

**Blanchland Parish Council**  
**Minutes of the meeting**  
**Blanchland Village Hall**  
**On Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023 at 7:00pm**

1. **Present:** Councillors, Mr T Bowers, Chair, Mr M Kennedy, Mr M Forster, Mr D Kelly, Mr R O'Connor, Mr C Horncastle Clerk Mrs C Asquith.
2. **Apologies:** None
3. **Declarations of Interest:** Councillor Forster BCDO Chair, Councillor Kelly, Village Hall Committee, Councillor O'Connor Blanchland Post Office and Shop. Carolyn Asquith, Blanchland Artisan Markets 2023
4. **Minutes of the last meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2023:** Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.
5. **Matters Arising:**
  - 4.1 **Drainage and Highway Maintenance:** No further updates from Glen Harrison, despite emails from the Clerk. The road to Birkside is in an appalling state, the drainage is failing as there is nowhere for the excess water to flow too, the area of concern is near the gated field which was spoken about 2 years ago and access was required, the council queried if negotiations with Savills have taken place. Drainage between Acton and Cowbyres has improved as gullies have been cleared however Councillor Forster queried next steps regarding the pipe not running due to the narrow gauge and this still needs to be attended to. Pennypie footbridge is still underwater and Councillor Kennedy suggests that a team needs to clear the sand as this is causing the blockage as the water cannot run freely. Pennypie road remains an issue with vehicles being damaged due to the extent of potholes, the road needs repairs and the culverts need clearing. Issues still remain on Clapshaw with the run off from the fish ponds causing damage to the Village Hall Car Park, the raising of the kerbside was to be looked at as part of Place Making Scheme, but in order to save the car park from further damage it needs attention very soon. Councillor Kelly has cleared out some of the drains on Clapshaw and Councillor Bowers commented again that one of the drains/manhole cover was tarmac over when work was done a few years ago. The Clerk is to contact Glen and cc Colin Horncastle.
  - 4.2 **Slaley Forest Access Public Meeting:** Colin Horncastle advised that there is discussion regarding recommending closing route, so that repairs can take place and then to be open seasonally. Discussions are taking place between County, The Police and Neil Dawson from highways, the route concerned is Slaley - Ladycross - Pennypie – Baybridge
  - 4.3 **Bridle Paths and Public Footpaths:** The Kissing Gate on the Show Field has yet to be replaced (as in previous meeting) and there is a further kissing gate repair/replacement on the show field route where the path crosses between the two fields, the posts has rotted and the gate is now open. The Clerk to chase up with Savills.  
No further sightings of horses using the cinder path – monitor situation.  
The riverside path is deteriorating rapidly with the areas of most concern being flagged up to Duncan Lovatt, there is scope to move the path to the side at certain points to create a safe route in high water. The Councillors discussed closing the path as it is becoming unsafe particularly in high water after heavy rain. Clerk to follow up with Duncan and Michael Evans. Clerk to see if the above is listed on the LTP for 2024.
  - 4.4 **Grit and Salt Piles:** The Clerk has been in touch with Linda Dodd who has agreed that the bins will be filled free of charge this time and then refills will cost £125 for 3 refills per bin. The Parish Council will liaise with NCC as and when they need refilling. Councillor Forster will place the bins in the following locations. 1. At the bridge at the South of the Village. 2. Outside the Felons Bar. 3. On the bank opposite the Tea Rooms, beside the bench. 4. At the Shildon Road Car Park verge.
  - 4.5 **Blanchland Place Making Scheme:** No updates from Savills, Clerk to contact Michael

Evans for updates.

**4.6 Warm Hub/Northern Power Grid Foundation.** Discussion around the covering of the generator to keep the rain off and to make it more attractive/less obvious. Councillor Forster will get a quote for this, but the decision would have to be made by the Village Hall as the PC budget would not be able to cover it. Nothing back from Northern Power Grid Foundation regarding handover/promotion. The Village Hall thanked the Parish Council for the generator and a brief discussion about future financing and warm hubs agreed that the Village Hall has many options available and they can get assistance from ACRE to support various ventures.

**4.7 Blanchland Village Spring and Christmas Fair:** The village Christmas Tree is up and lights are switched on, and need turning on at the Crewe. The Christmas Tree Festival will include a tree from the Parish Council, the Clerk will organise this. Parking in the Village Hall car park may be restricted due to the containers and state of the car park. Councillor Forster kindly offered to fill some holes on the approach but advised that it would be a temporary fix.

**4.8 Transport:** No updates despite contact from Clerk and local resident. Clerk to continue to follow up.

**4.9 Litter Pick:** No official litter pick has taken place, but the Village Hall Committee did undertake 3 litter picks after bonfire night to clear the area of sticks, sparklers and waste. The third litter pick was after a dog was injured after coming into contact with a stray stick from a firework. Next year a fingertip search will take place on the Sunday morning to ensure stray rubbish has been collected.

**4.10 Blanchland Community Buildings:** The new committee have begun their work by updating the lighting in the Village Hall; the new lights should make a saving of 1/3 of their annual electric bills. They had a successful Bonfire night, with many visitors coming to the village and good support from local volunteers. They plan on getting the cupboard floor repaired this week, as it is unsafe and they also have licensing in hand and hope to do a transfer from Felons Committee to the Blanchland Hall Committee over coming weeks.

**5 23/03051/FUL Planning Consent Byre:** No comments were received the Clerk reported this to the Council

## **6 Finances:**

**6.1 Current statement/Balance:** £943.58

**6.2 Petty Cash:** Balance in credit, Clerk keeps spreadsheet updated and keeps all receipts.

**6.3 Clerk Wages:** £73.10 cheque xx signed by TB and MF

**6.4 Election Charges:** The final payment has been made.

**6.5 Donations:** It was agreed that the Parish Council would make a goodwill gesture of £150 to Cliff Whelpton for his work on and around the Show fields, chq no. xx signed by TB and MF and they would also make a donation of £50 to Great North Air Ambulance, chq no. signed by T Bowers and M Forster.

## **7 New Business:**

**7.1 Residents Issues with Damp.** Whilst the Parish Council sympathise with residents who are experiencing issues with damp they feel that they cannot get involved, but urged residents to report any issues to Savills immediately and to chase up any action that is not forthcoming.

**7.2 Kissing Gate on Show field:** – Added to the minutes above, Clerk to follow up with Savills

**7.3 Cinder Path Drainage:** After the recent heavy rain the path was under water for some time, on tracking back the problem is coming from a block culvert further up the path, where the small water fall is. The culvert goes under the path, but as it is blocked the excess water is running down the hill and causing issues pooling on the path, at some points it was up to about 10 inches. Clerk to add to the list and contact Savills/ Duncan Lovatt.

**7.4 Elections:** This was not a call for the elections but a request that Clerks send in form to apply for access to the Electoral Role, the Clerk will do this over the coming weeks.

**7.5 PC Laptop and Email:** The PC laptop is struggling with the battery no longer charging and

various issues preventing speedy loading. The Parish email is bombarded with Spam and the Clerk has suggested that she is happy to use her Laptop and set up a Google Account for the Parish Council, this will keep affairs separate and pass worded and will mean that a

**7.6** new email could be set up with better spam filters. The Council agreed that this was a workable solution and were happy for the Clerk to set this up. The old laptop would need wiping and could possibly be recycled.

**7.7 Precept 2024 – 2025:** After discussion it was agreed that the Precept would increase this year and would go up this year from £1400 to £1610 a rise of 15%

Meeting closed 20:45 pm

**Date of next Parish Council Meeting: 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at 7pm in the Long Room/Bar**