

# **MIDDLETON & SMERRILL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

## **Held on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

Attendance: Councillor Dianne Jeremy (Chair)

Other Electors of the Parish: Lisa Bingham, Helen Brocklehurst & Paul Jeremy

Non-electors: Matthew Lovell (Parish Clerk) & DDDCllr Laura Mellstrom

### **1. Appointment of Clerk to the Meeting.**

The meeting appointed the Parish Clerk to take the minutes.

### **2. Apologies – Cllr Pat Musgrave, Cllr Jamie Wigley PCSO Boswell & Simon Spencer (County Cllr)**

### **3. To confirm the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

The minutes were confirmed and signed

### **4. Chair's Report**

The last year has been an exciting one with respect to developments to improve the local environment, in addition to continuing to address the challenge of deteriorating road surfaces and potholes. Potholes are regularly reported on the portal

<https://myderbyshire.gov.uk>.

A replacement sign for Middleton-by-Youlgrave was installed at the Smerrill entrance to the village by the Lowfields road. After a prolonged delay, the signpost at the junction of the road into Middleton from Youlgrave has now been fully repaired with its three fingers restored.

Work in the Dale to repair the sewers has been ongoing and the pathway into the Dale is still very uneven for walkers.

Bad weather has again caused significant problems with blocked drains, debris on pavements and damage to some drystone walls. The wall on the S bend at Roughwood Hollow has been reported to DDC [Case – 641015726] because the seat it supports is leaning backwards towards the Dale. The work is being programmed by DDC and in the meantime the seat is out of use.

The surface of the children's playground was greatly improved by the new tarmac last year, but the areas below the play tower and swings were excluded. These areas continue to be affected by accumulations of moss and efforts to control the moss have had variable success. Alternative methods to control the moss without damaging the surfaces are being researched.

The defibrillator in the telephone box in the Square is regularly maintained. A training session for residents to learn how to use the defibrillator was held in the Village Hall and it is hoped to offer another session as it was well received.

Council has had six regular meetings this year plus an additional one to discuss an amended planning application.

Good News about the toilets in Middleton! The public toilets are currently closed from October to March. Following representations by the Parish Council, and as a result of a recent review of public conveniences, the Derbyshire Dales District Council has agreed to support opening the toilets in Middleton for a trial period of twelve months from April 2025. A footfall monitor will be introduced to measure the use of the toilets throughout the year. This is an important change as the village is experiencing a rising number of visitors throughout the year. This initiative by the present DDDC restores the legal agreement made in 1994 whereby the Council would, for 50 years, keep the toilets open all year and maintain them. Our thanks to District Councillor Laura Mellstrom for the support she provided to the community on this matter.

The Community Greenhouse was delivered on March 7th 2024 and was constructed by a team of volunteers from the Climate and Nature group and the Village Hall committee. It was completed in time to be used to raise a huge selection of plants for sale at the Village Market in May and was then available for local residents to book a 'slot' to grow their own plants for the rest of the year. The greenhouse ( funded by a grant from the Community Lottery Fund) has proved to be a great success. The site has been developed to include two water butts and a rainwater harvester donated by Mark Sealey. Next steps will include the construction of composting bays and final clearance of debris.

A successful application to DDDC small projects fund provided watering cans and predator proof hedgehog shelters this year.

Sites of Meaning 25th Anniversary : After twenty five years, some of the Stones of Meaning are showing signs of wear; advice is being sought on any repairs that may be necessary. Charles Monkhouse is leading an initiative to plan how to mark this important anniversary. It is proposed that a working group will comprise a parish councillor, a Village Hall Committee member and a youth member. An estimated £4-8000 is likely to be applied for to provide a current photo set, publicity, web pages updates and a new generation children's activity. This will be a very significant initiative for Middleton as it is intended to secure the future of the Sites of Meaning project for the next twenty five years and beyond. The Climate and Nature group continues to meet weekly to develop and maintain the different garden areas – the triangle at the top of the Dale, scented garden, playground borders, and Picnic Garden with the herb planters and the large planter near the postbox. All of these areas are fully maintained to provide attractive plants and flowers throughout

the seasons. All of the plants are carefully chosen to give maximum support for bees and other pollinators.

In December, the Climate and Nature group was successful in obtaining a grant of £1,000 from the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust Community Fund to develop the garden at St Michael and All Angels' Church. The purpose of the funding is to make the church garden attractive to wildlife and pollinators and more accessible for people to enjoy the peaceful environment.

The development of the historic barns behind the church has resulted in the loss of rough ground which was previously used by hedgehogs and other creatures as it will become a car park for the planned holiday homes. Ensuring that the church garden remains a space dedicated to nature is intended to support biodiversity and to promote wellbeing.

This project has already started and visitors are welcome to come into the church garden to see the progress that is being made. Information boards are planned with one specifically to encourage children to be engaged in initiatives to support wildlife conservation. The addition of 'bug hotels', bat boxes, nest boxes, additional shelters for hedgehogs and a seat for residents and visitors is also planned.

The hedgehog population in Middleton continues to thrive with frequent sightings and more people providing appropriate food and water. New warning signs have been put up to alert motorists to the presence of hedgehogs.

Litter is not currently a major issue. Volunteers regularly remove litter from the village and surrounding roads and pathways. In March there is a targeted effort to clear the grass verges from any litter and debris before the vegetation grows too high. This year four bags were collected.

Bateman's tomb is regularly inspected and the area around the tomb is kept weed-free and tidy. The information board is in good condition.

The two memorial trees on the path up towards the tomb are now registered as part of the [milliontrees.co.uk](https://milliontrees.co.uk) initiative which aims to list of every tree planted in Derbyshire since June 2021.

Council has submitted an application to the PDNP Foundation Community scheme for funding to create a more biodiverse area in the pathway up to Bateman's tomb.

Consultation with our local ranger is ongoing to finalise the most appropriate options for planting.

Council appreciates the regular updates from the Village Hall committee in every meeting and there has been close co-operation with the VHC on initiatives to support community benefit.

I would like to express my thanks to the members of the Parish Council, the Climate and Nature Group and members of the Village Hall Committee for all their work during the past

year. They have given generously of their time, energy, donations of numerous items, ideas, transport and more.

We wish to thank Councillor Laura Mellstrom for her extremely useful support on a number of key issues affecting the parish.

Thanks also to PCSO Anthony Boswell for his regular reports to update Council on important local issues.

Council is grateful for the financial support received this year from Cllr Laura Mellstrom, the National Lottery Community Fund (2024), and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust Community fund.

I would also like to thank Parish Council clerk Matthew Lovell for his work in providing support and advice and ensuring that the business of the Council proceeds efficiently.

Matthew's experience and knowledge are invaluable and his expertise is much appreciated.

Local Government Reorganisation: The Government has announced that it will be introducing Unitary Authorities across England, including for Derbyshire. This will mean at some point the abolition of the present Derbyshire Dales District Council. No decisions or timetable for Derbyshire have been announced. Although parish councils are not part of this major change, it will be necessary to monitor the consequences for them.

Dianne Jeremy, Chair, Middleton and Smerrill Parish Council

5. District Councillor – Laura Mellstrom noted her first year as district Councillor has seen her involved in issues encompassing traveller sites, Ecobat odour, noise and light pollution compliance, reopening of toilet blocks success and the major issue of housing provision over the next 5 years. It is hoped that the double taxation on second homes will release more stock to the market but holiday lets need national government to intervene. On top of it all the major uncertainties that the forthcoming abolition of District Councils will bring with affects on officer retention and recruitment to keep Council's functions running until absorption are a new challenge. Her expanded District of Youlgrave has meant more meetings to attend and our combined 1800 electorate vs the new 5500 per Unitary Councillor is a worry for representation of small communities.
6. PDNPA Member no longer allocated for any parishes specifically – the further cuts to National Park budgets by Government were noted – PDNPA is holding further staff reductions until the autumn in the hope that the 3 year budget being set then for all National Parks will reflect the reality of needs.
7. County Councillor Simon Spencer – sent his apologies.
8. Police – PCSO Boswell report noted no crimes in the last 3 months.
9. To consider any other Parish matter that may be brought forward by the Council or local government electors.  
A parishioner requested a direction sign in the square for the toilet block.  
Thanks were expressed to the parish council for all the diverse work it does for the community and the positive raised awareness parishioners have of it. It is more important than ever with the oncoming loss of the District that the Parish Council's voice is heard.

The meeting ended at 20:00