

Beetham Parish Assembly

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First an apology – for lack of publicity for this important event, which I am sure explains, at least in part, why attendance is not up to usual standards. Until two weeks ago we had a speaker from Natural England lined up to talk to us and publicity material had been prepared. But then, at the last minute, this speaker gave backward and left us rather in the lurch. Our Clerk has since checked any number of alternatives over several days without success. Then, just this evening, Digby Singleton of Storth came forward and agreed to talk to us about the Teddy Heights butterfly reserve.

Anyway, welcome to those of you who have taken the trouble to turn up and I hope you enjoy the assembly - **your** assembly - and the refreshments to follow.

You will be very much aware that land matters continue to be an important issue for us all, and take up much time of the parish council. Dominating events over the last twelve months or more has been SLDC's Local Development Framework exercise, which has involved trying to identify underutilised pieces of land and find ways of bringing them into use, either for affordable housing or light commercial activity. This exercise culminated recently in final land allocation proposals and has now entered a public consultation process before the proposals are submitted to central government later in the year. Very few plots of land in Beetham parish appear in this final list, but the parish council will be making a formal response before the 17 April 2012 deadline and you are all encouraged to do the same as individuals.

Also to do with land, Sandside Cutting now has official public right of way status, which should improve awareness of its availability to the public and hopefully access to a wider range of funding. Regrettably, many permissive paths in the parish, which are not protected by this ROW status, are being closed off by the owners and an official petition against closures in the Hale/Beetham area is now with CCC.

Environment Agency plans to terminate pumping services on some pumps in the Lyth and Winster valleys will have little effect elsewhere, but there are concerns that proposals for these, and considerably more, services to be taken over by a local Internal Drainage Board could have serious financial consequences for Council Tax payers.

This winter, so far, has been relatively mild compared with the last two years, but grit has been delivered and our Parish Steward is standing by in case of need. Plans are afoot for celebrating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in June, including a project to create an attractive public garden out of a small plot of overgrown land beside the A6 in Beetham. Individual local communities also have plans for the celebration. It is hoped that the long-awaited Hale information board may be ready for an official unveiling at that time.