in the Village Hall at 2.45 in winter when the Artists' Class was running and 2.00 pm in summer. As always the public should be aware they would be most welcome to attend, and there is always an Agenda item for public participation.

There had been a number of **planning** applications, of which the most notable was probably the approval of the Millbeck Hydro scheme. In connection with the National Park Authority the Chairman paid tribute to John Hayton who for many years had represented parish councils in Allerdale as a member of the Board, and who had done great service in this capacity, but was now retiring.

Highway repairs had occupied much time and effort but in view of government cuts with disappointing results. The Police had not been optimistic about getting a speed limit on the

A591, but the residents present urged the parish council to try again.

Finance The Parish Council had contributed £400 towards the Information Board, and £1,000 towards the purchase of land adjoining the Hall. The Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2013 had been approved by the government auditor. For the current financial year the Precept had been raised by 5% giving the Parish Council an income of £3,148 plus a government grant. A proposal was circulating for 5% of the business rate raised in a parish to be paid to parish councils. (Currently this rate is collected by the District Council but paid on to the Government.) The Chairman sought the meeting's views on this, which appeared to be generally favourable, although it was queried whether this would simply result in the amount payable being raised by an equivalent amount.

The Chairman told the meeting that continuing efforts were being made to get better screening for the **Sewage Works** which were an unsightly blot. Recently Friends of the Lake District had sent a representative to assist in discussions with UU. Some new proposals had been put forward.

MRWS The proposal to consider having a nuclear waste disposal facility in West Cumbria had appeared to recede following the decision by Cumbria CC to reject this process in January 2013. However there are now signs that the idea is creeping back. Government proposals sent out for consultation suggest that those who objected to considering the facility might now be removed from the decision making process. Also the primacy of the test of geological suitability was now being replaced by the idea of providing total manufactured barrier systems.

Broadband The Chairman thanked Maggie Climie for representing the parish in discussions with BT and Cumbria CC. It appeared that the majority of the parish would receive good broadband reception by October 2015, but there was uncertainty about some remote areas.

Oil Consortium The chairman paid tribute to Joe Saxton who had organised this from which about 30 households were now benefiting. The scheme was working smoothly.

The Chairman concluded by thanking his fellow councillors for their help and support, the Clerk for her hard work, and the residents who had attended the meeting that night.

5. Questions and discussion

There was a discussion about speeding along the A591, and in particular the noise nuisance from motor bicycles, racing round Bassenthwaite Lake. One resident disagreed with the suggestion that it was mainly residents who speeded. There was a suggestion that the question of reducing the speed limit should be pursued, and that possibly a Speed Indicator Device (SID) could be used.

Some residents were suspicious that the extra funding for Broadband speed shortfalls might be lost in view of the short interval between the intended roll-out (October 2015) and the termination of the funding (year end 2015). The council was asked to explore what would happen.

An announcement was made about a talk on the subject of Small Scale hydro projects.

6. First Responders in Underskiddaw

Tony Gibbs explained that the First Responders Scheme is run by the Ambulance Service, who train volunteers in life-saving skills, and they are called on to go to help at an emergency and hold the fort until the ambulance can get there. Up to now Underskiddaw had relied on Keswick First Responders, but now a parish resident, John Crosbie, is being trained, and will become active when the administrative process is complete. It is not yet certain where the defibrillator will be kept.

7. Alan Bowness Member of Cumbria County Council

Mr Bowness explained that he had 17 parish council in his ward and he was therefore unable to get to as many parish council meetings as he would like. That evening he had come from the Bassenthwaite APM. He was aware of the problem with the white line and had reported it twice – now that he knew it had still not been dealt with he would report it again. He would also go and look at the problem at the end of Applethwaite Lane. He was always available to help whenever he could.

8. Invited Speaker – James Spedding of Mirehouse

The chairman invited Mr Spedding to speak on his chosen topic – The Mirehouse Estate, present and future.

Mr Spedding described the Mirehouse Estate and its assets, and referred to the effects of specific plans for the next 5 to 10 years,(the Forest Plan and the Heritage Plan). He looked into the future, where challenges included the problem of how to develop Applethwaite Farm in the best way; the expense which the Estate would incur as the National Park has withdrawn from an agreement to maintain permissive paths of which there are many on the Estate; the impact of tree disease; and the likely disruption from a new water pipe line which could be laid through the parish.

{A more detailed summary is given in an Appendix to these Minutes as it is of considerable interest to the Parish}

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.30 and refreshments were served.

APPENDIX I

Present : Jim Wilson (Chairman), Alan Bowness (Cumbria CC member), Councillor Betty Bulman, Mike Bulman, Councillor Chris Corder, Dr Tom Donaldson, Councillor Marion Fitzgerald; Councillor Tony Gibbs, Ian Hall, Rosemary and Barry Healey, Edith Helme, Councillor Karen Hind, Steve and Jennifer Holliday, Clyde Mitchell, Harriet Sainsbury, James Spedding (Speaker) John Wood.

Apologies : David Bateman, Bill and Alison Bell, Councillor Jan Boniface, David Boniface, Jill Broucker, Maggie Climie, Margaret Corder, Alberta Donaldson, Gill and David Edmonds, Ros and David Roberts, Councillor Tom Ryan, Gail Ryan, Phil and Tina Sykes, Polly Wilson.

APPENDIX II

Mr Spedding said his talk would fall into 3 parts, first a description of the Mirehouse Estate and its assets, secondly specific plans for the next 5 to 10 years, and thirdly a more general view of the future and its challenges.

I. The Estate comprises :

1. Four farms, or former farms
 - (i) Sandhills – a tenanted farm of around 300 acres stretching from Black Moss to the South end of the Lake
 - (ii) Lonscale – a tenanted farm including fell and fields used for farming and sheepdog trials
 - (iii) Greta Bank – no longer a working farm but used as a veterinary centre and kennels
 - (iv) Applethwaite Farm – in the centre of village. The farmhouse is now let on a residential tenancy and the fields are farmed by a farmer in the parish.

2. Forest land
 - (i) at Dodd Wood which is leased to the Forestry Commission
 - (ii) the woodlands around Mirehouse
 - (iii) a juniper plantation on Lonscale Fell planted in traditional manner but beginning to be affected by disease
 - (iv) the woods on Latrigg and Brundholme, which are in hand.

3. Residential tenanted properties.

4. Mirehouse itself, where the family live, and which is open to the public at certain times.

Other people than he himself and his family had interests in the Estate. These included: 22 part time staff involved with the house and garden, and a partner at the Old Sawmill Tea Room. There were people who enjoyed the visual amenity of the landscape of Latrigg and the two public rights of way over it (from Spooney Green to the Gale Road Car Park and on up to Skiddaw, and the road across the face of Latrigg). All other footpaths on Latrigg were enjoyed by the public as permissive paths. Calvert Trust used the woods for riding and Bassenthwaite Lake for boating. There was a right of way from the Sawmill to St Bega's Church. West Cumbria orienteers came regularly, and groups sought permission to hold challenge events to raise money for their own causes. Whilst these mountain challenges raised money for charities of their own choosing they could cause disturbance particularly when held at night, and did add to the wear and tear on footpaths. The Estate did try to make some charge for use of the fells in order that money could go back into the local community.

II. Specific plans for the future. These were :

The Forest Plan, which his land agent had come to the Parish Council to explain, and Mr Spedding expressed his thanks for the positive response received from the Council. All the 280 acres of forest on Latrigg was in hand, and there was a 10 year plan for management. Some areas would be clear felled and left to regenerate. There would be a plantation of spruce and Douglas Fir. Where possible the aim was to move to continuous cover, as clear felling was not good for the landscape. The canopy would be kept open and light to encourage growth of an understorey of young trees.

In managing the forest a big problem was the fencing. It was important to fence out sheep and deer, or regeneration would not take place, and financial losses would be incurred if planted trees were destroyed. Trees would fall on the fences and let animals in, and also some deliberate damage had been experienced to the fences and to gates in order that mountain bikers could get to the steep areas which gave exciting rides. It was a challenge to maintain a balance between economic reward, ecological sustainability and public access. Roe deer were being culled, while the policy for grey squirrels was eradication.

The next stage was the felling of Aeroplane Wood, and its fencing and planting for amenity.

The Heritage Plan where the Estate had given undertakings to various public bodies relating to preservation of landscape, and the findings of a Report which showed there were areas of “outstanding scenic, scientific and historic interest”. There was an area of blanket bog of European significance and an SSSI.

III. The future generally – plans and challenges

Applethwaite Farm

The property consisted of a farmhouse, two barns and a yard with farm buildings. The Estate’s intention was only to part with the farmyard and outbuildings for development. There are frequent offers to develop and Mr Spedding is keen to do this in order to improve the look of the area, but there are difficult decisions to make to hold the balance between economic development, planning constraints and his desire to be a good neighbour. Considerations are – the number and type of dwellings, the requirement for affordability, the future management, and how any development would affect the land and buildings retained by the Estate.

Public paths on Latrigg

Paths which are rights of way are maintained by the National Park. Most paths on Latrigg are permissive and used under a long-standing agreement with the National Park from which it has now unfortunately withdrawn and that stands to end next year. This means the burden of maintenance will fall on the Estate unless a new arrangement can be struck : as Mr Spedding hopes may be possible.

Tree disease

The impact of Larch disease (which also affects junipers), and Ash die-back are sad and far-reaching. There is a big threat here, and ash is no longer being planted. The management of the end of ash cover on the land is going to be costly.

New water pipeline

This would inevitably come and would affect the land under which it was laid, although the route is not yet known.