

## **Bishopton Parish Council**

### **Chairman's Annual Report 2024 to 2025**

As Chair of Bishopton Parish Council ("the Council") for the last year, it is my duty and privilege to record the work done by the Council over the past year.

#### **PLANNING ISSUES**

An ongoing requirement of the Council is to scrutinise and comment on the large number of planning applications submitted to Darlington Borough Council each year. Whilst the presumption in development control is usually to support proposals, the Council must also look at the wider community view and try to strike a balance between these occasionally competing interests and review and comment on all applications. The Council is aware of its responsibility in supporting local occupancy conditions and developments in keeping with local architectural style on all and will continue to monitor all planning applications with the interests of the whole community in mind.

A few particularly contentious applications have appeared before the Council again this year, perhaps the most notable being:

1. The proposed development and building of a huge Solar Farm from Brafferton to Bishopton through Little Stainton and Great Stainton. The development will surround Great Stainton and Bishopton. It will have a massive Visual Impact, Loss of amenity, Traffic, Noise, Hazardous Chemicals, Chemical BESS Fires, Contamination of water in ground and Aquifers etc.

The Parish Residents and Villagers most affected by the proposed development formed an Action Group and vigorously opposed the developers plans, forming a response to the planning proposal. The group raised over £30,000 pounds donations to cover the costs associated with engaging Landscape /Visual impact experts and Experienced Planning experts to provide the knowledge and experience required to properly address the Planning Inspectors and present a well presented and thought-out defence.

The Steering group which consisted of 8 residents drawn from the villages of Bishopton, Great Stainton, Little Stainton and Brafferton regularly met to discuss and agree the objection strategy and attended all the Planning Meetings held in Darlington. The response from the Parishes and Villages has been outstanding and meetings well attended, the same people returned 360 questionnaires all objecting to the proposal in well-constructed and thoughtful responses.

Fundraising to finance the employment of experts in Planning and Landscape & Visual impact objection strategy has been very successful enabling the group to submit effective and constructive arguments against the proposal. The Steering group also arranged a Band night (Sounds of Brass) which generated funds for the campaign. The event was well attended but was not sold out. Thankyou to all of the residents who did attend.

The Planning Inspectors are currently reviewing all the presentations and have submitted their decision to the Secretary of State in the coming weeks. The outcome may not be known until September/October 2025.

2. The change of use of existing farmland and their submitted planning application for 24 proposed holiday cabins opposite the Bishopton Lake Wind Sailing Centre remains with DBC and has not been progressed due we believe to the large number of planned Solar sites surrounding the villages.

The application vigorously fought by the Parish Council/Residents remains open and at this time Darlington Borough Council have not reviewed the application.

3. Glamping Application Redmarshall Road – Application is for the building of several Holiday Tents. The parish council has objected to the planning application on behalf of the Parish residents. DBC Highways have also objected to the proposed development on Road safety issues.

It is hoped that DBC will endorse the Parish Council opinion that these applications should all be refused.

The Parish Councillors endeavour always to protect the interests of the Parishioners at all stages.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

Environmental issues remain very important to the Council. The Parish works on improving and tidying roadside verges and footpaths. The Highways Department and Street Scene are regularly pressed by the Council to maintain and repair roads and drains within the parish, as well as remove waste left by Fly Tippers. After many phone calls, letters and e-mails, the Parish Council has successfully convinced DBC Highways to install 40 mile and hour signs to all roads leading to the village. We have also got agreement to install Salt bins on right angle bends within Mill Lane.

The Council is very grateful for the support given by the residents of the village who regularly carry out Litter Picks and clear leaves from footpaths.

Flooding is another prominent issue that is at times making it very difficult to access or egress from the village. The parish council is in constant contact with DBC on the matter and has requested DBC to repair/unblock the Culvert on both sides of the T-junction on Redmarshall Road to the East End of the village. DBC have cleared the south side and have been able to complete that side with help of from the landowner. BPC have contacted Northumbrian Water with a view to identifying the root cause and possible source of the flooding. It is hoped that the issue will be resolved in the coming months, following the re-introduction of the well and culvert on Redmarshall Road which it is hoped will allow the water run-off from the fields to dissipate instead of flooding the road.

### **EXTERNAL FUNDING**

The parish council and Playground Association have enjoyed a large amount of success in obtaining funding from Banks Community Funds and other donations and fund-raising events for the Playground. The resulting funds have been used to purchase and install additional pieces of play equipment, Fund raising is ongoing to achieve completion of the planned project and meet the planned maintenance costs.

The Parish Council has also managed to obtain funding from Banks Community Fund for the provision of a second defibrillator which has been installed at the West End of the Village the Installation, and power supply to same is has been carried out by DBC, it has been agreed that DBC will fund the electricity supply costs.

### **EVENTS**

Once again, the Parish Council with financial help from Banks have been able to provide and support the Village Christmas Celebrations including, Christmas lights, Pantomime, Christmas tree and Carols around the Tree with Fishburn Brass Band providing musical support.

The Parish council provide support to the Village Hall to stage another Pantomime for the villagers. This was the second pantomime staged by the Council/Village Hall, they were both Sold Out and a huge success. Another, this time Jack and the Beanstalk is under discussion for December 2025.

### **VILLAGE GREEN**

The Parish Council finally managed to carry out Tree pruning to the Village Green Trees in accordance with the Tree Condition Survey carried out in 2022. We contacted DBC regarding damaged trees in the Church Grounds that required removal, and this was eventually carried out by DBC.

Our future plans for enhancements to the village include, refurbishing the Bus Shelter, Defibrillator to the East End of the village Adjacent to the Bluebell Public House, New Speed signage to each end and centre of the Village, increased planting throughout the village green to expand the bulb planting already carried out and a new survey to identify residents needs and aspirations regarding facilities and equipment in the village.

The Parish Council are currently sourcing funding grants to repair and upgrade the shelter to continue its use as a bus stop and free library.

### **PARISH PRECEPT**

There has been an increase to the 2025/2026 precept, but it has been kept as low as possible and generally below other public bodies and the Council remains conscious of its duty in spending public money responsibly and tries to keep its costs to a minimum.

### **MANY THANKS**

My thanks to Ward Councillors Colin Pease, Deborah Laing, and Yvonne Renton for their continued support of our issues in the Parish, for their reports to Council meetings and the provision of monthly surgery which is held in the Village Hall.

We also note the resignation of Phillip Watson from the Parish Council and warmly thank him for all of his support and efforts during her time as a parish councillor – especially with regards to traffic management issues.

My thanks also to the PCSO Andy Cusick for keeping us informed with statistics of any crime, incidents or RTC's within our area.

I conclude by thanking my fellow Parish Councillors, Vice Chair Geoff Preston, Steve Wall, Debbie Latham for their support and hard work and welcome Mr Graham Fisher to the Council as our latest member Lastly, we would also like to thank our new Clerk Mr Steve Rose for his work duign the year.

Parish Councillor Norman Melaney  
Chairman

May 2025