

# Kirkby Fleetham with Fencotes Parish Council

**Minutes of Parish Annual Meeting – 15 May 2025 at 7.00 pm.**

**Present:** Parish Councillors: C Walker (Chair), A Edwards-Heathcote, R Henderson and M Wall. Parish Clerk/RFO: N Lowe.

## **1. Apologies**

County Councillor Wilkinson and Cllr Lamperd. The Council accepted these apologies.

## **2. Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday, 18 May 2024,** were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting proceedings and signed.

Acceptance was proposed by Cllr Walker and seconded by Cllr Edwards-Heathcote.

## **3. Chairman's Report**

When I delivered the annual report last May, I had only been the chairman for a short while and was really just getting used to the position. Despite that the Councillors were kind enough to unanimously agree to my continuing in the role and so here I am again one year older, not so sure about being wiser though. But seriously I am grateful for your continued support and I will do my best to continue to lead and support the Parish Council as long as you will have me.

A few changes have happened to our number since last year. We welcomed Michael Wall as a new Councillor in October last year bringing us up to our full complement of five councillors. Alas this was all too brief as Anne Herbert then decided after many years of unstinting work with the Parish Council that it was an appropriate time for her to step down. It is difficult to understate how much hard work and quiet dedication Anne has given to the community in her various roles over the years and particularly as a parish councillor and we all owe her our gratitude for it. She may have stepped down from the council but nonetheless continues to play an active role in supporting the community, long may it continue. Fortunately, we were soon back to full strength again as we welcomed Richard Henderson to the Council in January and I feel very confident that we have an excellent panel of councillors all with valuable skills and enthusiasm for the year ahead.

Over the last 12 months, it has been mostly business as usual, but I will mention, in no special order some of the key matters that have been dealt with or concluded within this reporting period.

We have repaired and renovated our bus shelter roofs in Kirkby Fleetham and in Great Fencote and we thank North Yorkshire Councillor Annabel Wilkinson for her generous support from her community fund towards the cost.

We also purchased and installed a second Parish defibrillator in Little Fencote, a very valuable asset which we hope to not need but which nonetheless has the potential to save lives. The Yorkshire Ambulance Service provided an interesting and valuable session in CPR training and defibrillator use. Once again, our thanks to Annabel Wilkinson for further support for this asset also from her community fund.

Regarding St. Andrew's Church, all gravestones that were listed for relocation together with the movement of the Church Font have all been completed. The sale of the Church, with approved change of use to a dwelling house is now fully complete, although no work on new construction has yet commenced.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund project for the Commemorative Garden Space project at the Parish Cemetery, which included the construction of a Lychgate together with a wide range of local history research and environmental projects within the cemetery was fully completed by the end of last year. The lychgate was formally opened at a ceremony on 10<sup>th</sup> November. It was a very successful and well attended event and we feel it was a fitting way to bring the main project activities to a close and to record our appreciation for all the hard work from the many volunteers involved. A final project evaluation report was prepared by a specialist consultant, the report is an excellent and very detailed summary of the project achievements. It has all now been sent to the Lottery representative together

with the final summary of expenditure. We hope that this will be agreed by them in the very near future and the project will be officially closed.

The Solar Farm Community grant was secured from Lightsource BP, to be applied for the benefit of the communities of this parish. Grants for this financial year that have been awarded and funded are as follows: 1. £100 towards a replacement egg box, 2. £912 toward the purchase and placement of the second parish defibrillator in Little Fencote, 3. A sum to be determined but approximately £5300 for the NLHF Commemorative Garden Space project including the Lychgate.

On behalf of the Parish Council I attended a meeting in December last year with North Yorkshire Council, Highways, other local parish councils and representatives from the Environment Agency. This was to provide updates on the actions from an earlier meeting relating to the flooding of the River Swale, particularly at Morton Flats. The main outcome was that NYC had secured funding for improved warning signs for when the river overflows the flood defences and causes a road closure. There are to be electronic signs both west and east of Morton triggered by sensors mounted on the river banks. I am unfortunately not aware of these signs being installed yet. It is to be hoped that once installed, the early warning they provide should mitigate the problem of vehicles turning round close to the floods and then attempting to divert through Scruton and our parish.

On local transport and community support, I would like to thank John Lamperd for his tireless work in highlighting local public transport needs and campaigning for their improvement together with his promoting the various support services that are available such as the excellent work done by Hambleton Action. The continuing success of the Fleetham & Fencotes Outings Group is a great credit to him and we hope it will continue for many years to come.

Two very sad outcomes this year are firstly the loss of the Kirkby Fleetham Church of England Primary School at the end of the Summer term and secondly the closure, which we very much hope will be temporary, of St. Mary's Church. On the school closure the parish council added its voice to the very well organised and determined local group in challenging the closure with the Dales Academy Trust and with our MP Rishi Sunak. Alas the decision to close was confirmed by the Secretary of State for Education despite all the challenges. On the closure of St. Mary's there have been a number of recent surveys on the stonework, the roof coverings and the structural timbers on the Church and following the last structural survey there was sufficient concern about the deteriorating conditions of the roof timbers that the decision to temporarily close the church to all visitors was deemed necessary. Much work will now go into investigating what can be done to make the Church safe enough to be able to resume services and much local and diocese wide fund raising will take place to hopefully raise the significant monies needed to achieve this. The most recent such fund raising venture for which the Church volunteers are to be applauded was the very successful VE Day 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tea in the Village Hall last week.

In a moment Nathen, as Responsible Financial Officer, will outline the Parish Council finances for 2024/25 in some detail. But firstly, I would like to briefly mention the issue of the parish precept. Other than grants for bespoke projects, the precept is the only means by which this Parish Council can raise funds. In the last financial year our expenses and income levels were very closely aligned. Recognising the need to protect against, thankfully lower than previous, inflationary pressures it was felt necessary to apply a modest £200 increase from the previous level of £8200 up to the current level of £8400 for the 2025-26 financial year. The good news on this is that despite this increase, the resulting parish element on each of our local council tax bills actually reduced slightly. This is a result of the formula which North Yorkshire Council use in which they assumed a slightly increased number of properties over which the precept is divided.

I would like to conclude by thanking all of our Councillors, Alison, John, Michael and Richard plus Nathen for the support and commitment they have provided to me during this past year. Thank you all.

#### 4. Financial Report

##### Parish Council Account

The starting balance at the beginning of the financial year 2024/25 was £8,641, excluding the Solar Farm Community Fund. During the year, £9,336 was spent on the Parish, which included maintenance costs, grass cutting, hedge cutting, wages, village hall rental, insurance, etc.

The Parish received a Precept of £8,200, £1,000 from North Yorkshire Council towards the costs of the repair of the bus shelter, a National Heritage Grant of £18,434 from the National Lottery, £9,051 VAT reclaim (£1,518 for the Parish Council and the remaining goes back to National Lottery and Community Fund and a further £402 income.

Income (less grants)	£10,120
Expenditure	£ 9,336
Surplus / Deficit	£ 1,566

At the end of 2024/25, £10,207 (excluding the Solar Farm Community Fund and Heritage grant) was carried forward in the Parish Council Account.

##### Burial Authority Account

The starting balance at the beginning of the financial year 2024/25 was £13,710.

The Burial Authority received £828 in income and spent £2,229, which included maintenance costs, grass cutting, hedge cutting and loan costs. At the end of 2024/25, £12,308 was carried forward in the Burial Authority Account.

##### Summary

That leaves a total surplus in both accounts of £22,515. In 2012, councillors agreed to hold a contingency fund of £3,000 for unforeseen expenditures. This leaves a balance of £19,515 between the two accounts available for future developments or improvements.

#### 6. Open Discussion

##### St Mary's Church

A structural survey of St. Mary's Church has highlighted some serious issues with the roof. A stonemason has also visited the church and will conduct some masonry work. The diocese is helping the Local Church Council access grants to repair the issues.

##### Footpaths

Residents said that tourists are not following the footpaths and walking over farmers' land. They have asked if walkers should exercise appropriate care and whether the local pub could notify patrons of this when they stay.

##### Bridleways

A number of landowners have received claims to record public bridleways across Kirkby Fleetham and Great Fencote.

North Yorkshire Council are currently seeing a very high number of these claims ahead of what was intended to be the cut-off date for applications based on historic evidence of 2031.

These claims will be assessed based on the evidence presented to North Yorkshire Council, and anyone can submit evidence either supporting or opposing the applications. Should the claims be successful, North Yorkshire Council will be able to offer the landowners practical assistance in managing the bridleway.

If landowners have any further queries, they can send them to [paths@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:paths@northyorks.gov.uk).

**The meeting closed at 7:30 pm.**