

SELLACK PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 22nd MARCH 2023 AT 7.15pm IN SELLACK VILLAGE HALL

Present: Cllrs Mark Whittal, Sarah Aitken, Mark Robinson and Nick Washington.

In attendance: Claire Vaughan (Clerk) and 9 residents (2 for part of the meeting only).

Before the meeting commenced, the Chairman advised those present that this was the Annual Parish meeting, which is separate to the Annual meeting of the Parish Council, which would take place in May.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Paul Franklin

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting, held on Wednesday 10th May 2022 were read, agreed and signed as correct.

3. ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL 2022-23

3.1 Chairman's Report (Cllr Mark Whittal)

'This year has been fairly similar to previous years with the usual items on the agenda to manage throughout the Parish, such as Backney Bridge Picnic Site, footpaths and drainage maintenance. The Parish Council aims to manage everything within the Parish cost effectively to the benefit of the community.

Backney Bridge Picnic Site is the Council's main asset, which is currently having a maintenance management plan put together to ensure the upkeep of the site, and that it is also a safe environment for all visitors to enjoy. Thank you to all volunteers who have attended the maintenance working days, your support is much appreciated.

Last summer the Parish Council published its first newsletter, and has just delivered the winter newsletter to all residents in the Parish. As well as having the website and Facebook for the local community to find out what is going on, the newsletters will hopefully be a successful way of keeping everyone informed of the activities carried out by the Parish Council.

I would like to thank all of my Co-Councillors, Cllr. Aitken, Cllr. Robinson, Cllr. Washington and Cllr. Franklin for all their time and contribution to the Council during the past year. Many thanks to Cllr. Robinson, the footpaths officer, for walking all the footpaths and organising the maintenance accordingly.

I would like to thank our Clerk, Claire Vaughn, for all her hard work involved with the administration and organisation of Sellack Parish Council.

I would like to thank our War Memorial volunteer who very kindly maintains it and paid for the recent inscription work to the memorial, which included a rededication service, also organised by local residents towards the end of last year.

I would like to thank our Ward member of Herefordshire Council and the Locality Steward for their help and support.

Also, thanks to the Lengthsman, Terry Griffiths and his team for all the maintenance they have carried out.

I would like to thank Claire Perez, Internal Auditor.

Lastly, I would like to wish the Councillors who are stepping down from the Parish Council all the best for the future and thank them again for their service. After 10 years as Chairman of Sellack Parish Council, I would now like to officially announce my stepping down from the Council. It has been an interesting journey and I have learnt a lot along the way. I have worked with a great team and hope that the Council continues to progress with some new members joining the team to ensure the Council achieves its aims. Many thanks to you all.'

Cllr Aitken took this opportunity to thank the Chairman for all of his work for the Parish Council, which was echoed by the other Parish Councillors present.

3.2 Parish Footpath Officer's Report including details of the new War Memorial plaques

Cllr Robinson introduced himself.

'This past year has seen some improvements to Public Rights Of Way (PROW) in the parish, including the one bridleway from the Church up to Pengethley.

Some of the PROW in the parish are on the Herefordshire Trail. With the aid of grant monies we have replaced some of the stiles on some of the PROW with wooden self-closing gates. Some stiles still remain and we will continue to monitor this and access further grant monies as and when we can.

There are some wooden gates where they are no longer needed, because the landowner has replaced with metal gates. Our hope is to move these to other sites, such as the footpath leading to Lawless Cottage, which has around four stiles that need replacing.

I keep an eye on the maintenance of these PROW and try to make sure they aren't overgrown. If you come across any that are overgrown, please let the Clerk know.

We are also intending to place memorial plaques on wooden PROW gates in the parish, for those lost in WW1/2, whose names appear on the Sellack War Memorial. If you would like to sponsor a plaque, you can choose a name and location. Please let the Clerk know if you'd be interested in sponsoring a plaque'.

Cllr Aitken added that there is a booklet that was produced by a local person who carried out some further research on those lost, including where they died, which is partly what prompted this project.

4. Backney Bridge Picnic Site (BBPS) Update and Consultation

The Chair of the BBPS Working Group, Cllr Aitken, provided an update on the Parish Council's activities at the site in 2022-23 and the launch of the Parish Council's consultation on the future of the site.

'We want to develop a plan on how we all want the picnic site to develop over the next 5-10 years and thinking about all of the local community, those who use it already and those who don't and understanding why that is.

We know that there is a long list of species that frequent the site, so we want to keep that in mind when making plans. We also have to take into consideration that the site falls within the AONB and partly within the River Wye SSSI. We have wanted to pollard the trees along the riverbank for a number of months now but have been awaiting permission to do so, so this is something we have to factor into the management plan too.

We know that there are grants that become available to develop natural sites, so whilst the parish council budget is small, we can look into what else is available, depending on what users of the site tell us they'd like for the site.

We have a survey available, hard copies available at this meeting (along with a map of the site to add comments to) with an electronic version to be published on our website and Facebook page. Once we have allowed sufficient time for consultation, we will meet as a BBPS working group to discuss comments received and come up with a draft plan to take to Council.

For this year, we have decided to mow the grass once on site, likely in June. We also really appreciate and welcome the support of local resident volunteers and the next Volunteer Day will take place on Saturday 29th April, 10am-1pm which provides us with an opportunity to litterpick, cut back brambles, carry out minor repairs and get the site ready for the growing season.

We are also aware that last summer, there were some anti-social behaviour issues on the site and it was raised at the time, that shutting the car park gate at dusk might help with the issue. This will be discussed further at the Council's meeting in May. At the time, when the issue was reported to us, we did advise our local PCSO, who carried out a number of patrols at the site.

5. Matters raised by Sellack Parish Residents

A discussion took place on BBPS and whether consideration should be given to removing brown tourist signs to the picnic site and potentially renaming the site so that it is no longer a picnic site. The Council will include these comments within the consultation response.

09/2023

One resident raised that they had recently cleared some graffiti off the parish council's signs at the BBPS.

Cllr Robinson advised that Network Rail are responsible for maintaining the railway pillars in the River but the parish council is responsible for maintenance of the abutment at the picnic site.

Cllr Washington shared that he had found the ordnance survey benchmark connected to the railway, at Strangford bridge. Cllr Aitken advised that the history of the railway would eventually be included on the noticeboard at BBPS.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 7.55pm, to allow for time for residents to complete the BBPS survey.

Signed.....

Date.....

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