

DALSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Sixty five people attended the Annual Parish Meeting held in the Victory Hall on 29th March 2005. Bryan Craig, Chairman of the Parish Council, began his report by thanking Pauline Dalton, the previous Chair, for all her hard work both during her chairmanship and latterly throughout the first year of his office. Secondly he thanked all the members of the Parish Council for their support and enthusiasm during the past 10 months, especially Liz Auld who proves to be an excellent clerk and had been an invaluable source of help and inspiration to him.

Two major issues took up much Parish Council time during the year. The Kingswood Activity Centre at Cumdivock was a very contentious issue amongst some residents and the Kingswood administration continued to ride roughshod over the planning laws and the Inspector's decisions following the Public Inquiry. The Parish Council was consulted on a large number of planning applications (88 in total during the year) and together with the Kingswood planning application; they had taken up a major part of the time during the monthly Council meetings.

The second main issue related to the preparation of the Parish Plan. The bulk of the work had been undertaken by a number of Working Groups dealing with each of the sections, and all those concerned, in analysing the information from the Questionnaires and formulating the plan, had put in a huge number of hours. When completed this Plan will benefit all residents, businesses and young people concerned with the future of Dalston and thanks were expressed to all those people who filled in the Questionnaires and added their valued comments. These additional comments had proved most useful and influenced much of the content of the Plan. It was almost at the print stage and the finished product would be delivered to every Parishioner's home. The final task was to compile and print the Design Statement, probably the most important of the documents as it will hopefully be incorporated into the Carlisle Local Plan and be adopted and used as a planning tool to influence any future development in Dalston Parish.

No major schemes had been carried out since the completion of the Signpost Project with the exception of the new footpath at Buckabank. It was disappointing that as soon as this work was completed, the utilities providers came along and dug it up. Maintenance work relating to various parcels of common land and on the Green had been undertaken, a boundary issue at Lakerigg had been resolved and the possible transfer of a parcel of land at Linton Gill, seemingly belonging to Dalston Parish, but now located in Skelton Parish was being progressed. Representations had been made to Carlisle City Planners regarding proposals for the development of land in Dalston, which according to the Draft Local Plan Appendix was going to mean an additional 157 new houses at Townhead and 20 at Buckabank, together with an extension of the Barras Lane Industrial Estate. This item was put on the Dalston website for consultation and there was a good response from all those who took time to voice their concerns. It was felt that the website was going to prove to be a very valuable tool for this type of consultation in the future and thanks were expressed to Ronnie Auld for all his hard work in building and maintaining the site on behalf of the Parish.

The Parish Council had continued to try and address the traffic and parking problems outside the Schools and the inconsiderate parking on the surrounding roads on the estate. There was no quick fix for this problem and patience was required. Work was ongoing with the Schools, Police and Carlisle City Council who were all involved in the Better Ways to School Initiative and hopefully an acceptable solution would be found. The problem of vehicles being parked on the footpath outside the Doctors Surgery, if all the legal hurdles were overcome, would be met by placing bollards along the edge of the footpath in this area.

Attempts to find a more suitable location for a Parish office in the centre of the village continued. Indications were that central and local government was devolving additional work to Parish Councils. If the plans came to fruition, it would be an office for the Parish Council but also possibly incorporate a new Library, Police office and Information Centre.

Depending on the level of grants available, the main projects for the forthcoming years would be the Square Regeneration, undertaken as a phased project over a number of years, improvements to the Station entrance, the provision of bollards outside the Doctors Surgery and seating on the Coast to Coast route at Raughton Head. The Square re-development was probably the single most important issue for the Parish Council and would not happen overnight. It required a great deal of planning and consultation, some of which had already been undertaken. It encompassed a large number of issues and it must be got right for the future well being and unique character of Dalston village. A number of small schemes could be carried out during the next few years as part of the overall grand plan, with the problems relating to parking in the Square, the safety of pedestrians and the increased traffic flows through the village to the M6 all borne in mind.

The Parish Council thanked all those who contributed to the Cumbria in Bloom competition win in the Large Tidy Village section and a Gold Medal. Barras Close flats were highly commended for their gardens, and the Gardening Club members for their care of various public areas. Volunteers were required to help keep

the pavements and road edge clean in the Square area to compliment the continuing excellent 'litter picking' duties undertaken by Stephanie Diver and a few others.

A great deal of additional expense was being incurred in maintaining the Cemetery. As well as costs following recent storms, there had been an increase in vandal related damage to many of the larger headstones. Work was ongoing with the police and the schools in an attempt to overcome this problem. Carlisle City Council Cemetery Regulations (Byelaws) were not applicable in Dalston, although various regulations could be imposed. Care of headstones was the responsibility of the families concerned, but the Parish Council had a duty of care of the Churchyard and Cemetery with regular inspections being carried out. Apart from the memorial and vase, the Parish Council had the right to remove any additional objects such as ornaments, windmills, gravel, dirty and broken artificial flowers etc. Headstone damage in 2004/05 had incurred £1,665 in repairs. Suggestions made at a meeting with the Community Safety Officer for Cumbria Constabulary were closure of the through route, reduction in the height or girth of trees and shrubs, signs indicating permissive right of way only and the use of CCTV. The Police had requested that anyone, especially the neighbouring householders should report any inappropriate behaviour or if they witnessed damage taking place.

Following flooding in Stockdalewath and extensive power cuts earlier in the year, emergency planning at Parish level was discussed. It was suggested that this was pursued and a committee formed to progress the matter.

The Precept had been raised to £19,000 with a further increase to £20,000 in 2005/06. The amount charged on each household was reasonable in comparison with other Parishes and offered good value. Burial fees, grants and Forge Green rental income were lower for the year. Financial support for the Buckabank footway and Primrose Hall was gratefully received through the Carlisle Parish Councils Association. Cumbria County Council and the Countryside Agency had given grants towards the production of the Parish Plan. Administration costs had risen due to increased hours and rate of pay for the Clerk. An increased total of £5,380 had been awarded in grants to local organisations. The expected deficit for the year was in the region of £4,000.

Dr Catherine Gregson, Director of Public Health for the Carlisle and District spoke about the Parish health statistics and recommended healthy lifestyles. Revd. Stephen Carter compared living conditions in Uruguay with Dalston and the changing needs of the Church building, with associated proposed rearrangements.

A display of the Redsppearlands Footpath Group activities was available at the meeting.