

BEETHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Assembly held on Thursday 19th March 2010 at Storth Village Hall.

Present were Cllrs Ken Blenkarn (in the Chair), David Clark, Chris Noble and Ian Stewart, the Clerk John Scargill and forty electors.

1. Apologies for absence – Cllr Meakin (illness), Cllr Jupe (illness) and Cllr Duckworth (family commitment).

2. The minutes of the previous Annual Assembly, held on 19th March 2009, were approved as a correct record.

3. Chairman's Review of the year 2009/10. Cllr K Blenkarn reminded the meeting of the various ways in which the parish council sought to look after the parish and to react to the concerns of parishioners. Land matters had figured prominently in the business dealt with in 2009/10, with much time being devoted to the consideration of and formal response to South Lakeland District Council's comprehensive papers on Core Strategy and Land Development Framework. However, it had not been possible to make much progress with the registration of several small pockets of land around the parish, where Dallam Estates had now been identified as owner and was itself engaged in this process, but the safety of this land from inappropriate development seemed reasonably assured. The Parish Steward and Highway Steward systems were both working well and benefiting the parish. A new bus shelter at Carr Bank Road end was in process of construction and a project to erect an information board at Hale was underway with the involvement of the community, including children from Beetham Primary School. Beetham's ambition to achieve Quality Parish Status had moved a step nearer with the qualification of the Parish Clerk, with just a small number of criteria remaining to be met – hopefully in 2010/11.

4. Dallam Estates – a presentation by Mrs Susie Villiers-Smith. This interesting presentation traced the long history of the present family's connection with Dallam as owner and custodian of the estate. It covered the size and nature of the estate, the multiplicity of tasks required in its management and the number of different people engaged in this. Sporting activity, pest control, the protection of endangered species and the maintenance of hedges, walls and pathways were all aspects of the management's responsibility, with health and safety an increasingly important consideration. The estate's paths were known to be the most used in Cumbria and eighteen listed buildings and four ancient monuments were sited within its boundaries. The assembly showed its appreciation for an excellent presentation with a rousing round of applause for Mrs Villiers-Smith.

5. Arnsdale & Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – a presentation by Lucy Barron, AONB manager. Ms Barron outlined the nature of the landscape, the wide range of habitat and its biodiversity, together with a valuable cultural heritage. AONB worked along with a great many organisations, including local councils, to protect and preserve this landscape. It had a five-year management plan which defined its objectives and the actions needed to achieve them. This plan covered land management, the special considerations applying to coastal areas, the restoration of heritage sites, education & awareness, access & recreation, influencing development, encouraging sustainable use of the area & community and the increasingly important issue of renewable energy. With only four employees, AONB depended heavily on volunteers. This was another enjoyable presentation, for which Ms Barron was thanked.

6. Questions from members of the public:

- concerns about development possibilities within the parish – received assurance that every effort would be made to maintain a tight control and balance of development and to keep it sympathetic to the area.
- the access gate onto the embankment from the bottom of Guard Hill Lane – Dallam’s closure of this access point had not been well received by users, but Dallam were the owners and the access path had concessionary status only. Mrs Villiers-Smith offered to reassess the situation with particular regard to Special Protection Areas (SPA) legislation.
- the implications for land owners and users of the proposed continuous coastal path – was a national initiative but essentially long-term. The possibility of a footbridge alongside the railway over the Arnside viaduct was being actively considered.
- access to the foreshore near the bottom of Green Lane – the new kissing gate installed by AONB had now been removed at Dallam’s request, for safety reasons, and replaced with netting which had already been trampled down. This meant that the original problem of sheep straying from the foreshore onto the road remained unresolved. To be reviewed.
- the lifespan of the quarry on Quarry Lane – stretched well into the future with provision for subsequent making good the site when operations terminated.
- the possible danger of large overhanging trees alongside the B5282 near Parkside, Milnthorpe – Dallam would investigate.
- was there a significant bat population in the parish? This was confirmed.

The meeting closed at 9.40pm and was followed by refreshments and informal conversation between councillors, presenters and members of the public.