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Member: Jennie Beaumont
Member: Jenny Smith
Member: Alistair McClee
Member: Damian Hadfield
Member: Andy Alton
Member: Terry Collins



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Kirkcommunity@gmail.com
www.kirkcommunity.co.uk

Kirklevington and Castle Levington Parish Council

Annual Report of the Chairman

May 2022 – May 2023

So many things have happened in the village in the past year, it is hard to remember them all until I start to write them down, then I realise how lucky we are to live here. Last year we were very fortunate to have Forest Lane resurfaced, there was a concern at the time that with all the potholes filled; vehicles would increase their speed, having reviewed the traffic data from the junction of Pump Lane\Forest Lane we can see that 1.76% of vehicles sped along Forest Lane between May 2022-> April 2023 - versus 1.89% between the same period 2021 -> 2022 (-0.13%) so it has in effect reduced speeds, this is also based on an increased vehicle count of 369,364 in 21/22 versus 390,126 in 22/23 (+5.6%). Please note that this only captures traffic information from eastbound traffic along Forest Lane and does not include anything from Highgrove, Jasmine Fields, or Springfield Grove.

At the time of writing the Website visitor count is 19,460 against ~11,000 this time last year; we have seen an increase of over 8,000 visitors. Our Facebook page which is moderated by a number of different KPC Admins needed to be opened up to the public (due to GDPR concerns we could no longer ask people to verify themselves by providing an address). We now have 563 members. I am still concerned however that we do not have a robust method of disseminating news out to residents quickly, whilst Facebook is great; and has helped us massively, it does not reach everyone, nor do posters or in some cases even mailshots. As a Parish Council I would like us to review what other options we have available, and ideally, the way Facebook works from a regulatory point of view as being 'open' means we cannot safely advertise events publicly.

The Kirklevington to Conyers\Yarm\Stockton Number 7 Arriva bus service successfully began on 30th October 2022 after a couple of teething issues (not picking up school kids at a stop, and concerns around dwelling locations) things do seem to have settled down and the service is being used albeit largely by the school children heading to Conyers.

The Story's development has now reached 80% sold with very nearly 100 houses actually occupied to date. Relationships between us and the builder are good and amicable, and they have recently provided a dog waste bin on their green ahead of time to help combat the 'fouling' issues.

We have had verbal confirmation from SBC about dropping their plans to make Pump Lane 2 way to the south of the church as to enable traffic to flow fully both clockwise and anti-clockwise

around St Martins Green. We are also still campaigning for the double yellow lines on Pump Lane between the Village Hall and the Church's southern entrance in an attempt to help alleviate dangerous and disrespectful parking (this may also influence the 2-way discussion further).

There have been many changes in the playground with the provision of a new 3m Christmas tree, 6m Flagpole ordered to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III and also the installation of exercise equipment for all ages, (thanks to a generous match funded grant from the William Hall Trust).

Last year we celebrated the Queens jubilee, sadly she passed away on September 8th which led to the recent coronation of King Charles III. On the 7th May we have planned numerous events in the village in honour of the coronation – hopefully the weather stays dry for us.

As is respectfully customary we remembered those that fell during the war in a dedicated remembrance service – Rev Kate Brown wrote, “Thank you to everyone who came to support the Service of Remembrance and laying of wreaths at St Martin's on Sunday. It's wonderful to see people coming together as 'community' on these occasions. It was great to also have the Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, and Guides with us. £710 will be sent to The Royal British Legion from our service and the one held in Worsall. Thank you for your generosity. It is going to an excellent charity.”

In the November we once again ran the Halloween trail, each year it seems to grow in size and popularity (often from people outside the village) there were around 100 people pounding the streets that night collecting sweets and voting on their favourite display. There have been some concerns that the 'competition' element of the evening is putting some people off and it has been suggested that this year we leave it open and not promote it as a competition at all.

We would like to say a HUGE thank-you to Andy Alton and Jennie Beaumont for their contributions to the Parish Council over the years, both have decided to step down due to other commitments. We greatly appreciate everything they have done for us all.

Last May 16th saw the public right of way around the south side of the school receive a new public footpath to allow for the installation of drainage to fix the historic surface water run off issues (thanks to our local ward councillors for their financial support here). Whilst the feedback was initially mixed due to the surface being very sandy and unsuitable in the wet weather, it does seem to have settled down a bit and is firmer underfoot when dry.

Parish newsletters continue to be published and distributed every three months as planned, following on from last year's comments, we now only circulate a 'Village Newsletter' within the village itself and tailor the deliveries around upcoming events wherever possible, we do have a great team of helpers who deliver leaflets and their help is greatly appreciated.

There was much talk last year about the realignment of the ward boundaries, many getting concerned that the actual legal Parish boundaries were changing – instead it was concluded that the WARD boundaries will be changed so that an additional ward councillor could be elected to cover a newly created 'Southern Villages' ward which includes Kirklevington, Maltby and Hilton. This is nothing to do with the ACTUAL historical Parish boundaries – merely an admin grouping to allocate the right number of councillors per residents' ratio. Elsie Hampton (Conservative Party) was elected in to this position on May 4th.

On the subject of local ward councillor support – it would be remiss of me to not pass on a huge thank-you to Andrew Sherris, not just from myself and the Parish Council but from every resident in the village, as part of the above ward boundary realignment Andrew now supports Yarm not Kirklevington and will be stepping back from supporting us directly. Andrew has been a pillar for us and guided us through many obstacles in SBC, his help, guidance, and support have been invaluable.

I am sure our paths will still continue to cross as the Theakston's application for 300x houses was approved and Duchy will begin work south of Yarm playing fields very soon – we know the traffic and construction work will become horrific and once Yarm School build their playing fields and bridge over the River Tees they will no longer have a need for the playing fields here and they are likely to become even more housing. I am sure we will be supporting each other throughout this.

This coming year's Kirkfest is scheduled to be held on the weekend of 24/25th June – this date has been selected specifically so the children are still at school and therefore not likely to be on holidays and miss the events. We are in discussions with the school to see if we can work together on this event as done in previous years and open up the school to new visitors and families. We intend to run the Scarecrow event this same weekend. No specific theme and no competition entry is required this time as we want to make it as easy as possible for people to get involved – simply create your own scarecrow and leave it on display that weekend for all to see – more details to follow in due course.

The biggest issue that the village has right now is the incessant flow of construction vehicles thundering through our village towards the Taylor Wimpey site. The builders have shown a blatant disregard to the rules and conditions placed on them and we are powerless to do anything about it. They consistently, speed, violate their permitted vehicle movement times (CTMP), working hours and adherence to plans to suit themselves. They have constructed a SuDS basin that must contain thousands of cubic meters of water (hundreds of thousands of gallons) right behind existing homes. This suds excavation is on the site of a natural aquifer spring and will therefore never drain away, it is resulting in dozens of 40 tonne tankers having to pump and transport the water elsewhere to prevent flooding. This construction is of a growing concern to all residents and has been escalated to the very top of SBC and discussions are slowly ongoing but given they don't have a planning enforcement team any more there is little they can\will done. Our relationship with this builder is very poor due to their aggressive and cavalier attitude. Most if the construction traffic could be avoided if the builder adopted the alternative access road (noting Story have almost finished there) but TW were unwilling to pay for the road extension when they have an approved access through the village available for free.

A big thank-you to all members of the Parish council for their continued involvement and to specifically to Ruth Mazonas who works tirelessly behind the scenes as clerk and responsible financial officer to the Parish council. I would further like to thank the William Hall Trust for their continued support and grants towards the play area; also, I would like to acknowledge the great work of our litter pickers in the Parish, local historians and the many people who take time to trim the grass verges, water the plants, tidy up after disrespectful dog owner etc. So much goes on silently behind the scenes – it is all duly noted and appreciated by everyone.