### **Peckforton Parish Meeting**

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish**

**A Meeting of the Parish was convened by the Chair of Peckforton Parish Meeting to be held at 19:00 on Tuesday 3rd December 2024, at Peckforton and Beeston Village Hall.**

 **8th February 2025**

The Parish Meeting welcomed attendance by members of the public. It was noted that attendees who are not electors in the parish were not be able to vote at this meeting.

Please contact the Clerk, Chris Jones at peckfortonparishclerk@gmail.com with any queries.

1. Apologies for absence. **Hilary Watson, Colin Statham, Richard Edwards, Sarah and Jimmy Rae, Claire Lincoln, Jo Parsons.**
2. Declaration of interests – Officers are to declare any interests under the following categories: - pecuniary, outside body, family, friend or close associate. **None**
3. Declaration of interests – Electors may, if they wish, declare any interests under the following categories: - pecuniary, outside body, family, friend or close associate. **None**
4. Approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 3rd September 2024. **Approved - It was noted that the original draft of the minutes was updated,** following comments from a resident of the villagewho raised a concernthat the Village Hall were not formally thanked in the last minutes. We have explained to the individual that the Village Hall Committee along with members of the community were thanked in detail as part of the Chair’s speech at the Buzzard unveiling and as such it was felt this was more than covered. The Chair explained that by way of further thanks post the unveiling the Parish had made a donation to the Village Hall committee to say ‘thanks’, and as such in the last meeting he thought it appropriate just to say thank you to everyone who took the time to come along and support the event. That said, the minutes have been adjusted to reflect the concern.
5. To receive an update from the Chair on various matters including
6. Highways. **Please see the extract from the Chair’s report, appended to these minutes.
Flooding in the village.** Peckforton Hall Lane is still flooded between Manor Farm and Peckforton Hall and has been flooded for some 3 weeks. The Chair has received a report of a near-miss at the bottom of Peckforton Hall Lane, where it meets Stonehouse Lane, when two vehicles skidded, perhaps because of the mud on Peckforton Hall Lane near the flood. It was thought that the excess mud was mostly because of the flood and the large number of very big agricultural vehicles in transit as crops are harvested. It was agreed that the Chair would discuss this with local farmers, Avove and United Utilities to seek their views.
7. Speed Update. **Please see the extract from the Chair’s report, appended to these minutes.**
8. United Utilities. **Please see the extract from the Chair’s report, appended to these minutes**
9. Developments at the Peckforton Estate. **Please see the Chair’s report, appended to these minutes. Peckforton Estate have agreed to contribute £1,000 towards maintenance of the public areas of the village in 2025/2026, and for 2026/2027 as well.**
10. Update on the Elephant and Castle in the village. **Please see the Chair’s report, appended to these minutes. There is a temporary brace in place. The owners are hoping to move the statue to firmer ground lower down the hill to ensure that it remains stable for many years. The meeting’s view was that any constructive plan to stabilise the Elephant and Castle for the benefit of the village would be very welcome.**
11. Village Hall fencing. **Please see the extract from the Chair’s report, appended to these minutes.**
12. Woodland retreats. **Please see the extract from the Chair’s report, appended to these minutes.**
13. Poppies/Remembrance. **Please see the extract from the Chair’s report, appended to these minutes. The Chair was complimented on the purchase of the Remembrance Silhouette and said that he hopes to purchase another (female) one next autumn.**
14. **The Chair hopes to collect a Christmas Tree - donated by the Peckforton Estate by the middle of** December.
15. To receive the Clerk’s report, including any planning matters that come to hand. **There were no planning items, the Clerk requested a new laptop for the parish, as the current laptop is operating on Windows 7, is unsupported by Microsoft and is becoming unreliable, which was agreed.**
16. To agree the level of precept to be requested from Cheshire East Council. **Clerk discussed the financial projection to the end of the year; the forecast shows a cash balance c. £ 1,600 on 31st March 2025. An increase of 10% to £ 3,300 was agreed, and the clerk was asked to write to Cheshire East Council to request this amount for 2025/2026.**
17. The Chair of the Parish Meeting will give an opportunity for members of the public to bring matters of interest to the meeting. Please note that any such matters will be dealt with under the provisions of the Parish Meeting’s Standing Orders adopted on 15th July 2021
**Mike Watson asked if there was any update on the application for the area to be designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. – The Chair agreed to look into this and to hopefully have an update for the next meeting.**

**There being no other items, the meeting closed at 19:58.**

**Chairman’s Report December 2024 Meeting**

1. **Highways**
	1. The main focus of the Chair since the last meeting was on the flooding problems in the village. The Chair reported that a number of emails had been sent to Highways (Roy Cook and Stacey Truman) about the condition of the roads. – In particular Peckforton Hall Lane, The Village Centre and at the bottom of Quarry Bank.
		1. It was confirmed that Highways had prioritised the work to address the floods on Peckforton Hall Lane and at the bottom of Quarry Bank, but at the time of the meeting the Chair did not have an actual date for when the work would be done. The Chair noted that it had been particularly bad on Peckforton Hall Lane the week prior to the meeting with the ice as well. Pictures of this were sent to Highways making the point that in addition to the road being broadly impassible, it was also dangerous to cars and pedestrians alike. Highways (Stacey Truman) noted the concern and again pushed it with the Drain Clearage team for action.
		2. The Chair also put on record his thanks to Steve Roberts and Mandy Salmon for getting on to Muir Homes and United Utilities respectively about the recent flooding on Quarry Bank. The Chair commented he was not sure who came out, but at least for the time being it seemed the problem was resolved. Water was flowing freely through the drain and the flooding had been stopped.
		3. Road Speed Issue
		The Chair reported that the second speed monitoring had not been done despite having sent in more suggestions for where to site the Tagmaster. Apparently, none of the 5/6 locations suggested and photographed were suitable. Despite having asked Highways to explain why, no response had been forthcoming so it had not been possible to suggest alternatives..

That said, Highways (Aki Tsakonas) did report back that he had found the details of 3 speed surveys carried by another department at Cheshire East in Jan 2022. One south of Peckforton Hall Lane; one south of Horsley Lane; and another in the middle. He confirmed he had looked at this data and it supported the case for a 40mph speed limit through the village. Whilst on the face of it this is good news, the case is considered ‘low priority’. As such Highways position is that they would not fund the necessary signage and other speed control measures, and if we were to proceed with it would be at a cost ***to the village*** of +/- £25,000. The Chair has explained to Highways that the Parish doesn’t have this sort of money and as such has requested a meeting to more fully understand why this is the case and what we can do to try and get support from Cheshire East.

As part of this the Chair has again requested (as agreed in our May 2024 meeting), that we jointly complete the Prioritisation Matrix (Highways and Peckforton Community), in the hope this may reinforce the case for action.

1. **United Utilities – Vyrnwy Project**

Phase 2 work is underway. Most of the pipes for the lining have been delivered to site. At the time of the meeting the actual re-lining hadn’t started but was expected to do so in the next couple of weeks. United Utilities reported that they don’t anticipate much activity before Christmas, but it was expected to move into gear in Jan 2025. They aim to have the work completed by March 2025. Regarding specifics: -

* 1. UU will open up the land on the right-hand side of Peckforton Hall Lane (direction Bunbury), to replace the valves in the second line. They have applied to Highways for permission to close the road as a precautionary measure, but do not expect to have to do this.
	2. Reinstatement of the land will take place in 2 steps
		1. Phase 1. dill commence June 2025 when they will be pulling out the Haul roads etc.
		2. Phase 2. Is seasonal work due to weather conditions and will involve laying soil etc. Reinstatement should be completed around spring of 2026
	3. The Chair reported that he continues to remind UU that the Parish/Village Hall are after some of the gravel from the in-roads they have built to lay in the Village Hall car park… UU have confirmed they do have plans to provide us with gravel but are currently working though landowner meetings to discuss what they want in terms of reinstatement. Once completed, they will be able to provide details of the quantity of gravel remaining.
1. **Peckforton Estate Update**
	1. **Land/Area Maintenance**The chair reported that the program of ground maintenance had gone well in 2024. There remained one item of work on the job list, namely one more cut of the hedges between the Bank and Forestry cottages and Quarry Bank and Hill Lane.
	The Chair was pleased to confirm that following a meeting with the Estate in September it had been agreed the annual contribution towards maintenance would increase from £800 to £1000. This is now fixed for two years.
	2. **Fencing** – The Estate have agreed to fund the fencing to the Village Hall Car Park to the sum of £3,500. The Chair confirmed that with help from Mandy Salmon and Richard Edwards he had scoped out the work and costed it and was therefore happy (subject to no crazy increases in material costs), that this would cover the monies required to complete the work. The money will be paid to the Parish/Village Hall in April at the start of the Estate’s new financial year. Other points of note in respect of the fencing: -
		1. Following discussions with Jimmy Rae and Richard Edwards, the chair has agreed with the Estate that the Village Hall should only be responsible for the maintenance/upkeep of the fencing for a period of 15 years (the expected/guaranteed life of the fencing). Thereafter the situation is to be jointly reviewed and provisions for going forward will be agreed.
		2. In response to a request for clarification, Holly Shaw has confirmed that there will be no changes to the Estate’s Insurance liability as a result of the fencing.
		3. Finally, ***we will be looking to put together a working party to install the fencing in the Spring***.
	3. **New Woodland Cabins** – The Chair reported he had received some initial concerns from members of the community regarding the Cabins. In response he contacted Trotton-with-Chithurst Parish Council (on the South Downs), who entered into an arrangement with UY Recreational in 2022, to get their insights into how it was working. The Chair reported a very positive response which was shared with the meeting (***see appendix)***.
	Holly has confirmed the Estate are considering installing another couple of cabins if things go well with the 1st two.

Holly also confirmed that they have placed a contract with a local agency to do the day to day housekeeping/changeovers for the cabins, but did ask for the Chair to mention that they are in need of someone to do more manual/maintenance if anyone is interested?

* 1. **Other Estate Matters**
		1. The tree restocking behind The Barns and to areas down by the old school beyond Horsley Lane will be carried out in Jan/Feb.
		2. The Chair raised a concern about the poor maintenance of the new trees in general. Subsequently further work was carried out and it was felt that whilst it had improved around the village hall, the area behind Bank Cottages does not look to have been maintained. Thid will be raised with the Estate.
		3. Finally we got the trees down next to Smithy Cottage … Hurrah!!
		4. A member of the village has agreed a lease with the Estate to take on and repair one of the sheds on Quarry Bank. If this is successful, the others may be offered up on a similar basis with a peppercorn rent being paid in return for the occupier refurbishing the shed. If anyone else is interested in this then they should let the Chair know.

All in all the Chair reported that he felt we have a very positive working relationship now with the Estate, inviting Edward Tollemache along to the Buzzard opening certainly helped as he was able to see at first-hand what we’re trying to achieve, and whilst it’s not an open cheque book, he is supportive.

1. **Other Village Matters**
	1. **Poppies/Statue**.
		1. The Chair confirmed he had purchased some more poppies to put up around the village and also passed on thanks to Mandy for her help with putting them up.
		2. An ‘executive decision’ was made together with the Clerk to purchase a ‘Tommy’ statue for the village green. At just shy of £200 these are not cheap, but it is hoped we will have funds to purchase a second one next year, so we have one either side of the village memorial.
	2. **Xmas Tree**It was confirmed we plan to put up a tree again this year and we’re aiming for weekend of 14/15 December. The Estate have confirmed they are happy for us to have another tree and Dave Buckley has kindly offered to help find a suitable.
	3. **Elephant/Castle Statue**The chair commend that he thought most people would have seen the bracing that has had to be put in to support the statue. Alison and Mike confirmed they were happy for more of the background/details to be shared with the meeting.
		1. In a recent survey (Alison and Mike have one carried out annually), it highlighted that there had been quite a bit of movement of the statue and that remedial action was needed.
		2. The outline plan (as at the time of the meeting), was to relocate the statue further down Alison and Mike’s garden onto lower/flatter ground which will be more stable. This also means only one lift of the statue thereby minimising the risk of damage.
		3. Work has to be approved by Cheshire East Heritage as it is a listed structure. In principle they are happy for the statue to be moved, but despite this Alison and Mike have to apply for Planning Permission.
		4. Finding a company who will take on the ‘lift’ is proving a challenge, not least of all because of the weight/size of the statue.
		5. Together with Alison and Mike investigations as to whether any grants may be available through English Heritage or Heritage England were being pursued..
		6. The current support work has been signed off by a structural engineer. It was understood by the Chair that this was for an initial period of 18 months.
		7. Enquiries were made with the Estate to ascertain if they would/could support the project, however they respectfully declined. On balance their reasoning was acknowledged as they cited the problem they have is f they say ‘yes’ to one, where does it end?
	4. **Working Parties**
	Thanks again to Jon Hughes for initiating this this summer. We plan to get this on to a more regular footing in the spring of next year.

The Chair concluded by wishing everyone a great Christmas and all the very best for 2025.

**Appendix – Response from Trotton-with-Chithurst Parish Council in response to request for Feedback on their experience with UY Recreational and the cabins installed in their parish.**

Dear Neil,

I’m sorry if I have missed an earlier email – probably like you I receive hundreds of unsolicited emails and do my best to respond to those that are legitimate but I do miss the odd one.

I can certainly reassure you about our experience with these “caravans”. We have not had a single complaint about noise or anything else – despite the initial fears from some neighbours about the possibility of extra traffic on the narrow single-lane road. It seems the people staying there are mainly city-dwelling types on genuine retreats, and it seems they seldom emerge until it’s time for them to go home. The “retreat” in our parish was set up by a family who have owned a woodland property attached to their home for several generations, and they did a good job of discussing their plans with the parish council and their neighbours well in advance. If I tell you that the retreat has been established for over two years now and that the owner has just joined our parish council, that might underline the lack of resistance to what he is doing!

I hope that helps but I am happy to respond further if you need anything else.

All the best.