

Broomhaugh and Riding Parish Council



Minutes of the annual Parish Meeting

Thursday 11th May 2023, 7 pm, held at the Parish Hall, Millfield Road

Present: Cllr. Christine Howe (Chair), Cllr. Andy Dunhill, Cllr. Eileen Carew, Cllr. David Irwin, Cllr. Jill Mills, Cllr. Brian Singer, County Councillor Anne Dale, Reverend Diana Johnson and Judy Wilthew (Secretary of the Village Hall Trust).

34 members of the public were present.

In attendance:

Catherine Harrison – Parish Clerk

Brian Watson, Domestic Carbon Reduction Officer, Community Action Northumberland

1. Apologies

Ms Suzanne Hart, Executive Headteacher, Corbridge & Broomhaugh First Schools, Cllr. David McKenzie and Cllr. Stephen Lightley.

2. Minutes of the 2022 annual Parish Meeting

, which had been displayed on the ridingmill.org website in draft form since June 2022, were agreed to be a true record.

3. Matters arising from the previous Minutes

There were no matters arising.

4. Broomhaugh CE First School Report, Ms Suzanne Hart, Headteacher

Written report received and noted with thanks.

I am very proud to be the Executive Headteacher of Broomhaugh and Corbridge First Schools, which are special places to learn and grow. Since my appointment in September 2022, and promotion from Executive Deputy Headteacher, I have worked hard to build on the successful foundations already in place.

Our team of dedicated staff work hard to provide engaging lessons that inspire our children to take their subjects beyond the classroom and develop a lifelong love of learning.

We have the Christian values of respect, forgiveness, truth, thankfulness and kindness guiding us in all we do, helping us to be courageous advocates who make a difference in our local community and the wider world.

'Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.' 1 John 3:18

Through high expectations and encouragement, we empower our children to believe in themselves and be the best they can be!

School Information

Number of children on roll: 68	% SEND pupils: 15%
Age range of pupils: 4-9 years	% of disadvantaged pupils: 5.5%

Our number on roll has remained steady this academic year, with school almost at the published capacity of 75 children. We currently have 10 children joining our Reception class in September 2023 and invite all prospective families to come and see what is special about life at BFS!

Key Developments (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education)

The whole school ethos, and promotion of personal development, are enhanced through collective worship, RE, the work of the play leaders and worship leaders, the work of the school council and the work of the eco-council. Picture News is used in whole school worship to discuss current affairs; pupils can access the content at a suitable level. The use of Picture News encourages discussion and debate through links to current affairs. Pupils are encouraged to talk about things happening in the world right now, becoming courageous advocates for change. Staff look at how the Bible can be linked to Picture News. The worship schedule is on the school website so that parents can use links from Picture News at home and know what has been discussed in school. Leaders will assess the usefulness and impact of this going forward. Pupil voice on PSHE and worship was carried out last year – pupils were positive about their experiences and stated that they enjoy working and learning together.

A PSHE enrichment calendar has been created for the year across the Federation; it includes, for example, global goals week, Black History Month, LGBT+ History Month, Christianity projects, STEM, Remembrance Day and Children in Need. There is a strong focus on the purpose of the days and why the school takes part. In both schools, a Rainbow Bake Off was held to support Children in Need. This was to emphasise that we are all different, like the colours of the rainbow, but we are all equally important. This took place during Anti-Bullying Week and supported the work on this. A lead assembly looked at bullying and homophobic bullying linked to this. British Values are interwoven with the Christian Values (Respect, truth, forgiveness, thankfulness and friendship) and ethos of the school. As part of the PSHE curriculum, each half term each class has a British Value that they dig deeper into. British values are also discussed in assembly. Reverend Diana supports this in school through worship and time spent in classes.

Commando Joe's respect curriculum and work in Forest School develop character. Pupils are supported in their development of good listening and communication skills. At BFS, children in Reception access Forest School weekly and other classes are timetabled throughout the year. Sarah Curtis has a day release each week to deliver Forest School as well as small nurture groups for identified children with SEMH needs who would benefit from time spent outdoors. Work is also starting on establishing a sensory/colour garden at and allotment area. This has been made possible by wonderful parent volunteers and the generosity of Osbit, who have shared the services of their gardener with us. At both schools, we are focusing on food, food miles and global consciousness, allowing the children to understand where their food comes from and to grow their own.

Every day, every class chooses someone to be a special person. The special person hears positive affirmations from their peers and provides their own self-affirmations; some pupils can initially find this difficult to do, however self-esteem is boosted as a result. The work also supports oracy and language development.

The SENDCo works closely with a number of external partners to promote positive emotional wellbeing and mental health in school; she has put in place a range of strategies to support pupils

and parents. An action plan details the ongoing work. The SENDCo is a highly skilled practitioner who has a sharp focus on achieving the best outcomes for all pupils.

5. Village Hall Trust Report, Judy Wilthew, Trustee

We are privileged to record here the debt which our Charity and indeed our village owe to our late Chairman, Philip Latham. A much-respected motivational figure in Riding Mill and beyond for many decades, Philip served his community with modesty and distinction. Despite an awareness that his time with us was limited, Philip served generously as the first Chair of the new CIO until very shortly before his death. We shall continue to miss Philip's quiet wisdom and steady hand for many years to come. Thank you, Philip.

There have been a lot of changes over the last year. We have said goodbye to several trustees and would like to thank them all for their contribution. We are however, delighted to welcome our new trustees, Kathleen, Chris and Adrian. The trustees are keen to encourage the recruitment of additional members who can offer skills and experience that can help to ensure that the Charity continues to improve its facilities and services to the community.

As many of you know, the Millennium Hall was out of commission for five months last year, but is now fully operational again, busier than ever and we have welcomed some new groups.

The ownership of the Millennium Hall has now been fully transferred to the Charitable Incorporated Organisation, the CIO.

The Parish Hall was awarded Warm Hub status in January. Warm Hubs are run by local people for local people. They are a place where people can find a safe, warm and friendly environment to enjoy refreshments, social activity and the company of others. This has been achieved by our wonderful volunteers. Thank you – all of you.

Last year we installed a new audio-visual system and hearing loop in the Parish Hall. This was funded by a grant from the National Lottery, Awards for All. This has made a big difference to Film Night, presentations, slide shows and was also used during the pantomime to show the 'village film' in which some of you featured.

The market table and book exchange continue to flourish.

Community Action Northumberland was awarded a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to run a project to preserve, record and share the heritage of Northumberland's Village Halls. There are over 200 halls in Northumberland and we were chosen as one of 15 village halls that took part in the first year of this project. People asked - why do you have two halls in Riding Mill? We are the only village in Northumberland that has two halls. So that was our project, the history of the Millennium Hall.

As part of our commitment to working with the community to better serve the community, we carried out a survey of the halls' users. The results of this will be used to help with future decisions.

We would like to thank St James's and the Parish Council for their continued support and help, and finally to thank our current trustees.

6. St James's Church Report, Rev. Diana Johnson

The past year has been busy in St James's, as we have planned for our future as well as grappling with post-pandemic rebuilding of our ways of worship, sharing our congregational life and taking our part in restarting in-person Riding Mill life. The Jubilee and then death of the late Queen, Remembrance Days, and the Coronation of King Charles were times when Riding Mill came together

– and St James’s was in the midst of all that we were able to share as a community. We have loved seeing large numbers of parents and children in services and music concerts based in the church building – convenient as it is to the school and large enough for children and parents.



Broomhaugh School Concert in St James's, March 2023

We want to be practical in what we do in and for Riding Mill. One concern I have had is that our graveyard is filling up and, by some estimates, might have had only a decade or two of use before it would be closed. I am aware that many people – some now living far away – have strong links to this lovely village and wish to know that resting here is open to them.

We have rearranged the designation of different parts of the new graveyard, and have expanded the possibilities of the old graveyard, to ensure that for the next century or two, any Riding Mill resident who wishes their ashes to be laid to rest in the peace of our churchyard may have their wish.

Practically, too, we are looking at our buildings and how they are arranged, accessed, used and heated to sustain us to a bicentenary in 2058. Our Third Century vision document, on the new website www.ridingmill.church, tells you what we are thinking we should look like beyond then.

It is a joy to me that Riding Mill has three churches. The programme of events led by ‘Churches Together in Riding Mill’ means we get the full benefit of worshipping, learning and being social. Together.

On a personal note, I have loved being in Riding Mill. I hope very much that I shall be here for plenty of time to come ... even if it means trying on a glass slipper in the Panto. It did not fit. After two years, I feel that I do.

7. County Councillor's Report, Cllr. Anne Dale

In my Annual Report last year I mentioned the impact Covid had on the village. It is great that normality has returned and everyone is enjoying meeting up and attending functions. The Parish Council meetings are now held monthly. I attend the meetings and I am available at the beginning of the meeting if any residents wish to raise any concerns with me.

The County Council has been through difficult times over the past year with the Independent Governance review by Max Caller last May, the resignation of the Chief Executive and Executive Directors, the Monitoring Officer and Head of Financial services to name a few. The Council has been working with a Challenge Board which consists of high calibre Local Government Chief Executives from around the country and the Council receives regular monitoring reports. It has been a difficult year.

The good news is that we have a new Chief Executive, Dr. Helen Paterson and five new Executive Directors. I am heartened that there is a new staffing structure in place and hopefully the public will be able to see improvement in the Council services over the coming years. Northumberland County Council charges the highest BAND D Council tax in England.

As a member of the Audit Committee there is a heavy work load with ongoing investigations. The Accounts have all been qualified by the external auditor under Value for Money since 2017.

Development Control (Planning) and the Local Plan

I commend the Parish Council for taking forward the Neighbourhood Plan. I will work with the Parish Council to ensure that the wishes of the village are met. Further, the County Council should take into account the residents' views during the next stage so as to ensure that future development of the village is for the benefit of everyone. The County Council should be supportive of the work that has been undertaken.

I continue to receive complaints about the Planning service from residents. The Government continues to make changes to their Planning policies too.

Highways Maintenance and utility works

Potholes and blocked gullies continue to be a major concern. I report all blocked gullies and potholes. However there is only one gulley wagon cleaner in the area and there are over 18,000 gullies to be kept cleared. The area covers from the Scottish Border to the Cumbrian, Gateshead, Durham and Newcastle borders. There are three gullies in Riding Mill where the drainage system is broken under the road. One area has been repaired and two are in hand.

Further work is required on the gas pipes on the main road through the village and due to flooding on the A695 work was required on repairing the pavement towards the west end of the village.

Rights of Way

There is little change to report on the re-establishment of the ROW between Riding Mill and Corbridge. The County Council Rights of Way (ROW) officer continues to work with the landowners on the changes required to the ROW between Farnley and Riding Mill. The legal issues surrounding this type of work are quite difficult and although headway is being made unfortunately there is no certainty that the route will be re-established. There are concerns that the land is still falling away and there is an issue that people are still using the route. Other concerns raised are taken up with the ROW officer who works with the various landowners in the area.

Road safety and Street scene.

As promised, I have been working with the Parish Council to ensure that all unnecessary signs on the A695 throughout the village are removed now that the pedestrian crossing is in place. We have met with a County Council officer and the removal of some signage has started and more will follow.

Following a request from a resident for speed reduction measures at Beauclerc, the County Council undertook a speed review. The figures showed that the speed was well within the limit. However I am working with the County Council on reviewing the road signage.

Members' Small Scheme Allowance

I am delighted to be able to help financially with the new work required at the Playpark for the Parish Council out of Member's Small Scheme allowance. The County Council also helped with funding towards the Coronation week-end.

Broadband Provision

There is still uncertainty as to when the village will be included in the roll out of the ultrafast full fibre broadband. This is being held up by changes at Government level on the procurement route.

Boundary Changes, Draft Report

The Boundary Commission has undertaken a review of the County Council Ward boundaries. This is based on each County Councillor representing approx. 4,000 residents of electoral age. The last Boundary review took place before the Local Government Review in 2008 when the District Councils were abolished. There has been substantial build since then - for instance in Prudhoe. The Report seeks to change the Stocksfield, Broomhaugh and Riding and Mickley Ward Boundaries. The Commission has added a new estate at the east end of Prudhoe to the Stocksfield Ward and removed

Riding Mill to Corbridge. There is no link to Stocksfield and Mickley to the new Prudhoe estate and I will be writing to the Boundary Commission on this particular point. As a small village I believe that Riding Mill is best served working with small villages and therefore should remain in the Stocksfield Ward. I will be reviewing the figures with the County Council. Any changes will be introduced for the 2025 County Council elections. If you have any views please do contact the Parish Clerk.

To end my report, I would like to thank the Parish Council and Clerk for all their help over the past year. My workload continues to increase and is very varied. I am always available if you have anything you wish to discuss with me. I can be contacted by telephone on 01434 673326 or by email at Anne.Dale@Northumberland.gov.uk

8. Chairman's report, Cllr. Christine Howe

This last year started off on a high note with the jubilee celebrations. All events were a great success and despite the poor weather on the day, the sports event was well attended and was enjoyed by all thanks to a grant from the county council, Osbit who paid for the children's ice creams and Fentimans who provided refreshments.

Another community success story was the raising of money to fund the correction to the war memorial plaque. Just over £2000 was raised with the help of residents, Osbit, the Royal Engineers Association and Northumberland Freemasons. The work is currently with the metal conservator and should be carried out soon.

Work this year has mainly been carrying out the assessment of our assets and maintenance. The planters at either end of the village have been replaced; there's a new bin within the station car park; there's a disabled gate and access to the sports field; and surveys of the woodlands and bridges have been carried out. Whilst ash die back continues to have an impact, the removal of some diseased trees has allowed hidden saplings to flourish.

The timber footbridge within the Marchburn woods was discovered to have a significant amount of wet rot within the timbers and the parish council have been investigating its replacement. This work is likely to take place later this summer and will give us a new bridge with a considerably longer lifespan than the current one.

The pond was monitored for over a year and despite the summer dry conditions, it is felt that with minor adaptations to the area we could have an improved local amenity with pond dipping. We have tasked Tyne Rivers Trust with putting together a scheme which will, as usual, be subject to consultation.

We have at last begun the improvements to the play park. All rope bridges have been renewed and further work will be taking place in the coming weeks to replace the timber sections, thanks in part to a S106 grant. There will be some new equipment too in the next financial year and this is thanks to our county councillor.

We have negotiated a new lease with the Allotment Association.

And we have been battling on with our neighbourhood plan.....

We completed our six week consultation with the Parish, made adjustments accordingly and submitted it the neighbourhood team at NCC in late January.

There followed much discussion re the background housing paper which included the site at the top of Broomhaugh (you may remember last year's presentation of the concept scheme). The site at Manor Close was also included on the grounds that, although we objected to the current plan, it was

still a viable site for the village, particularly as it is not in green belt. We argued hard for the inclusion of some housing sites within the village given the housing needs assessment indicated that affordable housing was lacking along with family housing and downsizing opportunities for the older residents. NCC would not let us include these without more work in the form of a Strategic Impact Assessment which would have resulted in further additional cost and a delay of up to 9 months. This remains extremely disappointing and we will continue to try and push NCC to review the current conditions.

The plan is currently out to wider consultation and in the hands of an independent examiner, and upon return and following any need for adjustment will go to the parish referendum later this year. I would urge you all to read the documents and exercise your right to vote for referendum (one way or another).

Community actions are part of the neighbourhood plan and these can be tackled at any time. We have lost some of our group team members and would much appreciate anyone who would like to join the teams (built environment, natural environment, climate change, transport, leisure & recreation) to progress the improvements to the village. In particular the built environment team have made a start and the area around the bench below Bobby's shop will be improved shortly with new paving, a new self-watering planter and low-level planting. Areas at the bottom of Whiteside Bank and adjacent the MUGA tennis courts are still awaiting schemes – all ideas and input welcome.

And last but not least we would like to thank our recently retired councillor, Pam Bridges for her work over the last 5 years. So we're looking for a new councillor.....

9. Financial Statement

The unaudited financial statement for the year ending 31st March 2023 was received and noted. The Clerk reported that spending had been in line with the budget whereas the previous financial year had been particular high due to the refurbishment of the sports pavilion. The PC accounts would be available from 12th June until 21st July for public scrutiny and anyone wishing to view them could make an appointment via the Clerk.

10. Minor Matters

There were no additional matters raised by residents.

Guest Speaker – Brian Watson, Carbon Reduction Officer, Community Action Northumberland

After opening the meeting, Cllr. Howe brought forward agenda item 10 – The Guest Speaker and asked Brian to give his presentation before the formal reports were received.

Brian gave a brief summary of his role at CAN and how he worked with the County Council. It was clear from his overview that there was no easy solution when trying to reduce carbon usage in older properties and that resources e.g. people able to give advice or undertake energy assessments, were insufficient.

Brian brought with him a number of helpful leaflets which have been upload to the ridingmill.org website (<https://ridingmill.org/climate-news/>). He also provided a number of useful contacts/websites after the meeting which are detailed below:

Grant funding for insulation and renewable grant support

Thrift Energy Ltd
Unit 2, Ninth Avenue East, Team Valley, Gateshead, NE11 0EH
0191 284 24 24
0800 689 3415
sales@thriftenergy.co.uk
<https://thriftenergy.co.uk/funding/>

UK Energy Management (NE) Ltd
6 Crown Road, Quay West Business Village, Sunderland, England, SR5 2AL
0191 466 1185
info@ukem.co.uk
<https://www.ukem.co.uk/eco-4-funding>

PHS Home Solutions Ltd t/a 0800 Repair
The Venter Building, 3 Mandarin Road, Rainton Bridge Business Park, Houghton Le Spring,
County Durham, DH4 5RA
0800 737 247
atp@0800repair.com
<https://www.0800repair.com/>

Support available to help people with the following conditions:

- A cardiovascular condition,
- A respiratory disease,
- Limited mobility, or
- Immunosuppression.

(If people do not feel confident taking this forward Brian would be happy to help, especially those not on mains gas)

The [Banker report](#) reinforces the problems we face in making our homes more energy efficient without a massive increase in grant funding and a huge increase in the number of tradespeople capable of taking on such works.

Northumberland County Councils' Warm homes team can be accessed by going to the NCC website and searching warm homes, this links to an online application form

The Energy and Climate Information Unit (www.eciu.net) daily bulletin is an excellent source of up-to-date information on issues on climate change and linked topics

pv magazine (www.pv-magazine.com) gives a more technical and global view of emerging issues, initiatives and technologies. It is much more technical but has lots of interesting insights.

Summary: CAN will provide free home energy advice and information about funding and grants to Northumberland residents. Anyone wishing to access this service should contact CAN on 07715 408343 or email renewables@ca-north.org.uk.

ClIr. Howe closed the meeting at 8.00 pm.