

Contact Details

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Your Parish Councillors are:

- Andrew Beeston
- Carol Blackledge
- Andrew Chanter
- Roger Clayton (Chairman)
- Diane Ingrey

All contact via the Clerk

Meetings:

Wednesday 11th March 2020
Wednesday 8th April 2020
Wednesday 13th May 2020
AGM at 6.30pm, APM at 8pm

Monthly meetings usually start at 7:30 pm in the
Cricket Club, Blaguegate Lane, Lathom.
Agenda is posted on notice boards prior to meeting.

All very welcome to come along



Newsletter

No. 26

February 2020



**See pages 10 and 11 for the details of our
Public Rights of Way Project**



Welcome to all New Residents of the Parish.

There have been several homes within the Parish which have changed hands over the past year or so but the major change has been the opening of the “Lathom Pastures” development by Bellway Homes. We extend a warm welcome to all new residents.

By Christmas (2019), around half of the Lathom Pastures development had been completed and occupied and we expect the remainder of the development to be completed by late summer of this year.

Although this Parish Council opposed elements of the **development**, its residents are now an integral part of our community and can count on our support with regard to local issues. Our contact details appear on the rear of our newsletters and we have a website which carries a wide range of information.

We operate as openly as we can, subject only to normal confidentiality standards. Our meetings are held monthly in the cricket club on Blaguegate Lane; they are open to all and there is always an early item on the agenda for residents to make (time limited) comments. As the meetings are technically for Parish Councillors to make decisions about specific items on the agenda, this item takes place during an adjournment.

We have requested TEP to obtain and manage tenders for recommended works where extensive cutting back of high foliage is required and eradication of invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed that require chemical treatment.

We have contacted landowners, (Lancashire County Council, (LCC), as an example), regarding their responsibilities to maintain paths on their land and the response has been positive with work ongoing. We are in communication with LCC regarding regular strimming of paths which have been neglected. (See front page photograph)

We have agreed a tender for strimming of Himalayan Balsam, (an invasive species that blights our footpaths), with a local contractor.

Finally one of the important aims of the project is to make paths accessible to residents with limited mobility and wheelchair and pram users, if feasible. We are considering paths suitable for surface upgrading to enable this access.

Parbold Hill

LSPC submitted an objection to the plan to re-commence landfill at the Parbold Hill site at the top of the hill. The site is not in our parish area but it is a renowned beauty spot with outstanding views. Local residents enjoy the various amenities of this site, walking, cycling or just sitting having an ice cream whilst contemplating and enjoying the view. The plan is currently under consideration by LCC. There are over 1000 objections.

Public Rights of Way Project

LSPC is undertaking a project to improve our Public Rights of Way, (PRoW), in the parish. We are funding the project from the Community Infrastructure Levy, (CIL), which is a sum of money paid by developers to a parish council, and can only be spent on capital infrastructure. Without a parish council all monies go to the borough council, a parish council gets just 15% of the money,(subject to a maximum).

LSPC commissioned a company called The Environment Partnership, (TEP), to conduct a survey of our public footpaths and recommend improvements. The survey can be seen on our website @ www.lathomsouthpc.co.uk under the "latest news" link.

The survey made a number of recommendations one of which was to improve signage of paths to aid navigation. Last month we installed a further 5 fingerposts and our very grateful thanks go to Bill Wareing and family who installed the posts with no charge for labour. This was a hard task with some difficult ground conditions. We will be installing a further 15 waymarker posts over Winter and another 2 fingerposts. Waymarker posts are simple posts with a yellow arrowhead to point you in the right direction.

TEP also recommended installing Information boards and these have been ordered and will also be installed over Winter. They will give details of routes and items of interest.

Meeting dates are set well in advance and appear on the website.

An annual meeting of the Parish is held in May, immediately following the Annual General Meeting, and it is an opportunity for residents (home owners and tenants) to advise Councillors on the future direction of business.

Now is an important time because the Local Development Plan is being formulated. This will set out areas for development across the whole Borough of West Lancashire, over a fifteen year period.

Much of the Parish area lies in Green Belt and we are committed to protecting it. However, we are not politically aligned and Councillors work together for the good of residents generally.

**Please check out the Parish Council Website
at
www.lathomsouthpc.co.uk**

Further Development on Firswood Road

Most of the area of land between Neverstitch Road, Firswood Road, Slate Lane and Blaguegate Lane was released in 2013 for housing development. This was allowed on the basis that landowners of 97% of the developable area were committed to working together to produce a coherent overall scheme.

In 2014, the Borough Council produced a development brief which was intended to guide developers to follow an overall plan for the site. Part of that brief set out arrangements which required **about 75% of the new homes to be accessed from Neverstitch Road**. There was to be no “rat run” through to Firswood Road. The area south of the railway bridge was envisaged as the first part of the development, with preference for access from Blaguegate Lane. Only if no other access proved to be achievable was there to be a **one** minor access from Firswood Road and that was to be south of the old railway bridge.

In 2016, Bellway Homes produced a plan to build 94 homes with an access from Firswood Road. This (just) complied with the brief in general terms but we objected to some points which would make life unnecessarily awkward for existing and for new residents. We (the Parish Council) could not have objected to development in principle, even if we had wanted to do so.

Financial Matters—Parish Precept

Recent correspondence with WLBC revealed that only properties that had been occupied on 1st December 2018 had been counted by WLBC towards the 2019/20 “tax base” (the “Band D” equivalent of all *occupied* domestic properties) for the Parish.

This has meant that the increased precept for 2019/20 has been concentrated on properties that were occupied on that date. Receipts collected as “Lathom South” from new properties occupied after that date (including Bellway’s ‘Lathom Pastures’ development) ended up as a “surplus” retained by the Borough Council, rather than being passed on to the Parish Council. This made it very important for us to establish a realistic tax base for the 2020/21 tax year.

We supplied up to date information about the number of properties occupied on the Lathom Pastures estate on 1st December 2019 to the Borough Council and we projected that number to the financial year end. The Borough Council has increased the tax base from 310 to 369 and we have set the precept for 2020/21 accordingly. The result is that the 10% increase reported (*per Band D property*), for 2019/20 will be followed by a reduction for 2020/21 of around 8%. Actual cash collected will rise slightly to take account of increased costs and responsibilities but it will be spread more fairly, without so much money being retained by the Borough Council.

They progressed to Slate Lane and saw some fine oaks. Walkers went across open ground to the line of the former mineral railway which ran from Skelmersdale. to the colliery (at various times called the Arley Pit, Blaguegate Colliery and Tuppenny Pit). It's now a public footpath which requires some clearance work.

They passed the Old Engine Pit site with the later sand-washing reservoir, (now duck pond), then along Firswood Road which has one of the two remaining railway bridges on the former Ormskirk - Skelmersdale line.

Then on to halfpenny Lane, also recently trimmed, (it had been classic machete country), across Lyelake Lane, along FP15, past Goose Brook and passing nine of the labelled tree species. Then because time was getting short they returned via Whiteleys Lane and back up Plough Lane to the Plough for very welcome refreshment.

The walk took about 3 hours and was 5.8 miles. Andrew commented that "It was a pleasure to have such a wide range of walkers, members from LSPC, U3A, Lathom Park Chapel and Ormskirk Parish Church". LSPC would like to encourage more residents to join us for the next walk, later this year. Once decided the date will be displayed on the noticeboards. By that time the work being undertaken to improve our public rights of way should be making big improvements.

Anyone living on Firswood Road, or using it regularly, knows its limitations and hazards only too well – narrow or non-existent pavements, road which varies significantly in width (down to only 4 metres), dangerous bend on a 60mph stretch, blind and narrow railway bridge, with one very narrow pavement and very awkward end junctions with Blaguegate Lane and Spa Lane.

Instead of treating the access for new properties as fully utilised by the Bellway (Lathom Pastures) development, as the development brief sets out, in November 2019 the Highway Authority (Lancashire County Council, LCC) and the Borough Council (WLBC) agreed plans for **another** 130 homes (**in total 56%**) to be accessed off Firswood Road, leaving only 176 (**44%**) to use Neverstitch Road. They have not even provided for safety measures to be taken to mitigate the road safety hazards, other than immediately adjacent to the proposed site entrance. We expressed our complete opposition to this plan but we have been powerless to stop it. The new homes will be built by Wainhomes once “reserved matters” (i.e. everything except access) have been approved. Residents of the Bellway homes might reflect that they have been duped by the Council into thinking that they will have relatively safe access to their homes. Residents of older homes will feel seriously let down by the two Councils (WLBC & LCC), unable to trust anything they say.

Edge Hill University Car Parking

The university had a major extension into Green Belt approved in 2012 for sporting facilities. At the same time, permanent car parking within the campus was increased substantially.

At various times since then, senior managers at the university have been engaging in moves to develop further car parking within the area of the sports facilities. At first, this policy resulted in the laying of rubber matting on grassed areas for restricted periods. However, this progressed into widening and surfacing of the trim trail with tarmac, with passing points, to take vehicles onto the grass. This would enable the more or less permanent parking of cars on grassed areas.

From 2012, the university had carried out substantial development of student accommodation on the campus and also the number of students studying at Edge Hill had reduced substantially, both of which should have reduced the demand for car parking.

Finally, under enforcement pressures, a planning application was made to retain the changes that had been made and to treat car parking as approved over long periods of the year. Following the pattern of previous “temporary” car parking provision being made permanent, we took the view that the application had to be resisted.

Other representative bodies took the same view and the application was listed for hearing at the Borough Council’s October 2019 Planning

Committee meeting. The officers recommended refusal and so, on the day of the meeting, the university withdrew its application.

The residents of Scarth Hill Lane who live next to the sports fields have had to endure significant disruption from events linked to Edge Hill over many years, so this was a welcome decision tinged with suspicion about the university’s Intentions.

The offending changes to the trim trail and car parking on the fields have yet to be reversed.

LSPC Walk August Bank Holiday 2019

Ten residents plus a dog, took part in a walk led by Andrew Beeston starting off from the Plough pub on August Bank Holiday. The route walk was designed to view the trees labelled by Andrew, our tree warden.

Walkers headed off across a field and footpath to Moss Cottages and then via FP 22,(recently strimmed for us otherwise blocked by impenetrable bracken), to Firwood Road.

*** continued overleaf***