

# THIRSTON PARISH COUNCIL

At the Parish Council Meeting held via Zoom on Thursday 25 March 2021.

**Present:** Cllrs S Allan, E Davidson, D Green, H Lindley, T Jackson and J Marshall.  
County Councillor G Sanderson  
The Parish Clerk in attendance – Mrs L Hamlin  
17 Members of the Public

**215 Apologies for absence – None**

**216 Declarations of interest in items on the Agenda – None**

**217 Public Questions (max 5 mins per person) –**

CC Sanderson, aware that there were a number of residents in attendance who wish to raise their concerns and complaints on how NCC are handling the issues in relation to the airfield, started the discussion with an update from NCC.

CC Sanderson confirmed there will not be a virtual determination of the application, it is far too important an application so will therefore be determined when public can attend.

The Management Plan is being put in place for clarity of what is allowed within the Planning permission and gives the ability for a more fit for purpose way of monitoring and communicating when things don't go well and that is still being worked on.

NCC did talk about having a public meeting some time ago and then Covid came along and Glen would like a public meeting to take place (virtually) and he has informed the Director of Planning of this. Participants would be the Public Protection Team, fire and rescue team, planners, noise enforcement team and police but this will take a few weeks to arrange. Glen is happy to set this up if that is what residents want, it will have to include the applicants as well. It will be an opportunity for both sides to put forward their arguments.

He had suggested a follow up meeting with the PC and some residents but cannot see the point in that until we can see what the Management Plan looks like.

Clerk

Happy to arrange either a public meeting or a follow up meeting with PC and some residents involved – if the PC could get back to him on this.

Cllr Lindley asked if it would be possible to have a look at the Management Plan as it stands. The PC were told by NCC that we could have and then told this was not possible.

CC Sanderson stated it is not ready as there is no agreement or draft plan in place yet. Various attempts have been made to get a draft and it has not happened yet.

Clerk

It was asked how long has NCC been trying to get the Management Plan agreed. CC Sanderson thought it was about a year but to ask the planners direct.

It was asked are the airfield involved in producing the Management Plan or are the planners developing this on their own? Are they working on it together? CC Sanderson's understanding is that there is a stalemate with no agreement and believes there is no point taking it to a council meeting unless the plan is drawn up and agreed.

One resident asked at what point is a line going to be drawn under this? Are we going to have to wait another year whilst we are subject to all the activity and negative impact on our homes, lives and businesses whilst the airfield continue to operate as they are without a Management Plan. Agreed with the idea of a public meeting but needed to make sure all the relevant agencies were there including public protection and police.

NCC has a duty to put this application forward or not as the case maybe. NCC are trying to make progress with it.

CC Sanderson left the meeting as he felt he should not be present whilst discussions are taking place about complaint against NCC and hope we can get this sorted out soon.

# THIRSTON PARISH COUNCIL

**The meeting was then opened to the residents for them to raise their issues and an hour long discussions took place with the following main areas of concern raised:**

- NCC were to undertake a noise survey but nothing forthcoming.
- Residents are frustrated that the planning authority has mishandled this application and changes have been made without full consultation ie in relation to light aircraft definition to allowing in much larger aircraft and not in the same times as other airfields in the area.
- The airfield users regularly breach flight paths, not avoiding local housing and when complaints are made to our MP and NCC residents are told they need to produce evidence of tail numbers for identification which is a farce, you cannot do it. The airfield are not interested in any concerns although try to make the right noises and say you need evidence.
- It is excessive to extend the opening hours to 7am til 11pm especially as the operators are not prepared to monitor effectively their air traffic, not consider the noise, the safety and the effect on residents. It is very intrusive in West Thirston so for those living nearer it must be an absolute nightmare. When refuelling is taking place even West Thirston residents cannot have the windows open.
- There is an air regulation 53c states you should not fly below 1000ft above the highest obstacle within a horizontal radius within 600 m of the aircraft. This would mean that the aircraft should not be flying over settlements in the area such as West Thirston and West Thirston should not be used as an approach or take off path or as a practice area for take off and landing. Many years ago an agreement was put in place that aircraft would not overfly West Thirston and the surrounding settlements and this has been adhered to until the new operators came in and this needs resolving.
- No changes to the airfield should be accepted until a robust Management Plan is in place and the airfield agreed that they will adopt it.
- We need full and fair planning process and we need to get this Management Plan satisfied. There are too many people being affected by the airfield not to have this done.
- The operators have a vision for the airfield which completely collides with reality with the people in the area. The whole planning process has been a mockery from the start. It has gone on the assumption that the residents views do not matter and they are going to go ahead with it, we are three years into this process, and even with CC Sanderson as Leader he cannot make this process work. How is further dialogue going to fix this?
- Equal weight is being given to comments made by someone in Leeds or further afield as to a resident. But it was ignored by NCC.
- Air safety is an issue. Residents are concerned about the air traffic safety issues over the last number of years. It is just a matter of time before an aircraft comes down over the village. There have already been several incidents. Noise intrusion can be easily dismissed but aircraft coming down cannot be dismissed.
- Any objections raised against the airfield are bombarded by abuse on Facebook. All evidence is dismissed by various people so the issue is we are not dealing on a level playing field.
- Residents ask the PC to make a formal complaint at this stage to NCC about their conduct of the planning process at Eshott airfield, if residents could go straight to the local government ombudsman they would do that but we need to go through the local process first and this needs to start now.
- The operation of airfield is spoiling this as a place to live. As others have said the lockdown has been a reminder of how peaceful it can be living here. The noise and circuit flying and those of us that suffer purposeful taunting due to low level circuits is about to start again. The hard fact is that although NCC talk about the economic value of the airfield it is just largely destroying economic value for residents around. The operators of the airfield boast of their influence in high places in NCC and there are persistent rumours that their social contacts within influential conservative politicians in and around Morpeth. Teresa May's visit to the airfield in 2017 was hardly a cold call, that does not happen without connections.
- What is clear is that the planning process at the airfield appears to be being conducted by NCC according to the airfields agenda and, more than that, very differently from

# THIRSTON PARISH COUNCIL

established planning practice in relation to other airfields in the UK. Local residents are being locked out of the process, residents are being ignored, being denied information, are being denied consultation on a Management Plan. Contrary to what CC Sanderson thinks a Management Plan is not something that the applicant chooses to accept it is something that is a condition in the planning process after a consultation, which in our case has not occurred. It should be no surprise that NCC has conducted this planning process in a legally flawed way.

The residents commented that no one present had spoken in support of the airfield or of NCCs handling of the planning process which had led to this position. As residents felt their views were being ignored and the Management Plan appeared no nearer resolution, they asked the PC to consider lodging a formal stage 1 complaint into NCC's handling of these matters.

The PC took on board all the comments and agreed to take a vote on how to progress and relay this to the residents in attendance.

ALL

A group of people are meeting tomorrow morning to cut back brambles and tidy up the Field of Hope if anyone is available to help meeting at 10am.

**218 The minutes of the meeting 4 February 2021** were agreed as a true record and will be signed at a later date due to Covid-19.

**219 Matters Arising therefrom:**

- a) Road to Longhorsley to Burgham complaint – outstanding awaiting NCC action Clerk
- b) Ditch on the Burgham Park Road blocked – outstanding awaiting NCC action Clerk
- c) Leak at riverside – Clerk still to review when raining Clerk
- d) Parking/traffic issues at Pumpkin Pie – the Clerk has received a number of complaints from residents that parents are parking on the yellow lines and blocking sight lines. Some parents have been abusive when approached. Photos have been forwarded to the Clerk. It was agreed to contact PC Teasdale to request police presence at the nursery at key drop off and pick up times. Clerk
- e) Rails on the steps down to The Peth – these have been repaired.
- f) Footpaths through the village – clearing of vegetation has taken place along the footpath from the garage out of the village and along the footpath to the Field of Hope. Repair requests are still outstanding.
- g) Bus Shelter opposite Northumberland Arms – the Clerk is still waiting on receiving 3 quotes, it is not proving easy to get workmen to commit. Clerk
- h) Thorns and debris on roads following hedge cutting – There was another issue of hedge cutting along the Wintrick Road after the last PC meeting, again NCC came out and cleared the road within 48 hours.
- i) Street light request for East Thirston – outstanding awaiting NCC action Clerk
- j) Letter to Highways and NCC re traffic diversions – waiting on Felton PC to send in their letters as they are leading on this issue. Clerk
- k) Speed camera to entrance of village not working – fixed within 24 hours of reporting fault.

**220 Report by County Councillor Sanderson**

The Council is cracking on with filling potholes after a very wet winter which, with frosts and snow as well, has caused major problems across the County and also for many other County Councils, but we are putting in a lot of effort and time into this.

Our staff continue to do a brilliant job in continuing to deliver all our frontline services.

The new Leisure Centre complex is underway in Morpeth now and work will start soon on the new car park at Goosehill, as well as ones for Amble, Alnwick, Hexham and Berwick.

The pilot glass collection is going well with high levels of glass being collected.

Our new Climate Change Action Plan lays out the new projects which we will undertake over the coming years including very large solar and ground and air source heat pump schemes plus a trial of pavement EV chargers.

# THIRSTON PARISH COUNCIL

The Northumberland Line has received its first major funding and will be up and running in 2023 with plans for new stations being lodged with planning shortly. And it is hoped that the new battery mega factory will get the go ahead - it is in for planning now and could be the creator of thousands of new jobs in the County. Finally, the build outs work is almost complete and thus the traffic calming scheme - which will hopefully bring more peace quiet and safety to West Thirston. I will be happy to arrange any meetings you might wish to have with NCC and thank you for your friendship and good joint working over the past four years and my best wishes and thanks again to Hazel for her stewardship as Chair over the years.

## **221 Report back from Meetings and Representations on behalf of TPC Recreation Field Committee Meeting –**

Discussed ordering supply of bark for play area.

Also look to replace equipment that was to be done by a Committee member is now not happening and so looking at a professional contractor coming to price for replacement swing and on closer examination some of the other equipment is coming to the end of its useful life as well so a meeting took place with a contractor to look and suggest equipment that could go in and give a price for a much more comprehensive refurbishment/replacement of equipment and new path surfaces. It is almost certain grant funding would be required to put that into place. Also costings being sought from resurfacing of MUGA.

Cllr Lindley asked if there is going to be enough money, will some of the funding that the PC has been ringfencing for other areas be transferred over to use in the play area? Cllr Marshall thinks this is a fair point and the money put aside for community building could be used as a long way off from getting such a building and a functioning play area needs to take priority. For the money involved both PCs have to be on board with the funding but need to know more about the proposals involved before making a commitment. Concern was also raised about the proportion of users in Felton in comparison to users from Thirston and whether percentages of contribution reflect the respective parishes uses of the facilities.

## **222 Potential Projects**

- a) Footpaths/Rights of Way – Nothing to report
- b) Landscaping – Nothing to report
- c) Neighbourhood Plan Update – Following information being received from NCC all the NP paperwork was submitted to NCC to start the examination process. NCC checked all the documents, requested a couple of changes and they now have the final version. Reg 16 publicity should go out next week advising of the examination taking place.

## **223 To report on any planning decisions:**

**20/03833/FUL** - Carinya Cottage West Thirston - Demolition of existing cottage and construction of new dwelling with garage - WITHDRAWN

**20/01327/FUL** – Building NW of Blackbrook Farm - Conversion of redundant agricultural building to provide a single dwelling unit – REFUSED

### **Planning applications pending:**

**19/03659/VARYCO** – Eshott Airfield – make temporary hours of 7am to 11pm permanent – objections submitted.

**20/01580/FUL** – Thirston Court – Retrospective: 2 new dwellings (re 18/01327/AGTRES) alternations to site layout. Amendment submitted – No Objections

**20/02026/COU** – Cottages at Burgham Park Golf Club – Change of use from holiday cottages to residential dwellings – No Objections

**20/02093/FUL** – Burgham Park Golf Club - Replace greenkeepers shed, create six-hole golf course, re-locate driving range, create landscape bund, erect driving range shelter, extension and alteration of clubhouse and new car park layout – concerns on location of greenkeepers shed.

**20/02094/FUL** – Land NW of Burgham Park Golf Club - Remove green keepers compound and erection of 56 dwellings plus upgrade of access road, electric sub station, SUDs, domestic package treatment works and domestic gas storage

# THIRSTON PARISH COUNCIL

**20/04177/FUL** - Land North East of Felmoor Caravan Park - Extension to existing holiday comprising 139 no. pitches for holiday lodges plus ancillary features including water feature, play area and vintage vehicle museum

**21/00402/FUL** - West Moor House Felton - Dining room extension and conversion of existing outbuildings to form self-contained annexe – Cllr Lindley undertook a site visit – No objections

**21/00432/FUL** - Ivy Cottage West Thirston - Remove existing roof, construct new pitched roof to kitchen and bedroom 2 [including new dormer window]. Construct new utility room to rear. Convert garage to 1 bedroom annex – no objections

**APP/P2935/W/20/3254874** – Appeal by Northumberland Estates in relation to housing application at Land East of Greycroft (19/05017/OUT) – Northumberland Estates appeal was successful. The Councillors asked when would we hear about the full application and whether there are going to be any changes to the outline permission. Clerk to contact the planning officer to see if he has any indication on this.

Clerk

## Planning Issues:

**Northumberland Arms** – Retrospective planning for beer gardens still not forthcoming.

## 224 Requested Agenda Items:

Litter Pick – NCC has confirmed they will not provide equipment for litter picks this year however they are happy to pick up any rubbish collected either from residents houses on normal collection day or from a designated area if a lot is collected. Felton PC has made the suggestion that the villages could have a joint litter pick team of volunteers who do litter picks all year round as opposed to once a year and that the PCs purchase litter pickers for their use. It was stated that this is a good idea but would like an indication as to whether there would be any volunteers before any commitment to purchase litter pickers. Also Thirston Parish is a lot more spread out than Felton with smaller settlements so need to consider that they are not excluded. Clerk to speak to Felton Clerk to see how best to progress this.

Clerk

## 225 Correspondence:

- NCC – Election Packs – duly completed by the Councillors who wish to stand in the May elections and the Clerk has an appointment at NCC on Monday to deliver these.
- Email re White railings corrosion – A resident from Felton has emailed to inform the PC of corrosion on the white railings on the bridge. The Clerk informed the resident the PC were aware of this and that NCC has recently done a repaint job on it when they painted the new bridge railings however no repairs were undertaken as it is not part of the restraint system. Cllr Marshall stated one rail is corroded right through he recalls that NCC were going to do something with these railings long term but need to check with CC Sanderson what the proposals, if any, are.
- Email re tree planting and other environmental activities within Parish – an email received from a resident thanking CC Sanderson and the PC for the recent speeding measures and asking what opportunities there are within the parish to contribute to ongoing efforts to improve the environment and to combat climate change. They asked if there are public spaces within the parish where trees could be planted or where other activities could be undertaken to improve bio-diversity and to capture carbon. The Clerk informed the resident of the recent tree planting, the fact the PC has no public spaces and that there is a group within Felton who are looking at climate change and forwarded details to them. Cllr Lindley stated that the Neighbourhood Plan has highlighted that Longdyke Burn needs protection but the Clerk stated a lot of the Burn is on private land.
- Email FOI request in relation to costs of speeding measures – this was passed to CC Sanderson as the PC holds no such information.
- Email complaint re bottle bank overflowing – this was reported to NCC and the overflow was removed that day and the bottle banks emptied the next day.
- Email – copy email to CAA re breaches in Covid rules on flying at Eshott Airfield – For information.
- Email – copy email re legislation on non MOD helicopters using Eshott Airfield that was sent to NCC – for information as there has been no response from NCC on this issue despite reminders.

Clerk

# THIRSTON PARISH COUNCIL

- Email re air pollution issue and flying outside permitted hours from Apache helicopters – email sent to NCC re the resident who had to have medical intervention due to fumes from helicopters.
- Various complaints re MODs use of airfield – numerous emails, phone calls and texts in relation to the MOD.
- Email re fire at Eshott Airfield and residents ongoing safety concerns – the residents have still not received response from NCC or Fire Department in relation to concerns over fuel at the airfield and this latest incident has made residents even more concerned.
- Email re harassment by worker managing traffic management at West Thirston – a complaint was received by a resident in relation to a worker on the traffic management works. CC Sanderson looked into this issue and it was a sub-contractor company and the individual concerned was removed from the site and NCC stated this individual will no longer be employed on any NCC contracts going forward.
- Emailed NALC updates
- Clerks and Councils Direct

## 226 Finance

(a) **Financial Summary** was reviewed with no issues and the current balance stands at £11,612.74.

(b) **Payments** - The following list was put before members and was approved:

Payments this meeting:		
IB112	L Hamlin Salary and Expenses 32 hours at 14.90 (£476.80) 5 hours for Neighbourhood Plan at 14.90 (£74.50) 2 x Zoom Conferencing (£28.78) 2 x Home working allowance (£22.18) Underpayment of cheque for Age Concern (£5.00) Postage - Neighbourhood Plan (£16.92)	£624.18
DD	Information Commissioners Office	35.00
DD	Mr & Mrs Bates – Defib electricity	50.00

(c) **Receipts** – None. Clerk has contacted NCC in relation to the cemetery double charge payment but to date no response received.

The Clerk has submitted a VAT claim for 2020/21 which should be paid in April.

**227 Urgent Items** – None

**228 Items for next agenda** – None

**229 Resolution to exclude public and press**

**The Parish Council passed a resolution under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 to exclude public and press due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed, which includes discussion of personal data.**

- a. Update on ongoing communication with local resident. Waiting for a response following a holding email received from resident. It may be that this situation is now resolved so this will be removed from the agenda unless contact is made by the resident.
- b. NCC Meeting for clarification of ongoing situation – It was agreed unanimously to proceed with a Stage One complaint against NCC and a date has been arranged to meet to progress this. Clerk to send an email to residents to confirm what the Councillors have decided.

Clerk

Cllr Marshall ended the meeting stating that on behalf of all the Councillors, Cllr Lindley has actually been on the Parish Council since February 2008. Here we are just over 13 years later and you have announced you are not staying on. Just to say in all of that time all of us know many years of diligent service you have put in

## THIRSTON PARISH COUNCIL

as a Councillor and latterly the Chairman, the many positive changes you have been part of for the community, meetings you have attended, one in particular deserves a star for your attendance ! You have gone above and beyond the call of duty and you have entertained us after a lot of litter picks. You and Peter have made a great team and worked on a lot of projects together. We will really miss having you on the Parish Council Hazel and quite a meeting to go out on tonight but a big thank you from everyone for all your commitment.

Chairman closed the meeting at 9.45pm

Date of Next meeting: 13 May 2021