

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**19th July 2022**

**at Crawcrook Social Club**

**“Concert Room”**

**7.00 p.m. – 8.30 p.m.**

**M I N U T E S**

**1. Chair’s opening remarks:** John Neill welcomed everyone to the AGM of Our Villages Crawcrook and Greenside.

**2. Apologies for absence:** Helen Haran, Barbara William, Maureen Forster, John Forster

**3. Presentation of Annual Report (Chair):** John Neill presented the report verbally, he explained that the charity has several regular activities and events as well as specific projects and activities in progress and on the horizon as follows:

* Gardening. Sue Welch and Judy Smith have continued with their gardening activities within Crawcrook park and around the village of Crawcrook, creating beautiful and colourful flower beds and containers. They are supported by a small team of volunteers who meet weekly. Their efforts are very much appreciated by the village residents. Shop keepers are encouraged to water the containers along Crawcrook main street on a regular basis, particularly in the hot weather to keep them looking fresh. A bed has been planted at the T Junction next to Greenside church and has got a little out of hand, one the nesting season is over it will be tended to. A volunteer gardening day is to be considered to take place after nesting season (Action Our Villages). Volunteer gardeners are always welcome, please get in touch with Our Villages via OurVillagesCAG@gmail.com if you are interested in getting involved.
* Litter picking. There is a team of regular litter pickers around Crawcrook and Greenside led by Stuart Lowerson who tend to the litter picking of areas close to their homes. Diane Cadman confirmed the quarterly litter picking events in Greenside have recommenced following COVID and 2 have been held so far in 2022 with a further event planned in October. Volunteer litter pickers both regular and for quarterly litter picking events are always welcome, please get in touch with Our Villages via OurVillagesCAG@gmail.com if you are interested in getting involved.
* Dog fowling. This continues to be an area of concern. We do try to raise awareness of this problem; we use biodegradable pink spray to highlight the problem and warn passers-by of the hazard, and warning notices have been placed in Crawcrook Park and on lamp posts around the area.
* Fund-raising.
	+ Crawcrook Tandoori Charity Night – Thanks to Crawcrook Tandoori for a successful charity night which took place in January 2022. The profits from the evening as well as the raffle money were donated to Our Villages. A total of £800 made towards the Christmas Lights.
	+ Grants received – LCF fund (£1,500) received during 2021 for park play equipment, LEAF fund (£1,109) received during 2021 for litter picking equipment and pink spray campaign, Coop Fund (£3677) received during 2021 for accessible park play equipment. Feasibility study grant (£3,000) received during 2021 for Crawcrook Park plans and feasibility assessment.
	+ Autumn Fair – due to COVID the normal Summer Fair didn’t take place and instead a smaller scale Autumn Fair was held in October 2021.
	+ Judy Smith who knitted novelty Christmas and Easter items. These were then sold.
	+ Collecting tins in local shops. The money raised from these tins goes towards the Christmas lights.
	+ Sponsorship – Many of the local businesses were kind enough to sponsor the 2021 Christmas lights. We hope to have similar sponsorship support in 2022.
	+ Golf Day – Chris Beer and John Neill arranged a charity Golf Day at Prudhoe Golf Course raising £200 for the charity. 38 people attended and a good day was had by all. The plan is for it to be an annual event with hopes for 70 people to attend the 2023 tournament.
* Other projects and Activities.
	+ Redevelopment of Crawcrook Park. This is one of our major projects. We have applied for an asset transfer and, if successful, the bowling green, multi-use games area (MUGA) and pavilion will be transferred to Our Villages to develop as we wish for peppercorn rent. This is a long-term project which will be carried out in stages. The first stage is the young children’s play equipment, including accessible equipment, is now in the process of being installed. Our Villages have raised £19,000 towards the cost of the equipment which will be paid out July 2022. A pavilion sub-group has been formed led by our treasurer Laura Clark, a meeting is planned to discuss the terms of the asset transfer with Gateshead Council late July and a public consultation will follow regarding proposed plans for both the pavilion and green. It is also being investigated how best to install CCTV and further lighting in the park to deter anti-social behaviour. Tony spoke out from the audience and is happy to give guidance as he previously worked on CCTV contracts in Alnwick and Berwick when he was a director for a CCTV company. Hugh Kelly also mentioned that discussions are ongoing with Gateshead Council to open up lines of sight in the park.
	+ Community Garden. A joint venture between Holy Spirit Church and Our Villages to create a community garden on the land behind the church adjacent to Crawcrook Park. The project is still in the early stages, the first stage will be to clear and level the ground. Funding options are being pursued.
	+ Greenside Skatepark. Laura Clark explained the issue of the poor state of the current skatepark was raised with Gateshead Council. Long overdue maintenance will be carried out by the council this financial year in particular to replace broken ramp sections and missing sides of the ramps. Following the maintenance Our Villages have suggested that a local graffiti artist paint some artwork to make the area more aesthetically pleasing and welcoming.
	+ Autumn Fair. An autumn fair will be held in Greenside Community Centre Saturday 24th September. Any donations towards raffle prizes, tombola prizes and a bottle stall would be greatly appreciated.
	+ Christmas Lights: It was agreed the Christmas lights are fantastic and for 2022 the lights in Crawcrook and Greenside will be similar to 2021, however, if we can raise more funding in Greenside the lights could be extended to lampposts.

This ended the annual report ended and the chair opened the meeting up for questions.

Issues were raised by the audience around overhanging branches, gorse and brambles

near Jubilee Terrace and Westview. Councillors Hugh Kelly and Kath McCartney who

were in attendance will investigate further. Hugh and Kath also requested that they be

contacted directly in the case of issues in order to take action where necessary.

Councillor Hugh Kelly informed everyone at the meeting that construction works were

due to commence imminently to rectify the subsidence of the Keelman’s Way. An open

meeting will take place **Tuesday 2nd August 2022 5pm-7.30pm at Clara Vale Village**

**Hall** and will provide further information.

**4. Adoption of Annual Report:** This was verbally adopted.

**5. Presentation of Accounts (Treasurer):** Laura Clark, Treasurer, presented the accounts verbally. Details below for the period 1st December 2020 to 30th November 2021 where 30th November 2021 is the year end.

 

**6. Adoption of Accounts:** The accounts were formally adopted.

**7. Appointment of Auditors:** Heritage Accountancy, Prudhoe were formally appointed.

**8. Election of officers:** Firstly, the main officers:

***Position of Chair:*** Following Julie Gavin stepping down earlier in 2022 the vice chair, Helen Haran, has been covering the chair responsibilities. John Neill was nominated as chair, proposed by Chris Beer and seconded by Caroline James. This was agreed.

***Position of Vice Chair:*** Helen Haran, currently holding this position stepped down from the role, she will stay on as a Trustee. Chris Beer was nominated as vice chair, proposed by John Neill and seconded by Laura Clark.

***Position of Treasurer:*** Laura Clark, currently holding this position, was formally elected following taking over the position in February 2022, proposed by Caroline James and seconded by Chris Beer. This was agreed.

***Position of Secretary:*** Mo Forster, currently holding this position stepped down, the position is open and applications are welcome. It was proposed by the trustees that the role could be split into the positions of Secretary, Event Administration and General Administration if potential applicants wanted to take on a smaller amount of work. Mo’s hard work during her time as Secretary was recognised during the meeting and it was agreed she was a hard act to follow as she did so many good things as Secretary.

In addition to the four main officers, John Forster stepped down as a trustee; the other trustees in post are Stuart Lowerson, Barbara Williams, Sue Welch, Caroline James, Derrick Marrs and Helen Haran.

The Chair expressed the need for more trustees to join the board as well as a new secretary. Please contact OurVillagesCAG@gmail.com if you are interested in applying or have any questions. An advert will also be put out on social media (Action – Our Villages).

**9. Motions to be put to the AGM (**to be received in advance of the meeting**):** None received.

**10. Joint presentation by Peter Shields of Gateshead Council and Amanda Bell from Durham Wildlife Trust, ‘Plans to improve the habitat and encourage wildlife to thrive on Hill 60’:**

 Peter Shields explained he is an ecologist and part of his role is to provide planning inputs for new developments to ensure they consider environmental and biodiversity aspects. He was therefore involved in the planning for Story Homes development adjacent to Hill 60. Until recently the Hill 60 land was owned by Story Homes but it has now been transferred to Gateshead Council ownership. The aim is to have the land designated as a green space which will allow it statutory protection and to work with the local community to give long term care and appreciation to the site.

 Peter expressed frustration as to how long the land transfer has taken, the delay has predominantly been due to the quality of the work carried out by Story Homes’ contractors in respect of the gate entrances and fences to Hill 60 including the corral access. Gateshead Council will now arrange the remedial work to rectify the poor standard of work at Story Homes’ expense. The developers should have had the work completed 6-12 months after the first building commenced and it’s been disappointing how long it has been delayed as it has unfortunately led to deteriorating biodiversity.

 Positive management of the site will commence including using local grazing horses seasonally, horses are the most suitable livestock as they graze in a manner which is sympathetic to the landscape. The horses will be removed before the winter months set in to avoid churning up the wet ground. Peter went on to say 100 metres of new species rich hedgerow has been planted and fenced on both sides in order to protect it from grazing livestock.

 Questions were asked by people in the audience about the rights of way access and positioning of the fences adjacent to the Shepherd’s Wall. Peter explained in his capacity as an Ecologist he couldn’t fully comment on these issues, however, he pointed out full planning process was followed regarding the perceived permissive route and unfortunately the route in question had never been a formal right of way. With respect to the positioning of the fences the placement isn’t in line with the legal boundaries deliberately to preserve the Shepherd’s Wall structure, the title deeds are on file showing the legal boundary should it ever be contested. A further question was raised by members of the audience regarding the land between Hill 60 and the back of the houses on the North side, this belongs to a 3rd party and access to that land needs to be maintained. Residents were also concerned about the damaged saplings put in to replace areas of hedgerow, this has now been rectified. It was recognised by the Our Villages Chair and Peter that there is a lot of public disgruntlements about some of the decisions made, and although sympathetic to the concerns due process has been followed, drawing on their charity expertise and volunteer base.

 Peter handed over to Mandy from the Durham Wildlife Trust (DWT) who explained they would be working closely with Gateshead Council on the positive management of the site. DWT have been engaged by Gateshead Council to support over the next 20 years. The field around Hill 60 includes areas of acid grassland and many flora and insect species necessary for the support of the wider food chain. The mature and fledgling hedgerows will require sympathetic management including consideration of bird nesting season. Birds such as Lynch are declining in the area.

 The intention is to maintain the circular route of Hill 60 and put in some information boards including reference to the history and wildlife. A bin has already been put next to the kissing gate entrance from Marchetti mews which will hopefully reduce the dog fouling on the land, including the instances of abandoned bagged dog waste. A bin also exists on Fell View, it was not possible to put it on the opposite entrance within Hill 60’s field due to access for the waste disposal team. Dog wardens will also patrol and issue penalty notices if necessary and educate and raise awareness of issues. Quiet informal recreation will be encouraged, such as, but not limited to, walking including dog walking. Whereas golf practice and metal detecting are to be discouraged. Sledging will still be allowed. Antisocial behaviour and littering will also be discouraged.

 Durham Wildlife Trust will be on the Hill 60 site over the next few weeks and if anybody wants to volunteer to get involved you can do so by completing a volunteer application on their website ([www.durhamwt.com/volunteer](http://www.durhamwt.com/volunteer)). The upcoming volunteer activities will be the removal of ragwort and cutting back of gorse prior to the arrival of the grazing horse.

 The chair thanked Peter and Mandy for a very informative talk and welcomed ongoing collaboration between Our Villages, residents, Durham Wildlife Trust and Gateshead council on the positive management of the site.

**11. Any other business.** Graffiti was highlighted as a concern. Our Villages have purchased 2 cans of graffiti remover to tackle some graffiti.

**12. Closing remarks.** The Chair thanked everyone for attending.