

DRAFT Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 16th May 2023

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(Subject to amendment until signed by the Chair at the next meeting in 2024)

Parish Councillors present bbbb	David Hamblin (Chair), Andrew Mussell, Adrian Gidlow, Sue Wallis-Garcia
Absence	Apologies received from Jos Harwood
County Councillor	None
District Councillor	Vic Thomson
Also in attendance	Charlotte Rust – Parish Clerk
Members of the public (MOP)	Five

23.37 Welcome to the meeting from Parish Council Chair.

Given.

23.38 Apologies for absence.

Cllr J Harwood sent her apologies.

23.39 To agree and sign minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on 19th May 2022.

Approved and signed by the Chair. The Chair also welcomed the new Parish Councillors.

23.40 Parish Council Chair's report – Read by Cllr D Hamblin.

Parish Council Chair's Report Year ending 31st March 2023

Reflecting on my report from 2022, I am pleased to say that this year has been one of steady progress. We started the year with several projects in the pipeline and these all either have continued or have been completed. We welcomed Charlotte Rust as our Clerk in June and I would like to thank her for her professionalism and efficiency which she is applying to this crucial role. The Community Speed Watch is up and running, monitoring cars travelling over the 30mph speed limit. While the vast majority of drivers do respect the speed limit, there remains a significant minority that do not. This initiative will enable us to report these motorists to the Norfolk Police who will send the driver a letter in the first instance. If they continue to speed through our village, further action will be taken by the Police. The Funding Claxton Village Playground project continues to make real progress, backed by the support from 63 out of 64 questionnaires returned. The subcommittee has now received three competitive quotes and decided on a preferred provider, NGF based in Dereham. There are plenty of local fund-raising plans in the pipeline which we hope the village will support. We liaised with the Village Hall committee to discuss various Wild Patch initiatives as put forward by Sue Wallis-Garcia and also to commission remedial action to lift the boundary trees. One of these was to plant a boundary hedge and I thank Jason Cantrill for liaising with the Claxton Manor estate to enable this. Sue has organised this and together with 8 others, has planted 200 hedging plants. The tree work has been successfully completed enabling unobstructed access to that side of the car park and in

particular for the bottle bank vehicles. My thanks to Adrian Gidlow for liaising with me on this. We supported the Platinum Jubilee celebrations for Queen Elizabeth II together with other village organisations in June. We then marked her passing at our October meeting. We continued by granting funds to support celebrations for the coronation of King Charles III. We agreed to move our bi-monthly meetings to Tuesday and I would like to thank our District Councillor Vic Thomson for not only giving us comprehensive updates but also for delivering them in person and taking questions and following through any further actions. Although we have seen less of our County Councillor, Kay Mason-Billig did attend our January meeting. Kay has recently been elected Leader of Norfolk County Council and I thank her for the comprehensive annual report she has given us. At the end of the year both Mike Balmer and Jason Cantrill informed us that they would not be seeking re-election. Jason joined the Council in 2015 and his specialist knowledge as a chartered surveyor has been very useful. Juggling work commitments and a young family leave little time for voluntary roles so thanks very much Jason. Mike joined the Council in 2012 as Clerk and immediately set about modernising and reviewing the Clerk role. He continued in this role until May 2018 and after a brief hiatus, re-joined us as a councillor in 2019. Mike has also produced bi-annual newsletters and delivered them himself and managed and co-ordinated the speed monitor use with Langley with Hardley. He has also ensured that his handover of the Clerk's role to Charlotte was coordinated with her induction training. Throughout, he has always given everything put to him thorough and perceptive analysis and I have very much valued this, as I know Pat Clare did when she was Chair. Thanks Mike, for all your support and work over the years. Jos Harwood has led on and set up the Community Speedwatch group I referenced earlier. It currently has ten members but I know Jos would welcome more. I encourage people to come forward as the more people the less each might have to do. I thank her for taking on this important work and for her advice throughout the year. Lastly, we welcome three new Councillors in Sue Wallis-Garcia, Adrian Gidlow and Andrew Mussell. I look forward to us all working together for the village.

David Hamblin Chair Claxton Parish Council.

23.41 Police Community Support Officers report (if any).

None.

23.42 County Councillor's report (if any) – Read by the Clerk.

Annual Report 2023

Once again I have had a busy year as your County Councillor. I have been to many parish council meetings in the division and have been answering questions about local issues from residents. We still have many problems with potholes. If you come across one, please report it on the Norfolk County Council website. This will give you an enquiry number. If it isn't fixed in reasonable time, then let me know. I will chase it up with my Highways Engineer to find out what is happening. Having an enquiry number makes this easier to do, as it has already been logged. We still have issues with hedges and trees obstructing footpaths and causing visibility problems on some roads. Again, please report it and then let me know if things don't improve. Some foliage can be cut back by the Council team, where it is not on private property. Alternatively we can write to land owners asking for them to trim back any obstructions. The new roundabout at Loddon on the A146 has made

a massive difference to safety at this junction. I am aware that it is not looking its best though and I am pursuing this to get the dead trees removed and replanted and for some regular maintenance to take place. The extension to the 50mph speed limit at the Hellington Bends is likely to happen later this year. I am awaiting the issue of the Road Traffic Order that will enable us to replace the signage and reduce the speed limit on this dangerous stretch of road. We have tackled the problem of flooding in many different areas in the division including recent works in Ashby St Mary and Chedgrave. I am aware that this is an issue which affects many people and the flooding of residential property causes major distress and upset to residents. If you know of any particularly vulnerable places, let me know and I will ask my Highways engineer to take a look. I have also been out with Officers from County to look at some new safety schemes in our villages. I am aware that speeding is a big issue in many places. I am trying to find solutions for the problems in Woodton, Chedgrave, Claxton, Rockland St Mary, Alpington and also Loddon, which have been brought to my attention. I am sure there are many others. I can ask the Police to attend if you know of regular incidences, where we can give them intelligence about times and places. Please get in touch if I can help. If I can help in any way, you can contact me at kay.masonbillig.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk

23.43 District Councillor's report (if any).

Cllr V Thomson provided his 2022/23 report which covered:

- **Elections in May**
- **Impact of Covid – SNDC offered numerous grants to businesses. One bin run was missed during the pandemic. SNDC continue to use Zoom/Teams for meetings as these have proved effective.**
- **Heatwave – A review is being undertaken by the Fire Services following the devastating fires that affected neighbouring villages.**
- **War in Ukraine – Refugees continue to live with families.**
- **Inflation – SNDC offered numerous grants to assist with the cost-of living crisis. Created warm rooms across South Norfolk which will run again in Winter 2023. The social impact of these warm rooms has been wonderful.**
- **A handyman service is being implemented across South Norfolk, in 2023.**
- **Office move – From Long Stratton to Broadlands has provided cost savings of £1 million, this is from not having to heat the old offices and the new offices being more energy efficient. Final phase of the move should be implemented w/c 26th May.**

23.44 Village reports:

23.44.1 Village Hall – Read by Cllr A Gidlow.

Annual summary for Claxton Parish Council 16th May 2023

It is a pleasure to report that over the last year the Village Hall has been well used by our community. The income from bookings has surpassed the pre lockdown figures. We have seen the return of our previous users and welcomed many new ones during the year. We have raised the profile of the Hall online by a combination of a new website and social

media. During the lockdown we were supported by various grants which has to keep our finances in good order. The Hall has some developing issues to address, heating and drainage both will require replacement in the near future.

Adrian Gidlow

23.44.2 Social Club – read by Cllr A Mussell.

The Social Club have its regular members that keep the club going. We have tried numerous different things to get people interested and to join as we feel the village would benefit from the Social Club. During COVID-19, we had a number of food ‘pop-up’ vans for people to enjoy, the number has fallen (due to businesses returning to normal) but they are still popular when the ‘pop-ups’ return to the village.

23.44.3 Church – Read by Paul Carter.

St. Andrew’s Church, Claxton – Churchwarden’s Report 2022/3

- 1. Andrew’s Parochial Church Council (PCC) continues to manage its affairs with due regard to its strategic aims and objectives with respect to its ongoing engagement with the Claxton community and the congregation. The PCC continues to be represented by significant ‘movers and shakers’ within the community and to manage its affairs in a positive but realistic manner. Our aim is to adopt a ‘multi-layered’ approach to make the church and churchyard relevant and appealing to a wide range of our local community and to those who visit the premises.**
- 2. We are the custodians of a Grade 1 listed church which is of historical and cultural importance to the community. The PCC’s aspiration is to ensure that this church and its churchyard continues to be relevant, well maintained and enjoyed both by the local community and by all our visitors. We want this ancient place to appeal not just as a place of worship to provide spiritual comforts, but somewhere where all can enjoy the peace and tranquillity of an ancient building surrounded by a diversity of flora and fauna.**
- 3. We recognise that in these challenging, stressful and secular times the church and its surroundings can provide a wide range of benefits for its visitors in addition to providing spiritual comfort and a place of worship. This would not be possible without the ongoing support for the work of the Ministry team lead by Revd Canon Nick Garrard and supported by Revd. Helen Garrard and Rev. Mandy Ansell. Together they provided regular services at the church as well as virtual online worship and related events whilst ensuring that all the major festivals were supported, and services delivered.**
- 4. This year we completed the repair of the church sedge ridge and maintenance of the thatch roof at a cost of ~£12,000. This task was completed by Gary Stokes of Rockland St. Mary and was possible following donations of £4,000 from the Claxton Pits Trust matched by a similar amount from the Village Hall Committee and a grant of £3,000 from the Garfield Weston Foundation. The PCC organised a number of events to raise funds to help finance these repairs as well as demonstrating our strategy and operational work when applying for grants from charities. Our target was to raise £2,000 from donations and fund raising and this was comfortable achieved by organising a Claxton Open Gardens event, a Michaelmas quiz and**

supper, the sale of bundles of Norfolk sedge and raffles at the monthly Claxton Community Café. This fundraising helped us continue to deliver further actions arising from the quinquennial report completed in November 2021 by David Lemon including the 5 yearly examination by a competent person of the fixed electrical installation.

5. In June, the Rector dedicated the ornamental hawthorn tree (*Crataegus persimilis* 'Prunifolia') planted in the churchyard on behalf of the Claxton Parish Council, to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee and to contribute to the 'Queen's Green Canopy'. This event was well attended by ~ 30 children and adults and included a flower display in the church and a guided walk to the village hall with donations being used to help fund the repairs to the sedge ridge.
6. The Information Board project together with the church bench and cycle rack was completed to improve the amenity value of the churchyard for visitors, cyclists and walkers. This project was financed by the Claxton Pit's Trust as part of our post Covid efforts to provide a place of solace and interest within the ancient space of the church and churchyard. Our efforts to manage the churchyard for the flora and fauna were recognised as we were awarded the Ecochurch Bronze Award.
7. In December, we continued our tradition of organising and delivering the Claxton Wassail with carols, readings, music, poetry and readings all refreshed by mulled wine and finger food. This event was well supported and helped to prepare the congregation for the subsequent Christmas festivities. It is now a well-established event in the Claxton calendar and has been enjoyed for ~ 20 years since its inception by the late Rev. Geoff Saunders.
8. Sadly, Robin Godber, a former Claxton resident, churchwarden and supporter of the church for many years along with his wife Genny, passed away in November. Although he had moved to Loddon in 2012, he still enjoyed attending church services at Claxton and re-engaging with the Claxton community. His measured approach and wisdom will be missed. Paul Wright, a former member of the Claxton congregation who lived in the adjacent cottage also passed away in May and was buried with his later wife Lyndsey in the churchyard.
9. I would like to thank all the PCC members and supporters, including Carolyn and David Moar, members of Claxton Parish Council, the Pits Trust and the Village Hall Committee for their support to the church and help in maintaining the church and churchyard as an important amenity for the village and local community.
10. As I write this report, we have been instructed by our insurers to lock the church following three acts of vandalism which spanned 2022 to April 2023. Given the 1,000 years that the church had been open prior to Covid, this is a very disappointing, but understandable, outcome. These matters are currently under investigation by Norfolk Constabulary PC Alan Hupton who has received an initial report from the PCC. We hope that the matter will be resolved and that we will be able to reopen the church for the benefit of all who wish to enjoy this ancient space of worship.

Paul Carter, Churchwarden, April 2023

23.44.4 Community Café – Read by Janice Dix.

Apart from August when we took a break, the Community Café has operated every month, usually on the first Wednesday between 10:00 am and 12:00 noon.

Attendance is always good and our customers range in age from 0 to 80+.

Our children's craft activities, organised by Judy, are popular and a good way of attracting young Mums and their children.

John's bacon baps and Sarah's sublime sausage rolls are in high demand as are Sue's tasty cheese scones. Rosie bakes a range of cakes and Judy can always be relied upon to bake seasonal biscuits with an American twist. Not forgetting Margaret who washes up each month.

With a rather small team, the Community Café has been grateful to the guest bakers who have provided cakes, when one of us has been away or unable to bake.

In October we included a number of fundraising initiatives which helped us to raise £362.40 for Macmillan Cancer Charity (50% more than in 2021).

As in 2021, we extended the length of our December Café and invited local crafts people to bring stalls. The morning was a success; while we sold out of bacon baps and nearly all of our baked goods, the stallholders did well and are keen to come again this year. At the same time we held a raffle which raised £90 for St Andrew's Church.

In January and March we ran the café over lunchtime offering soup and a roll in addition to our usual fare. Whilst January proved to be very popular March was not quite so well attended. However, we may consider repeating this next Winter.

We generally cover our costs and make a small profit, which is set aside to fund replacement equipment etc. This also meant we were able to fund some of the Coronation craft activities.

Without doubt our biggest undertaking this year was the Coronation Afternoon Tea to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III. Our small team planned and organised the event. Every child in the village was given a board or template to decorate. Those that were returned were displayed in the church and the Village Hall, as part of the Coronation decorations.

The Afternoon Tea was attended by over 120 people, who enjoyed a sumptuous feast and a glass of prosecco to toast our new King. The good weather meant the children were able to play outside and everyone had a great afternoon. None of this would have been possible without the volunteers who helped deliver flyers; baked cakes, scones, quiches and sausage rolls; made sandwiches and helped on the day.

We collected over £170 for The Prince's Trust and a raffle for the playground made £100.00.

We hope we helped Claxton celebrate the Coronation in style.

We are a small and enthusiastic team, and would welcome anyone who would like to help on an occasional basis when one of us is unavailable.

Janice Dix on behalf of Sarah, Judy, Sue and Rosie

23.44.5 Pits Trust – read by Terry Kendrick.

Annual report of Claxton Parish Pit Charity, May 2023

Trustees during 2022/23

Terry Kendrick, Independent Chair; David Hamblin, Secretary and Chair of Parish Council; Mike Balmer, Treasurer, independent member; Paul Carter, representing Claxton Parochial Church Council; Jason Cantrill, Parish Councillor; Susi Catchpole, Parish Councillor (part year); Jos Harwood, Parish Councillor; Kevin Parker, independent member representing Ducan's Marsh; Ric Warren, independent member

Introduction

Claxton Parish Pit Charity (the Pits Trust) is registered charity No 243172. The Trust receives income from three regular sources; Ducan's Marsh, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, for which grants are received from Natural England as well as grazing rent; Number 3 The Warren, a semi-detached house in the village which is let; and a share of the income from the solar panels on the Village Hall which were funded by the Trust.

Governance

The Governing Document of the Claxton Pit Trust follows a standard Charity Commission model and is available on the village web site for all to read. Trustees are not remunerated and do not claim expenses.

Meetings

The Trustees have met eight times in 2022/23.

Finance

The Treasurer prepares a financial report for each meeting showing income and expenditure. The Trust is required to have enough reserves to meet any likely shortfall in income and the target of two years' expenditure has been set. Accounts are provided annually to the Charity Commission and made available to parishioners via the parish website and village notice board.

Asset Management

No 3 Warren – This is the primary asset of the Trust and was refurbished in 2015. It is let through professional property managers. During 2022-23 an existing tenant left to purchase a house and was promptly replaced by a new tenant. Minor maintenance items and re-decoration were completed during the year.

Ducan's Marsh – Under an agreement with Natural England, we are subject to Higher Level Stewardship management. To underpin our case for ongoing stewardship a management plan was devised in 2022/23. This is based upon the advice commissioned by the Trust from an expert in this area. The five-year management plan for the site became operational in September 2022. As part of its management the marsh is let for grazing during the year. Recent activities are seeing good outcomes – the three installed bat boxes, for instance, have been occupied by Soprano pipistrelle bats and discussions are underway to establish a colony of large marsh grasshoppers.

Community Orchard – The creation of a community orchard on the former allotments continues with ongoing management of the site. Trees have been tended during the year.

Requests for support

Educational grants – Funds exist to support educational needs. During the year the Trust has provided public transport financial support for attendance at college in Norwich.

Contact Care scheme – The Trust provides funds for villagers benefitting from the 24-hr lifeline emergency response service provided by South Norfolk Council through Contact Care. A number of residents continue to be supported. The Trust welcomes further requests for this support. All requests are considered in confidence.

Support grants to individuals – During the year Claxton welcomed a small number of refugees. Their Claxton hosts were granted a very modest fund to support these refugees. This support was primarily to ensure that the refugees had transport to seek and accept paid employment outside of the village.

Grants to organisations –The Trust made one-off grants to the Parochial Church Council to support church roof maintenance and specific one off support grants to village organisations for village events. Our grant support also helped the completion of the Parochial Church Council project to provide a replacement bench, cycle rack and information board at St. Andrew’s Church. This project provided a valuable place of peace and tranquillity for all villagers and other visitors to the church and churchyard.

Terry Kendrick, Independent Chair, 10 May 2023

23.44.6 South Yare Wildlife Group.

None.

23.45 Public Participation.

None.

The meeting closed at 8:10pm