

# Witton Gilbert Parish Council News

wgpcnewsletter@gmail.com

## SACRISTON LANE ALLOTMENTS

We are pleased to report that the ongoing issue of the Sacriston Lane Allotment Gardens has come to a satisfactory conclusion.

A little more than 12 months ago the Parish Council, and subsequently its tenants, were served with a "Notice to Quit" on the allotments to expire on the 12th November 2020. This would have meant the end of 110 years of continuous occupation of the site.

Durham County Council resolved, at a Cabinet Meeting held in October 2020 to support the Parish Council in its efforts to acquire the site, by agreeing to initiate a Compulsory Purchase Order of the allotment land on behalf of the Parish Council.

By the time the County Council was in a position to serve the relevant papers it was becoming extremely close to the 12<sup>th</sup> November deadline and the tenants were already starting to remove property in anticipation of having to vacate their allotments.

To everyone's relief following a conversation between the local MP's office and the



One of the Allotment Garden Plots

owners of the allotments they had a change of heart and decided to withdraw the Notice to Quit and also to sell the land to the Parish Council on reasonable terms.

Since then things have moved on a pace and hopefully by the time this edition goes to press the purchase of the land will be nearing completion if not already completed.

The Parish Council would like to record its thanks to a number of people without whom it would not have been successful in securing the future of the Allotments.

Firstly Clare Cuskin and Andrew Holtham of Durham County Council who have assisted greatly in navigating

the Parish Council through the Compulsory Purchase Order process, regularly taking time out of their schedules to meet with the Council on Zoom and never wavering in their commitment. We would also like to thank both our County Councillors Beverley Coult and Arnold Simpson who have provided funding and behind the scenes help at a County Council level. Also our thanks to Robert Jauneika of H and H Land and Estates for his valuable help and advice and to Nick Rippin, assistant to MP Mary Foy who was instrumental in obtaining the agreement.

Finally a big thank you to everyone else who helped to secure the future of our popular allotments.

## WITTON GILBERT PARISH COUNCIL

### Parish Council Meetings and Contact Details

Current members of Witton Gilbert Parish Council are as follows: -

Fraser Reynolds (Chair)	3711198
Neil Liddle	07950440265
Arnold Simpson	3712161
Paul Guy	3710455
Lynne Michelle Hope	0790418423
Geoff Brown (Vice Chair)	07540500073
Amanda Hillary	3718239
Louise Murphy	3711564
Daniel Lynch	07837278471

Parish Council meetings are normally held on the second Monday of the month in the Witton Gilbert Community Centre at 6.30 pm. However, at the time of publication meetings are being held by video link due to Covid 19. This will continue until it is deemed safe for face to face meetings to resume.

Members of the public wishing to attend a meeting may do so but must leave during confidential parts of the agenda. Residents may be given an opportunity to speak but this will be restricted to 15 minutes in total and is at the Chairman's discretion.

Agendas and Minutes are currently being published on the website in line with Government Guidelines.

Residents wishing to attend a meeting must give their full details (Name, Address, Contact No.) to the Assistant Clerk by email at [wgassistantclerk@gmail.com](mailto:wgassistantclerk@gmail.com) at least 3 days in advance of the meeting and will receive

an invitation email with further instructions on how to access the meeting remotely in good time before it takes place. If a member of the public wishes to take part they will need to be willing to install the necessary software on their PC, Tablet or Telephone if they don't already have it, further details will be provided by the Assistant Clerk before the meeting.

The Parish Clerk can be contacted on 01913711808, or by mobile at 07984027243 or by email at [wittongilbertparishcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:wittongilbertparishcouncil@gmail.com)

The Assistant Parish Clerk can be contacted by Mobile phone on 07587568095 or by email on [wgassistantclerk@gmail.com](mailto:wgassistantclerk@gmail.com)

### Parish Precept 2021/22

The Parish Council at a meeting held in January 2021 reaffirmed a decision made at its December 2020 meeting to set the precept for 2021/22 at £55000. This is an increase from last year which reflects the cost of purchasing the Sacriston Lane Allotments but it also enables the Council to continue to do more in the Parish including: -

- grass cutting around the village centre and allotments
- a Fireworks display on November 5<sup>th</sup>
- funding a Christmas tree with associated costs
- litter picking

- a considerable number of donations to various good causes.

In addition, the Council would like to finance other work around the village including possible environmental improvement projects that are under consideration.

## COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

2020 was a year none of us ever expected to experience and hopefully we will never face anything like it again in the future.

We wish to focus on this year and being positive, there are several projects which are planned for Witton Gilbert in 2021. The new play park to the rear of the Primary School should be installed and this will provide a modern, exciting location for the children to enjoy.

Helping to secure the future of Sacriston Lane allotments was fantastic. We managed to do this by attending many meetings and also providing £10,000 worth of funding. We both know how important this area of the village is to many people and look forward to seeing gardeners preparing their plots for the new growing season.

A massive thank you must go to Witton Gilbert Parish Council and DCC officers who committed a phenomenal amount of time ensuring that the allotment site was secured for many years to come.

We also secured funding to replace some equipment at the park near South Lea. Additional benches will be sited on the grass, along with the recreation of the pathway running from the top of Findon Avenue down to the heart of the village near McColls.

It was wonderful to be able to support Witton Gilbert Primary School with funding towards the hand washing stations which were installed and utilised throughout covid19 (see photograph below). These stations are an additional facility which can be used moving forward for many years to come.

We will continue to work on other issues such as traffic concerns around the village.

If you have any concerns please do not hesitate to contact Arnie or I. Our contact details are [arnold.simpson@durham.gov.uk](mailto:arnold.simpson@durham.gov.uk) 07387253816 or [bev.coult@durham.gov.uk](mailto:bev.coult@durham.gov.uk) 07771840947.

## WITTON GILBERT COMMUNITY CENTRE

2020 was certainly a year for us all to remember, both young and old.

The Village Hall Association has certainly missed holding our usual successful events for children from our village and surrounding areas due to Covid, but we are certain they will resume in the future.

Before Christmas the committee gifted all children within our Village Education Sector a Christmas present; this included the Village Hall Playgroup, Witton Gilbert Primary School and the School Playgroup.

We hope you all continue to stay safe and well during these uncertain times.

From all members of the committee of Witton Gilbert Village Hall Association.

## WALKING IN COUNTY DURHAM

***Are you fed-up with doing the same old walks?***

Walking in Durham [www.walkinginengland.co.uk/durham](http://www.walkinginengland.co.uk/durham) is the website for you!

With hundreds of walks to download and print, free, it also has books of walks, contact details for all the walking groups in the county and much more. Whether you want to walk on your own or with a group all the information is there in one place.

There is so much walking information on the web but it is difficult to find. Walking in Durham (part of the Walking in England suite of websites [www.walkinginengland.co.uk](http://www.walkinginengland.co.uk) one for each county in England) has brought it together in one place so whether you are walking from home, or away on holiday, you will be able to find a walk suitable for you.

With walks from half a mile to twelve miles plus in length, and a note of suitability for pushchairs and wheelchairs, everyone can find a walk to enjoy.

So home or away, check out the websites and get walking!

John Harris  
[www.walkinginengland.co.uk/durham](http://www.walkinginengland.co.uk/durham)  
email:  
[john@walkinginengland.co.uk](mailto:john@walkinginengland.co.uk)



The New Hand Washing Stations at Witton Gilbert Primary School supported by County Councillors Coult and Simpson

## BREATHING SPACE

### ***What's Breathing Space been up to during lockdown!***

Before the current lockdown Breathing space had started their Get Active programme thanks to Cooper Hall in Witton Gilbert and the Fulforth Centre in Sacriston who allowed us to hire the larger halls to accommodate social distancing.

In late October the North East unfortunately had to go into tighter restrictions which mean that our indoor classes would not be allowed and so we looked to provide exercise packs for our participants to use at home and doorstep sessions.



Breathing Space Exercise Pack

Members felt that the exercise packs were "Excellent, the Exercise kits are used regularly, We find the exercises clear to follow and miss attending the Indoor sessions we are unable to attend the outdoor classes as we are shielding."

In November we were placed into lockdown restrictions which meant we could not do the doorstep sessions legally

and so we offered worksheets to our participants and we were able to negotiate the use of the churchyard to use



Breathing Space Get Active at Witton Gilbert Community Centre

for one to one sessions. We were amazed at the number of our members who still wanted to continue in the outdoors to keep fit and active.



Exercise Session in the Churchyard

One member said the sessions are "Very enjoyable and helps me to exercise on a regular basis, I look forward to my weekly Outdoor exercise it's the only outdoor activity I can do under the current Covid restrictions."

Contact Gillie at [breathingspacedurham@gmail.com](mailto:breathingspacedurham@gmail.com) for further information about exercise sessions

## PARKING PROBLEMS IN NEWTON STREET

Parents and Residents are reminded of the issues caused by parking in the village, particularly in Newton Street during school drop off/pick up times.

The following issues have been highlighted;

- Blocking driveways
- Preventing access down the pavement for prams/wheelchairs
- Making turning out of Newton Street onto Front Street and Sacriston Lane difficult
- Preventing/restricting access for emergency vehicles.

There is a particular concern about the impact of restricted access for emergency vehicles should, for example, a fire engine or ambulance be required. Furthermore, residents in Newton Street are being 'blocked in' by parked vehicles in front of driveways and access points.

**Editor Mr. D. C. Rider**  
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**The closing date for the next edition is Friday May 28<sup>th</sup> 2021**

**Please provide articles in Microsoft Word format. Pictures should be provided separately as a jpeg file at a resolution of no less than 300 dpi.**