

Nenthead Ward Annual General Meeting

Monday 20th March 2023

Nenthead Village Hall

Meeting started 7 pm

Minutes recorded by Alex Sawyer

1. Present:– *Maxine Denoual, Brian Aves, Zerel Robson, Christine Habberjam, Rod Smith, John Glendinning, Ron Robinson, Matthew Herdman, Laura Seaton, Trudy Seaton, Jackie Carnell, Colin Carnell, Graeme Ransom, Milly Rudd, Adam Herdman, Moira Raine, Steve Blenkinsop, Rafael Canet Perez, Alastair Roberston*

Speaking:– highlighted above

Apologies:– Kim Holden, Adrian Clark

2. Elections:–

Chair: Maxine Denoual proposed by Laura Seaton

Brian Aves proposed by Matthew Herdman

Maxine Denoual elected 10 votes to 6.

Vice-chair: Brian Aves proposed by Ron Robinson, unopposed.

Secretary: Alex Sawyer proposed by Maxine Denoual, unopposed.

3. Minutes from meeting on 30th January 2023:– approved with changes (attached)

Matters arising:–

Laura Seaton confirmed that she had stepped down as chair of the Community Toilets Committee, firmly rejected the notion that spending decisions had been made outside of formal meetings. At the last meeting, Brian Aves had suggested that Peter Thompson, as vice-chair, should call a meeting of the committee to address his concerns. No meeting had been called.

Zerel Robson drew attention to a mistake in the minutes, and wished to clarify that Nenthead Community Projects (NCP) were not responsible for the maintenance of the play area or the replacement fence that had been erected.

John Glendenning clarified that, although the initial estimate for restoring Nenthead's Fountain had been £30k, actual tenders for the job were around £16k. Since the stonework below the fountain need repair, the fountain will have to be removed, which also helps with insurance since, once removed, it would be covered by the contractor's insurance. There are many legal constraints on what can be done, and how. The full extent of the damage and what's required to fix it won't be known until the (lead-based) paint has been removed. Responding to comments made at the last meeting, Zerel Robson wished to note that the ownership issue is the stumbling block, and that temporary repairs had been carried out in 2015. She asked that comments made at ward meetings be fact-checked before the minutes are circulated. Ron Robinson expressed his support for the approach and work of Nenthead Community Projects, and noted that the matter had been raised with the parish Council. Alastair Robertson again expressed his frustration that the Parish Council won't officially assume responsibility for the fountain.

4. Minutes from 2022 Annual General Meeting :- approved, no matters arising

5. Reports and Updates:-

Laura Seaton has met with the Coal Authority's PR representative to discuss future public meetings. Jackie Carnell pointed out that holding them during the day on weekdays made it hard for some people to attend. Adrian Clark's comprehensive summary of the shortcomings of the scheme had been sent to DEFRA, without much effect, but Laura Seaton agreed to start circulating the summary in the village. Alston Moor Parish Council will be holding further round table discussions with the Coal Authority as things develop. Concerns about the scheme, and the one at Foreshield, should be relayed to Neil Hudson. The legal position vis à vis the County Council's asset transfer and Nenthead Mines Conservation Society should be clarified. It was suggested that a 'vision for the village' would provide a positive counter to the Coal Authority's plans. A working group of interested parties could be set up. Since Sheila Barker has stood down as trustee of the Nenthead Mines Conservation Society, Alastair Robertson will ask them about nominating another representative to attend ward meetings. The next Coal Authority event is scheduled for 20th May.

Maxine Denoual confirmed that the Hillersdon Terrace road sign has been agreed by the ward, and that Alston Moor Parish Council had been informed.

Laura Seaton has spoken with the County Planners about the application for change of use at the Miners' Arms, and is expecting an update soon. It was noted that, despite all the representations submitted by members of the community, the application had still not gone to committee, which is unusual.

Brian Aves was able to announce success in finding a replacement for Annie at the Community Shop. After the Village Hall secured a good deal on energy for the next two years, he was hopeful that the shop could do the same. As expected, the shop didn't make a profit last year; the accounts are available to anyone interested. The AGM will be held in April.

Rafael Canet Perez drew our attention to the Hive's AGM on April 23rd, at which plans for more opening in the evenings and future activities will be discussed. The business hasn't turned a profit, although this is entirely due to energy price increases and the Hive's Grade II listing, which have quadrupled running costs. A shortage of kitchen staff is preventing the Hive from opening seven days a week. As regards sources of funding, a suggestion was made to try the Plunkett Foundation, which has already helped a number of local community businesses.

Christine Habberjam announced that the exterior refurbishment of the Village Hall is to start in April/May, weather permitting. Charges for use of the hall have had to increase from £10 to £12 per hour, to cover energy and heating costs. It was noted that the charges compare well to those in Alston and Garrigill. Anyone is welcome to join the committee and or volunteer, as the committee is down to 6 people. As the largest hall on Alston Moor, it should see more use. Graeme Ransom is working on Alston Moor Emergency Response Group's plans to equip the hall with an emergency generator, and turn it into a Warm Hub. The question of responsibility for its maintenance needs to be addressed.

Christine Habberjam's report on the Women's Institute recalled that the Nenthead WI had been in existence for 72 years, providing a monthly opportunity to participate in talks, activities and contact with other WIs in the Cumbria federation. All are welcome to join the current 10-strong membership.

Laura Seaton confirmed that she had stepped down as chair of the **Community Toilets** group. The leak from the frozen pipes has now been fixed, and a meeting is needed to discuss finishing touches to the interior. Ron Robinson pointed out that the heaters, now removed, were never intended to warm the toilets, just to prevent frozen pipes. Zerel Robson noted that visitors had mentioned the lack of hand dryers, and supported the idea of providing disabled access. She has herself requested that a committee meeting be held.

Zerel Robson referred back to the above discussion of **Nenthead Community Project's** plans for **Nenthead's fountain**, pointing out that a lot was happening behind the scenes, and that she would keep the community posted as things developed.

Brian Aves had nothing new to report on the **Recycling Centre**. It was noted that some of Nenthead's public bins are not being emptied. Zerel Robson suggested that a little effort from everyone could improve the situation.

Kim Holden, as well as clarifying that the **Play Area** was the responsibility of the Nenthead Play Area Association, not Nenthead Community Projects, pointed out that the new fence was designed to be durable and safe. Her email went on to report that maintaining the grass was an expensive, time-consuming business for an organisation that was already struggling to find funding in the post-COVID landscape. The Play Area Association is open to, and would welcome, anyone who wants to volunteer, and meetings are advertised on their [Facebook page](#). The equipment is now 30 years old, but without funding, the association is already doing everything it can. Efforts to secure the play area as a community asset are still ongoing.

Graeme Ransom was still waiting for a meeting with **North West Ambulance Service**. In a challenging time for the ambulance service as a whole, the backup EMT vehicle has still not arrived. The Rapid Response group is down to 5 members, but there has been a recruitment drive for **Community First Responders**, yielding 3 or 4 new volunteers.

Maxine Denoual reported that the **Snowplough** had been busy in March, and that there is a shortage of drivers. She was grateful for positive comments on their work, and for the Hive's offer of a hamper as a raffle prize for fund-raising. In light of recent concerns over continuity during and after the local government restructuring, Mary Robinson has given

an assurance that the snowplough will be supported for at least another year.

6. Any other business:–

Graeme Ransom thought the public meeting with ward councillors held at the Hive on 18th March had been valuable and should be repeated. Suggested holding it upstairs next time.

Graeme Ransom reminded us again about the upcoming **Council elections on 4th May**, and the open seat for Nenthead ward. Anyone interested in becoming a candidate should contact Chris Johnson. All three incumbent councillors will be standing again. Maxine Denoual agreed to print out a copy of the Notice of Election for the village notice board.

Brian Aves talked about the Village Hall's **plans to celebrate the Coronation**. They're applying for funding from Alston Moor Parish Council, and a meeting was arranged for Thursday 6th April to discuss what form the celebrations should take. Laura Seaton agreed to publicise the meeting on Facebook.

Zerel Robson noted that the **grit bin on Tom Colliers Road** was being filled up with **dog waste bags** (she'd removed around 20 herself). Suggested asking Alston Moor Parish Council about having a dedicated dog waste bin.

Alastair Robertson gave an update on the state of the **paths below Hillersden Terrace**, where most of the stiles are rotten. Some had been removed, but the issue will be taken up at Alston Moor Parish Council.

7. The next Ward meeting:– will be on 22nd May at 7 pm.

Meeting ended 8:30 pm