



SEDGWICK PARISH COUNCIL

PARISH NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2021



Signs of Spring - at last. Daffodils along the towpath

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter and your invitation to attend our Remote Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting gives the Parish Council the opportunity to explain what it has achieved over the last year and gives you, the electors, the chance to have your say or ask questions about local issues. We use the meeting to learn about what you think are the most important parish priorities and through this, the outcome of the meeting helps shape our agenda for the future.

Last year's meeting was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic and although lockdown restrictions are still in place, this year's meeting, just like our monthly Council Meetings, will take place virtually.

Residents can attend this remote meeting using the free online platform Zoom or by phonenumber.

NOTICE OF THE SEDGWICK PARISH COUNCIL'S VIRTUAL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

To be held in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972

Wednesday 17th March 2021 at 7.30pm

A G E N D A

1. Welcome and Introduction
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of the 2019 Parish Meeting
4. Councillors' Reports
5. Reports from Village Organisations
6. Lancaster Kendal Cycle Path proposals
7. Questions and Future Priorities

If residents would like to attend the meeting, please contact the Parish Clerk for details and a link to the meeting, before 5pm on the day of the meeting. Please submit any questions or comments in advance to the Parish Clerk before Friday 12th March.

OUR ANNUAL PARISH REVIEW 2020-21

The past year has been profoundly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the Council have continued to work hard to represent residents and manage the amenities we are responsible for. Since April, we have met virtually each month in what now is beginning to feel like a "new normal".

Over the past year, we have been sorry to say goodbye to John Oscroft, David Willacy and Richard Gill as they have retired from the Council. We thank them profoundly for their work as Councillors. We have welcomed Bernie Tatham and Andrea Holmes to the Council and at the time of writing, are about to appoint a third member to complete our complement of 6 members. **Attendance rates** are currently running at 100%.

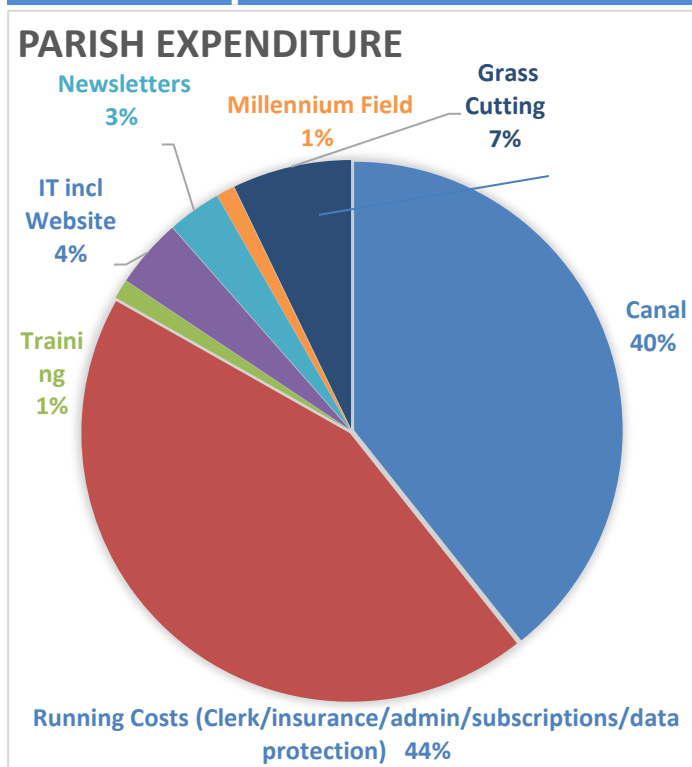
High on each of our meeting's agenda, has been our response to the pandemic. In early March 2020, we formed a **Neighbourhood Resilience Group** which, thanks to our wonderful band of volunteers was up and running before the country went into the first lockdown. We have been able to coordinate efforts to support all those who requested it and are extremely grateful to all those who volunteered and are still offering support.

The **Millennium Field** had to close during the first national lockdown, but we were able to comply with government guidelines and reopen it as soon as it was possible to do so. It has provided a vital, well used and much appreciated amenity since then. Our adult outdoor gym equipment is currently closed to comply with the January 5th restrictions. We have replaced the old picnic tables.

The **Canal Wildlife Area** has been more popular than ever, especially during national lockdowns and has provided a peaceful place to walk and enjoy the ever-diversifying flora and fauna. As the wetland habitat establishes, we are seeing more new species and already the spring bulbs are looking stronger and more numerous than ever. We have had to fell a significant number of ash trees as they have succumbed to Ash Die Back Disease and would have posed a hazard if left. Our woodland management consultant continues to inspect the woodland regularly.

Highways issues take up a significant amount of our time. Repairs have been carried out along Well Heads Lane, Crosscrake Road and by the river and all faults are logged with the County Council. Our campaign for better signage at the Aqueduct, Carex Farm crossroads and along Back Lane, where the footpath crosses the road, have all been successful and we await county contractors to carry out work. Our request for a 20mph speed limit in the village has been refused again, but we will continue to press for this much needed safety measure. We have opted into an SLDC scheme to improve local roads so they become safer routes for both cyclists and pedestrians. We urge residents to report any incidents to the police, ensuring there is a crime number allocated, as statistics seem to drive crucial safety decisions.

Financial Report 2020-21



Only 189 properties in Sedgwick contribute to our Parish income via the Parish Precept component of the SLDC Council Tax, (the lowest in the last 5 years), so we have a relatively small income to cover our running costs and maintain our invaluable village amenities. We have been able to make some savings because of the pandemic, but this has been offset by extra costs required to keep the Millennium Field open safely and enable us to hold virtual meetings. The chart shows how we have prioritised our expenditure. A significant cost this year has been the felling of trees that have succumbed to Ash Die Back Disease. Despite this unavoidable expenditure, we expect to finish the financial year with a small working contingency and our reserve fund which safeguards the long-term future of the Millennium Field and Canal Wildlife Area remains intact. We expect finances will remain extremely tight in the foreseeable future.

Draft accounts for the year will be available on the website prior to the Parish Meeting.



In October, our virtual meeting welcomed Jack Ellerby, from the **Cumbria Darker Skies** initiative and we are happy to support the scheme. We have published information and guidance on our website and urge all residents to find out more about the issue <https://www.sedgwickparishcouncil.org.uk/darker-skies-cumbria.html>



We also continue to work to comply with all **Data Protection Regulations, and financial** requirements and maintain our popular **website**. We have continued to be involved in the local **planning process** and have also attended a range of online **training and consultation events**, including those regarding the proposed changes to a new **unitary authority** which would replace SLDC and CCC. Finally, we have continued to oversee the **Sedgwick No Cold Calling Zone** to deter unwanted visitors and have updated the **Community Emergency Plan** which would help the community respond to a local crisis.

None of the Council's achievements would be possible without the contribution made by our brilliant team of Councillors, who give their time and expertise so generously and work so hard for the Parish and I would like to thank them on your behalf. Special thanks go to Gerry Stoker our Millennium Field Officer who keeps the area in such great condition and to Sylvia Roberts, our dedicated and hard-working Parish Clerk.

Boyan Holmes

Chairman of Sedgwick Parish Council

IMPORTANT NEWS

In February, the **Lancaster Canal Regeneration Partnership** (LCRP) invited Council members to a consultation meeting, because the proposal to transform the whole of the **Lancaster to Kendal Towpath** (including the section owned by the Council) into a multi-user cycle path is once again on the table and they hope it will become a reality within the next 6 years. In 2018, after we voiced significant opposition from residents to the plan, we were given assurances by LCRP that the very narrow section of path along the council-owned land in Sedgwick would not be included in the plan. We were told that the proposed route would follow the existing bridleway along the river and one of the existing 4 cycle paths in the Parish. Since then, we have continued to work with the LCRP in good faith and invest in the wildlife area. We also actively support several local initiatives to make our roads safer for both cyclists and pedestrians which would benefit residents and visitors.

However, the revived plan, which contrary to the assurances we were given, does include the Sedgwick section, has now entered an early consultation stage. Under the plan, the narrow, elevated towpath and access paths would be widened and altered so they are made accessible to all, to bring about much wider use, especially by walkers and "leisure" cyclists. Use by commuter and fast cyclists would be not be encouraged or permitted and would be prevented, in theory, by the installation of chicanes, barriers, gates and other speed calming measures. The use of the path however, would not be policed.

Especially during lockdown, we know that many residents have appreciated being able to walk along the canal, in peace, away from all traffic and we were able to voice those views along with residents' original concerns about the plan, during our consultation meeting. We explained how after the Parish purchased the canal in 1980, residents transformed it from an unsightly rubbish dump to a wildlife area and how, in the intervening 40 years, a significant amount of residents' money given via the Parish precept has been invested in maintaining the high-quality amenity. We also explained how the existing levels of tension and conflict between cyclists and pedestrians on our local lanes and paths is a significant concern to residents. We expressed concern that the widening of the towpath to between 2m and 3.5m (which would require the total removal of the grass verges in many places), the installation of cyclist calming measures and the upgrading of the access paths along Back Lane, would be an inappropriate and unwelcome urbanisation of the area. It would significantly harm visual aspects of both the towpath and the centre of the village. The measures would also disturb and damage the canal habitat by removing verges and shrubs. If the plan goes ahead, and user numbers increase as expected, the lack of parking spaces for visitors wishing to access the path in the village would make it even more difficult for residents to park near their homes. Problems caused by increased traffic and litter and changes to maintenance requirements and public liability were also raised.

We indicated that we would be reluctant to sign over the permissive rights which would be required to allow cyclists along the path and were given assurances that there is no plan to compulsory purchase the land. Despite this, the LCRP now plan to consult residents directly. Our current position is that we want to keep the parish-owned towpath as it is now, a peaceful area where walkers are welcomed and can enjoy the towpath and wildlife area, away from traffic and we would like to see all cyclists use an alternate safer and more suitable route.

We own and maintain the Canal Wildlife Area on behalf of you, the residents, so it is crucial that you make your views known both to us and the future public consultation. We have already had many comments from residents about the new plan and welcome further feedback either by email, comments on the website form, letter or by comments sent to or voiced at our Remote Annual Parish Meeting on March 17th. This feedback will supplement the comments you have already and will enable us to fully represent your views.

SEDGWICK PARISH COUNCIL CONTACTS

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Councillors:

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Gerry Stoker;
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Bernie Tanham
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Cllr. Roger Bingham 015395 63694

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Cumbria County Council

HIGHWAYS HOTLINE 0300 3032992

COUNCIL MEETINGS 2021

2nd Wednesday of every Month@ 7.30pm

10th March, 14th April, 12th May (tbc), 9th June, 14th July, 8th September,
13th October, 10th November

Residents are always welcome at meetings. Each meeting includes a Public Forum as part of the agenda for residents to ask questions, raise items of concern or simply comment on issues. Submission of questions in advance of the meeting is welcomed, so that they can be answered more fully.

Matters raised that are not included on that agenda will be considered for subsequent agendas.

Currently, meetings are held remotely due to COVID-19, on Zoom, with phone access available; to gain access, please follow the instructions on the agenda. Normal meetings will resume when guidance permits and all necessary safety measures can be put in place.



Our Website www.sedgwickparishcouncil.org.uk

Our Email sedgwick.parish@gmail.com



Find our Parish Council Page and
Neighbourhood Resilience Group on Facebook



Sedgwick
NO COLD CALLING ZONE

COLD CALLERS ARE NOT ALLOWED IN SEDGWICK!
If they call on you, contact Cumbria Police on 101 **immediately** and if possible, report them to Cumbria Trading Standards via the Citizens Advice Helpline on 03454 04 05 06

IMPORTANT EMERGENCY ADVICE

If you have to call the Emergency Services, remember to make sure they know which side of the aqueduct a vehicle is needed, because many modern appliances cannot pass under the aqueduct and the detour required is very long.

SEDGWICK

Community Emergency Plan

Sedgwick Parish Council has a Community Emergency Plan to help minimise the impact of a major local emergency on residents. In event of a major emergency, contact our Coordinator Gerry Stoker -Tel 60939