

Chairman's address 2017

I would like to start by thanking my fellow councillors and clerk for their support. I am particularly indebted to Jane for keeping me straight on procedural issues, and I am grateful to councillors who have volunteered for attending other meetings or working on other issues affecting the parish.

I would also like to thank District Councillor Annie Rawlinson and County Councillor Jim Bland for their attendance at our meetings, despite, in Jim's case, significant health problems.

The most important event to happen in the past year was the accession of the greater part of the parish into the Lake District National Park on August 1st. The most visible effect of this is that planning decisions for this part of the parish are now taken by LDNPA instead of SLDC. LDNPA has also taken over from the County Council responsibility for footpath maintenance and the Parish Council will continue to work with them on this.

From the Parish Council's point of view, probably the biggest workload has been the preparation of the Community Led Plan, of which you will hear more later in this meeting. This has involved a huge amount of work, and I am very grateful to Cllrs Carman, Seddon and others, too numerous to mention, for their efforts. The Plan has already proved its usefulness in being used as the basis for our response to SLDC's Development Planning Document.

The issue of drainage of the Lyth Valley, which proved so controversial last year, has largely dropped off the radar for the time being. An amendment to the 1991 Land Drainage Act is being sought to change the base on which land values are calculated, and further proposals will be put forward in 2019.

The hot topic this year has been the planning application by the CLT to build 8 houses, of which 5 were to be "affordable" on the site next to the Village Hall. At a well-attended Extraordinary PC meeting in August, members of the public were strongly opposed. The Parish Council, although in favour of more affordable housing, felt the site, and the scale of the development, were not appropriate and voted against. Disappointment was expressed that no-one from the CLT was present to give their side of the story. The LDNPA was also unhappy with aspects of the proposal, and we await further news.

Apart from the question of housing, the main concern of local residents appears to have been road safety. Concerns remain about the speed of vehicles through Brigsteer and in particular down Brigsteer Brow. There was a serious collision near the Wheatsheaf in May last year, and there have been other less serious incidents, but we have so far been unable to gain any support from Cumbria Highways to improve matters.

Vehicle damage to buildings has also been an issue, and here we have been slightly more successful, with the erection of "unsuitable for HGVs" notices on Low Lane.

Finally some good news! High speed fibre broadband has finally arrived in Brigsteer, and, by some quirk of the technology, we are privileged to have fibre to the premises, which gives much higher speeds than fibre to the cabinet. Unfortunately the Parish Council can't claim any credit for this, but it's encouraging to see that some things do happen eventually!