

# NATLAND PARISH COUNCIL

## Report and Interim Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2008

and invitation to the **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** on

**Tuesday 29 April 2008 in the Village Hall at 7.30 pm**

**Annual Assembly of the Parish Meeting:** The annual assembly is an opportunity for all parishioners and those interested in the welfare of the Village to come and air their views about Natland. Natland Civil Parish has an adult population of about 670, all of whom have the right to submit motions for discussion at this meeting. These must be with the Clerk, Kevin Price (01539 821596 or kevtherev7@hotmail.com or home address – see notice board), seven clear days before the meeting, so that they can be publicised on the Parish Council's notice board outside Natland Post Office and shop. South Lakeland District Councillor Brenda Gray, Cumbria County Councillor Alan Bobbett and a member of the Rural Policing Team have been invited to attend, speak and answer any questions.

**Invitation to Village Organisations:** All village organisations within the Parish are invited to send representatives to the Annual Parish Meeting to report on their group's membership and activities during the year. Eleven reported in 2007. There is always a section of the meeting allocated for this important exchange of information; please ensure your organisation is represented.

### REPORT FOR THE YEAR

The Parish Council has met ten times in addition to the Annual Parish Meeting. The County and District Councillors sometimes attend. Council meetings are normally held on the final Monday of each month (excluding August and December) at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall, to which all parishioners are cordially invited. The Council has a procedure for electors to raise matters in person at council meetings under 'public participation'; details are publicised on the notice board and web site.

**Shop and Post Office:** There is some relief that Natland does not feature in the current public consultations about proposals to close a number of Post Office branches. But that reprieve has not altered the underlying reasons why the shop/post office's survival is at risk. The Annual Report has regularly urged 'use it or lose it' in the face of declining usage as services are removed by official decree and customers adjust their habits.

**Litter:** 28 volunteers took part in the Spring Litter Hunt on Saturday 29 March. Virtually all the target areas were picked before the rain arrived at lunchtime. Many thanks to them and to SLDC for loan of equipment.

**Helm Common:** Following the disappointment of the Commons Act 2006 and the lack of progress by the County Council towards making the new 'right to roam' areas on the east side of Helm more accessible (as reported last year), the Helm Common Working Group has been on 'standby' awaiting events. Friends of the Lake District held an 'open day' in November and continue to organise work parties on their land on the east side, including walling, tree planting and litter picking, as they work towards extending public access over the whole of Helm.

**Natland Community Web Site:** The web site [www.natland.info](http://www.natland.info) just gets better and better in the creative hands of Don Shore and his team. It is now a significant force in linking the community by sharing news, comment, articles of interest and information about events, although there is still a need for more consistent input from some village organisations. The Parish Council is particularly grateful to Don for enhancing its contributions, such as the recent publicity about parking on the Village Green.

The Parish Council recommends that residents who are on e-mail send their @ddress to [editor@natland.info](mailto:editor@natland.info) in order to receive automatic Update Alerts. By doing this you do not need to remember to visit the web site but will be informed by e-mail every time there is a significant addition to it. This is a free service, the system used is secure, your @ddress will remain confidential, will not be abused and you will be kept completely up-to-date about news affecting Natland.

**Village Green:** The Council maintains the Green and several highway verges in Natland by regular mowing which is done by a contractor, John Nelson, who does a fine job. Causing damage to the surface of the Green, which includes the surrounding verges, is a criminal offence. The Council is very concerned about the growing incidence of such damage by vehicles either forced to drive over the grass by inconsiderate parking on the road, or even deliberately parking on the Green itself. The Council has publicised the issue and appealed to the School, Church and Village Hall to communicate with their users about the problem and to use the 'no parking' A-boards more consistently during events. Warning notices are also being placed on the windscreens of offending drivers. The Council hopes these actions will have the desired effect.

In July two of the planters on the Green were stolen, but were immediately replaced and replanted by Ronnie Holmes who voluntarily maintains all four. Thanks go to him and to other public-spirited residents who support the appearance of the Green.

**Dog Fouling:** It has been established that SLDC's dog fouling Order applies to all public footpaths and bridleways as well as to footways ('pavements'). This was not made clear in the flyer distributed to all households in June 2004. Notices have been put up at two of the worst spots.

The Council has become aware that some dog owners are allowing their pets to foul the Village Green but avoid contravening the dog fouling Order by attempting to clean up afterwards. The Council feels strongly that such behaviour is unacceptable on a play area used by children because some residue will always remain. The Council has the power (since 2005) to ban dogs from the Green, but this would be an extreme and expensive measure. The Council hopes that this publicity and peer pressure will persuade offenders to use more appropriate areas.

**Planning:** During the year the Council was notified of 16 planning applications. The Council consults neighbours likely to be affected by such applications before formulating its own view to send to SLDC. The Council asked to be consulted about applications at Larkrigg even though it lies outside Natland civil parish; SLDC agreed to this request.

The Council was happy to support and assist the Cumbria Rural Housing Trust's village housing needs survey by endorsing and distributing household questionnaires in July 2007. So far there has been no feedback from the CRHT about the results; this may indicate that no significant need was identified in Natland for housing for rent or low cost home ownership.

The Council has seen little sign of progress with SLDC's Local Development Framework (LDF) which is to replace the Local Plan, apart from responding to a questionnaire relating to the search for housing and employment land in the District. But public consultation about the LDF document "Core Strategy – Preferred Options" is planned from 18 April; it is expected to be of major significance to Natland.

For over two years the Council has sought an end to the operation of taxi services from 7 Long Meadow Lane which it considers to be a nuisance in a residential street. SLDC planning enforcement officers have been involved but without success so far.

**Sedgwick Road Footway:** Following an outcry at Cumbria County Council's proposal to grub out the hedge in order to adopt and maintain the footway, the Parish Council persuaded CCC to leave the hedge in place. But CCC refuses to give the hedge more than a single annual cut and expects the Parish Council to undertake any additional maintenance required (work which parish councils have no specific power to do). The Parish Council responded in September by questioning whether CCC's proposed maintenance regime would be sufficient to meet the Highway Authority's statutory duty to keep the footway safe and fit for pedestrians at all seasons of the year. At the time of writing no reply had been received despite several reminders.

**Other Highway Matters:** The Council continues to make representations to the Highway Authority about the poor maintenance of Natland's roads, including pot-holes, road markings, traffic signs and drainage. Highways defects are reported through the Clerk, by Pam Mansfield as the Council's 'highwayman', as well as through frequent use of the 'highways hotline' number (0845 6096609) by councillors and members of the public. It is hoped that the joint signing on 3 March of the Parish Charter for South Lakeland will improve communications and lead to more effective action.

The Council has requested CCC to provide a new bus shelter on the A65 at the stop facing Oxenholme Lane; if installed, it would be owned and maintained by the Parish Council, as are the other two shelters in Natland.

The Council continues to ask Network Rail to act to stop water pouring from the railway bridge onto Helm Lane.

**Finances:** The Council's thanks go to Richard Hewlett, who has stepped down as the Council's independent internal auditor, and to Marion Thornton, who has replaced him.

The Council's accounts for 2007-08 are on the back of this report. It has been another 'business as usual' year with no major expenditure items. The reserves remain relatively high and growing. The Council's precept is £5,500 for 2008-09.

**New Clerk:** As reported last year, the Clerk, Audrey Ireland, resigned after the Annual Parish Meeting. Kevin Price took over from 1 June. Kevin has made a confident start; he is clerk to four other councils, including Kirkby Lonsdale Town Council.

**Natland Parish Council 2007-08:** Barbara Bowley, Mike Dickinson, Keith Jackson (co-opted April 2007), Pam Mansfield, Di Outhwaite (Vice Chair), Ann Parnham, David Peters (Chair).

**Elections 1 May 2008:** A new council will be elected this year. Whether a poll is needed was not known at the time of writing, but a poll is expected for the new district council ward which now includes Oxenholme and part of south-east Kendal. All electors are urged to use their vote.

## NATLAND PARISH COUNCIL

### Interim Receipts and Payments Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2008

	£	£	£
<b>Balances at 01.04.07</b>			
Community (current) Account		667.55	
Business Bonus (deposit) Account		2,992.02	
Cash in hand		<u>43.18</u>	3,702.75
<b>Receipts</b>			
Precept		5,500.00	
Sale of computer		180.00	
Interest		202.22	
VAT repaid		<u>171.08</u>	<u>6,053.30</u>
			<u>9,756.05</u>
<b>Payments (net of VAT)</b>			
Clerks' salaries		2,451.06	
Street lighting		583.24	
Grass cutting		840.00	
Community web site		135.13	
Donations			
Church Memorial Garden	300.00		
Citizens' Advice South Lakeland	100.00		
Great North Air Ambulance	100.00		
North West Air Ambulance	<u>100.00</u>	600.00	
Audit fees		120.00	
Insurance		432.29	
Subscriptions			
Cumbria Association of Local Councils	171.00		
Cumbria Playing Fields Association	15.00		
Lancaster Canal Trust	8.00		
Open Spaces Society	<u>30.00</u>	224.00	
Meetings		66.00	
Clerk's expenses		82.37	
Councillors' expenses		84.11	
Miscellaneous admin		43.02	
VAT paid		<u>21.00</u>	5,682.22
<b>Balances at 31.03.08</b>			
Community (current) Account		1,579.59	
Business Bonus (deposit) Account		<u>2,494.24</u>	<u>4,073.83</u>
			<u>9,756.05</u>