

**Blanchland Annual Parish Meeting
Held in the
Village Hall on May 24th 2017**

Present Councillors, M Kennedy, S Graham, T Bowers, M Forster, clerk A Ellison plus 22 members of the public

Apologies: Councillor C Horncastle, Mr J Patterson
The minutes of the previous meeting on 19th May 2016 were approved

There were no matters arising

Chairman's report

I would firstly like to thank you for coming. We would like to thank John Patterson, who has stepped down as a councillor due to ill health. He has been a councillor for 14 years, took great pride in the village and has served us well. We continue to have discussions with NCC over various issues. We are hoping to get the verges along Baybridge Road cleared as well as some of the overhanging trees removed.

We are adding repair to Shildon Road footpath to the next LTP (local transport plan).

We have placed notices around the playing field with regard to dog dirt but there does not appear to be any improvement.

Small notices were placed around The Square with regard to parking causing obstruction without success. We will discuss this further at question time.

We will know later in the year if the bus service to Hexham is being withdrawn. We have been working with Slaley Parish Council on this matter.

All our minutes and agendas are available on line. Go to blanchland.org website, click parish council and the information is there.

Any issues you wish to be brought up at the regular meetings to be given to the clerk at least two weeks beforehand as they must be on the agenda to be discussed.

Report from Mr M Orde for Lord Crewe's Charity

Mr Orde commented that many of the current matters were topics mentioned last year. The Hotel's staff accommodation would shortly be moving into the old Deli in The Square when the current works are complete. The current staff accommodation at Baybridge would then be advertised to let as a residential property.

The Gatehouse and Post Office Cottage have been renovated to create additional facilities for the Hotel, including space for their offices which were previously situated in the old Deli.

Lord Crewe's Charity was established nearly 300 years ago and as mentioned last year the Trustees are beginning to think about ways to mark the tercentenary (in 4 years' time). If there are suggestions from the Blanchland community, these should be referred to Mr Orde.

The modernisation of the estate's housing stock continues, with refurbishments taking place between tenancies.

Surveys have been completed to identify ways to improve energy efficiency to the extent that this is consistent with good conservation. The majority of the appropriate works recommended consist of improvements to heating systems, and works will be undertaken this year and next at several properties that have poor energy efficiency ratings.

Whilst a new use for the derelict Baybridge Road Byres has not yet been decided, the structure will be stabilised and the roof replaced this summer to prevent its condition from deteriorating even further as well as preparing it for a future use.

As the reliability of the village wide television system was worsening badly through 2016 due to the deteriorating underground cabling struggling to transmit the increasing number of channels now available. Having considered various options numerous smaller satellite based systems have been installed, with satellite dishes being located to minimise their visual impact and freesat boxes being supplied providing over 200 channels.

A telephone mast has been installed near Cowbyers Farm by EE, providing mobile phone reception to the village and surrounding areas.

Report from County Councillor Colin Horncastle

As he was unable to attend this is a verbal report taken over the phone.

County Hall is definitely not moving.

Area planning is returning immediately.

NCC is bringing back District Officers. Hexham office will re-open as soon as a building is found.

Delegated budget will be decided by local members.

Blanchland Community Development Organisation (BCDO) Annual Report 2016-7

The BCDO met seven times during the year.

Our agendas have been dominated by the following items:

- Our main achievement, perhaps, has been to restore publication of Parish Post. This comes with a small grant from the Weardale Community Action Partnership, but the BCDOs own money has also subsidised the publication. Louise Bartholdi has helped me to edit it and we would be grateful for more volunteers to swell our 'team'.
- We have continued to be an effective forum for community concerns and have monitored many small, but significant initiatives including the maintenance of highways, especially the removal of dangerous, overhanging vegetation; the state of footpaths; the need for mobile phone coverage; the television system in the village and the appearances and maintenance of the principle buildings in the village.
- Most significantly, we have served as a bridge between the community and the Lorde Crewe Charity Trustees. This also followed the biennial meeting of trustees and tenants, which we helped to organise. Several issues of deep concern to tenants have been addressed and we feel that new and helpful lines of communication have been opened.
- We have worked with the Northumbria Dry Stone Walling Association to arrange a major training project in the village and to restore the wall bordering the Sports Field, beside the river.
- We have worked with the Lord Crewe Estate to restore the information boards in the main car park
- We have begun a potentially far-reaching project far-reaching to enhance the tourist appeal of the village including new display and interpretation boards, in association with Inspired North East and Historic England. We hope the project will draw members of the community in as volunteers.
- We have discussed, at length, the thorny issue of obstructive and inconsiderate parking in the village.
- We have submitted a detailed application for Blanchland to appear in the television series: Village of the Year.
- We provided the Christmas tree and lights and organised the singing of carols and refreshments afterwards.

I would like, once again, to put on record my grateful thanks to George Ellison for his work as secretary, to all my fellow the directors of the organisation and to Tommy Mark who has stepped down as a director. We very much hope that there will continue to be a regular representation at our meetings by a senior member of staff from the Lord Crewe Arms.

Helen Savage
May 2017

Questions:

Comments were made from the floor expressing concerns about the new television system, in particular:

- That Freeview is no longer available
- That terrestrial channels will no longer be available in the event of system failure
- That the satellite dishes are not discrete enough and spoil the appearance of the village
- That systems are powered by connections to cottage electricity, which is not only a concern to the occupiers, but could cause power interruption during tenancy voids
- Installation of satellite dishes causes a precedent that could cause future increases in numbers
- Wires installed under gutters are unsightly
- No explanation has been provided as to how the system works

Mr Orde noted all the comments and undertook to review these comments to see what improvements could be achieved.

It was pointed out that the mounting block by the Baybridge properties had been dismantled some years ago. As the stones are still on site, it was requested that the mounting block should be rebuilt.

Concern was expressed from the floor that the outside lights on The Gatehouse were out of keeping with the property. Mr Orde confirmed that these had been approved as part of the discussions with the Conservation Officer.

Concern was expressed that there was no signage or other restraint on overnight parking in the top car park, which Mr Orde agreed to look into.

We have had several complaints with cars parking in the Square causing obstructions and one of the latest was read out. Yellow lines bring their own problems, however we are hoping that someone from NCC will come to the village and let us know the best way to try and solve this. We will then have an open meeting so that residents will be informed before a final decision is made.

No further questions.
Meeting closed at 8.15pm.