

Hazlerigg Parish Council Chair's Report May 2025

Firstly, I would like to thank everyone for their hard work over the past year. Particular thanks goes to our clerk, Ali, who has gone above and beyond and been a real asset to the parish council.

We are also very fortunate to live in a village with a thriving community centre at its heart and this is largely down to the hard work of Cllrs Fairley and Garbett, who do an excellent job of running the centre, thank you both for this.

It has been a busy year, with lots of successes and lots of frustrations.

After much dialogue with Newcastle City Council, the height of the illegally installed phone mast in the village was eventually reduced and the cabinet colour changed, as per the approved plans, at the eleventh hour, before retrospective planning permission expired.

We managed to secure a new planter for the roundabout at Ogle Avenue and planted another 700 Spring-flowering bulbs in the village in Autumn. Thanks to the hard work and perseverance of Cllr Barbour and our clerk Ali, we were successful in progressing the registration of land at High Ridge so the land is now in our name. It will remain as an amenity space for the people of Hazlerigg with the addition of areas managed to support biodiversity. We also used some of the Northumbrian Water grant money to pay Northumberland Wildlife Trust to carry out a botanical survey of land at High Ridge, to help inform future management. A risk assessment was also completed for the area, which led to a number of actions that we hope to progress in the coming year.

Unfortunately, despite several meetings with grounds maintenance staff, grass at High Ridge was cut shortly after we had arranged for a cut by a local farmer and the area that had been raked and sown with seeds and plug plants was cut and the clippings left, undoing the hard work of parish councillors and other volunteers. Luckily, following the submission of a formal complaint to Newcastle City Council, this has now been resolved and we will be reimbursed for our losses.

Northumberland Wildlife Trust hosted an orchard training session for us in December and all of the orchard trees, with the exception of three that have

died, are doing well. We will look to replace these in November. We were also successful in securing Ward grant funding for the community orchard and would like to extend our thanks to Ward councillors.

We have nominated ourselves for a Bees Needs champion award, as part of Bees Needs Week in July, on the basis of the grass cutting regimes in the village that are in place to support pollinators, as well as measures such as planting native hedgerows and raising awareness of the plight of pollinator through engagement events.

We discussed opportunities for additional tree planting in the village and are attempting to progress plans for North East Community Forest planting at High Ridge. We were pleased to see the dead trees, planted last year in error on the playing field and not watered, have finally been removed. Three new trees were planted on the playing field.

In January Urban Green Newcastle attended our meeting to provide an update on what actions had been taken in Havannah Nature Reserve since the last update in January. In March, Newcastle City Council took over management of the nature reserves and we are maintaining an open dialogue with them around ongoing and future management of Havannah Nature Reserve.

A big thank you goes to Cllr Barbour, who has done a sterling job keeping the finances in order and sorting out our banking issues, as well as negotiating the easement agreement with Barratt Homes in relation to the Brunton Quarry development. In the coming year, we will likely need to reassess finances due to increased costs in general and the cost of maintaining the High Ridge area, whilst keeping the precept affordable for residents.

Cllrs Down and Barbour worked hard on the World War I project and as a result we now know how many people from the village lost their lives in the First and Second World Wars. It also led to us decorating the village with poppies on lampposts in November to mark Remembrance Day, again with the help of Ali and her husband Mark. We are still hoping to install a memorial bench in the village.

Hazelwood Primary School children designed a new speed sign for the village, which was installed last year. We asked for speed surveys to be conducted on Coach Lane and look forward to more work around traffic calming in the coming year.

Thanks also goes to Cllr Down, who has continued to attend Airport Consultative Committee meetings on our behalf. Last year, diffusion tubes were installed in the village as part of the airport's air quality monitoring project. Unfortunately, the full report is yet to be shared with us but there were some high readings next to the A1 and Brunswick Industrial Estate. This is concerning, as NOx emissions are associated with ill health and it is hoped the tree planting along the A1 may serve to alleviate some of this pollution.

In November we attended an all parishes meeting with senior Newcastle City Council officers and representatives from other parish councils. Unfortunately, the next meeting was due to take place today, but was cancelled at short notice and has been rescheduled for November. These meetings provide a forum to raise key issues but there are mixed opinions as to how useful these meetings are.

We have also attended the Newcastle Great Park Consortium nature conservation steering group meeting, where we raised concerns at further declines in wildlife in and around the Great Park. Our concerns are yet to be adequately addressed.

Public litter picks took place from late Spring through to late Autumn and then resumed again in April. Parish councillors have all put in extra time picking litter around these organised events. We took part in the Great British Spring Clean and pledged 10 bags of litter, which we exceeded.

We met with Newcastle City Council to discuss issues with the Ferguson Crescent garages in December and were promised the garages would be refurbished and made available. Sadly, there are still issues with the garages, meaning they cannot be rented out and this is something we will continue to pursue.

Ali has also been instrumental in continuing to produce the newsletter, thank you.

Earlier this month, we attended a planning peer challenge where we voiced concerns over planning issues to an independent advisory board. A feedback report is due to be published in the next few weeks.

We also secured a small grant from the Environmental Records Centre North East to fund a sound artist to record pond life and host a sonic pond dipping session, which will be held later in the year, as part of work to raise awareness of important wildlife habitats in the reserve.

We have continued to work closely with Northumberland Wildlife Trust on the swift project and a number of new swift boxes have been installed in the village. The first swift in Hazlerigg was spotted on 9th May this year and there is a swift survey training session being held in the community centre on 10th June.

We found out this year that the verge along Elliott Walk is in private ownership and therefore we are unable to progress an initiative to protect the verge, which is part of the wagon way, from multiple vehicles parking on and damaging the verge. Parking on grass verges has become an issue within the village, but NCC are not currently taking any action around this. Again this is something we will look to pursue in the coming year.

The Banks Group asked to meet with us to present their latest application for development on land adjacent to Brunton Lane and encouraged us to apply for their community fund. We also had a meeting with a representative from Newcastle Great Park Consortium in response to concerns from residents about earthworks, flooding, motorbikes and anti-social behaviour in Cell C3 of NGP. We have contacted our new MP on several occasions asking for a meeting to discuss various issues affecting the parish, however, nothing has been forthcoming, though we did briefly meet our MP at a drop-in session in Brunswick.

Cllr Barbour made verbal representations to Newcastle City Council's planning committee earlier this month, in response to plans to run a 3m wide path through the nature reserve and install street lighting. As a parish council, we were disappointed that an alternative, less harmful route was dismissed and the application approved. Now we face the prospect of the removal of trees and vegetation from within Havannah Nature Reserve and artificial light at night. This has set a dangerous precedent for future development in the nature reserve and we will look to work closely with Newcastle City Council in relation to ongoing management of the reserve.

Thank you.