

Chairman's Report 2015

As re-elected Chair of Staveley-in-Cartmel Parish Council, it is again my duty and privilege to record the work done by the Council over the past year.

An ongoing requirement of the Council is to scrutinise and comment on the large number of planning applications submitted to the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) each year. While the presumption in development control is usually to support proposals, the Council must also look at the wider community view and try to strike a balance between these occasionally competing interests. A few particularly contentious applications have appeared before the Council this year, perhaps the most notable being that concerning the cheetah enclosure in Ayside. The LDNPA endorsed the Council's opinion that the application should be refused. The outcome of an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate is now awaited. Other proposals included the replacement of existing small bungalows by large two-storey houses, both of which were opposed by the Council. One of these was given permission and the other rejected after an appeal. Sadly, the former stance of requiring specific local need to be identified before granting new housing permissions has been seriously weakened by a recent LDNPA policy statement. The Council believes this to be a serious mistake which could lead to unwelcome speculative housing development within the National Park.

The Council is partway through the process of preparing a Community Plan for the Parish. A questionnaire survey was delivered to every household during the year and a very gratifying response of nearly 50% returned forms has been achieved. The replies are now being collated and will inform policy and recommendations that the Council puts forward in its published Plan. The fact that nearly half the households in the Parish have had a direct involvement in the Plan should help to give it the credibility often criticised as lacking in similar documents.

Environmental issues remain very important to the Council. The Parish Lengthsman works on improving and tidying roadside verges and footpaths. The County Highways Department is regularly pressed by the Council to maintain and repair roads and drains in the Parish. I am pleased to report that the flooding issue in the centre of Staveley has now been resolved. The bus shelters in Newby Bridge and the four Parish notice boards have been cleaned and re-varnished. A planting scheme for the Newby Bridge roundabout prepared by award-winning garden designer Richard Lucas has recently been submitted to the Highways Agency for its consideration. The Council remains grateful to the Lakeside Hotel owners and staff for their sponsorship of this scheme.

Extra costs associated with distributing, returning and processing the Community Plan questionnaires has necessitated an increase to the 2015/16 precept. The Council has otherwise kept this as low as possible and in line with other public bodies. Nevertheless, it is still possible to support local organisations and charities with small grants and awards.

Together with an independent local resident, two Councillors and the Clerk administer the business of the Staveley United Charities Trust. Set up originally for the provision of small grants to Parishioners in financial hardship and to support apprenticeships, Trustees recently widened the scope of awards to include educational requests. Two Christmas gifts and three grants to students have been made this year.

The Council continues to send a representative to Local Area Partnership meetings to both fight its corner and to report back on the work of neighbouring and surrounding councils. The two local Church magazines receive regular reports of Council business. Council meetings are informed by reports from County Councillor Rod Wilson, District Councillor Sue Sanderson and Police Community Support Officer Howard Firth and, on the Council's behalf, I offer them my thanks.

As in previous years, I conclude by thanking my fellow Parish Councillors, Dot Crabtree, John Addison, Margaret Lealman-Howden and Arnold Gorse for their support and hard work. Lastly, but by no means least, I also thank Clerk Sarah Shires for her efficient management and organisation of Council business.