Lathom South Parish Council

serving our local community

Newsletter 35

Spring 2025

Welcome to the Spring/Summer edition of the Lathom South Parish Council Newsletter.

In this newsletter you will be introduced to our new Parish Councillor, Jacqueline Raeburn. We welcome Jacqueline to her new role as a Parish Councillor and hope she finds the role interesting and enjoyable.

You are all welcome to come and meet Councillors and find out more about the role of the Parish Council at the monthly meetings which are generally held on the second Wednesday of the month at the Cricket Club on Blaguegate Lane. Details are displayed on the Parish noticeboards and on the website.

This newsletter includes important information about proposed alterations to the old railway bridge on Firswood Road (pages 7-10). We encourage you to let us know your views on this project. This will be included on the agenda for the Annual Parish Assembly which is being held on Wednesday 14th May, commencing 8pm, at the Cricket Club.

We hope you enjoy reading about some of the events which have taken place over the last few months.

New Lathom South Parish Councillor

Greetings, residents of Lathom South, my name is Jacqueline Raeburn. I would like to introduce myself as the new Councillor for the Lathom South Parish, following the resignation of Cllr Carol Blackledge.

I moved to Lathom eleven years ago and fell in love with the area and now, look forward to being part of the Parish Council team and serving the local community.

Having a love for walking in the area, I will endeavour to help keep our pavements and public footpath access safe for all. As the good weather approaches (hopefully very soon) this becomes more of an issue, with hedgerows and brambles etc. sprouting to life and quickly becoming overgrown, it can make passing them difficult and hazardous.

Thank you in advance, all property owners, whose boundaries border public access, for keeping hedgerows in check and helping to make walking a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone in lovely Lathom.

You can see the many things that Lathom South Parish Council do within the community, with your help and involvement, including past newsletters and the history of why the parish was created, by visiting the **official web site** at:-

www.lathomsouthparishcouncil.gov.uk

WLBC Local Plan Update

West Lancashire Borough Council has once again postponed the release of its new Local Plan, citing recent national planning reforms as the reason for the delay. This process, which began back in autumn 2019, continues to be pushed back.

So, what exactly is a Local Plan? It's an essential planning document produced by every council that sets out a long-term vision for development across the area. It guides where new homes, businesses, and infrastructure should be built, while ensuring growth is managed sustainably and meets community needs.

The updated timeline from WLBC now schedules the publication and consultation on their preferred options (effectively the draft plan for public review) between April and September 2026, followed by consultation on the Publication Version (the updated version following public consultation) during the same period in 2027. Public examinations by the Planning Inspectorate are expected during 2028, with adoption of the finalised plan planned for later that year.

There is some concern that this timeline overlaps with the end of the current Local Plan which expires in 2027, which could potentially lead to speculative planning applications during the transition period. The Parish Council will continue to monitor progress around the Local Plan closely and will remain alert to any planning applications that could significantly impact the local area.

Parish Precept 2025

In our February 2020 newsletter, we, reported that our precept (the Parish Council's component of your Council Tax) had been **reduced** by 8% from the previous year. This was a correction of the previous year's increase, which had happened because the Borough Council had not taken into account receipts raised from new housing occupied on the Lathom Pastures 1 development. From then until 2024/5 we were able to hold the average precept at the 2020 level through a combination of more houses in the Parish being occupied and judicious use of reserves.

This year, with costs rising constantly, we were still on course to set an unchanged precept but the national insurance changes came as a difficult extra burden. You might not be aware that Parish Councils **are** subject to the higher charges even if they employ fewer than five staff. The £5,000 salary "threshold" for employer contributions is down from £9,000 and this change will cost 15% of £4,000, or £600 a year per employee. However, the contribution rate increase from 13.8% to 15% of qualifying salary will add to this cost. We employ only one (part time) clerk who is paid at the appropriate nationally set hourly rate, for twelve hours' employment a week, which adds an extra 8.7% to previous National Insurance contributions charged on earnings above £9,000 a year.

In spite of this unexpected increase and other cost pressures, we have held the increase per household to 2.1%, which will be identified separately on your Council Tax demand. You might ask why we can't just take the extra money from reserves but we have to be prudent

and the additional income from new homes will not continue to rise after the developments are fully occupied. Reserves provide for replacement of worn out assets, as well as providing assurance against unexpected situations. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) moneys have to be ring-fenced by law for qualifying investments; more details of these appear in other articles in this newsletter. All of your Parish Councillors live in the Parish, give their time feely and are subject to the same precept levels (according to council tax banding).

The Borough and County Councils have increased their charges by 3.0% and 5.0% respectively. Fire and Police Authority precepts are increasing by 5.9% and 5.3% respectively.

Lathom South Parish Council NEEDS YOU!

VACANCY for one Parish Councillor commencing May 2025

If you are interested in coming a Parish Councillor please contact our Clerk

clerk@lathomsouthparishcouncil.gov.uk
Tel: 07353 074691

Dangerous Tree Remains Left on Plough Lane

Local residents have likely noticed the dangerously placed log and tangled branches piled up along the roadside near the dip in Plough Lane. This debris is the aftermath of a tree brought down by Storm Darragh back in December last year.

While Lancashire County Council (LCC) Highways cleared the fallen tree from the road quickly, they left the hefty log and branches stacked alarmingly close to the roadside.

The Parish Council Clerk raised concerns with LCC Highways, only to be told that contractors are instructed to leave "remaining wood stacked neatly and safely by the roadside when private trees fall on-to the highway." Clearly, that's not what happened here.

Adding to the confusion, LCC claims the tree belongs to the landowner from the opposite side of Plough Lane and that, if the wood is stacked safely, it's a civil matter. But as the photograph below shows, location is anything but safe.

LCC then requested photographic evidence before taking further action, which we subsequently supplied. They have since confirmed that the debris will be moved to a safer position, however this could take some time as they will need to arrange for traffic management on Plough Lane. Meanwhile, the Parish Council will continue to monitor this situation.

Firswood Road Bridge Proposed Safety Scheme

In our Spring 2023 edition we carried a two-page spread about increasing road safety problems along Firswood Road. With increasing development of housing along the road, traffic movements have increased and will continue to increase as the Wainhomes "Latune Gardens" estate is occupied progressively. It's not just cars that will add to the traffic but home deliveries of all kinds and a surprising number of cars from the Lathom Pastures 1 development turn right and travel north along the road, also of course crossing the bridge.

At the time, we referred to "***The old hump backed railway bridge, with a pavement so narrow and sloping steeply towards the road surface, where only one unaccompanied person, taking great care, can remain on the pavement. Vehicles often approach the apex of the bridge at too high a speed, risking vehicle collisions and personal injury to pedestrians, children in buggies and dogs... Our first priority is to make proposals to Lancashire County Council to make the bridge crossing safer by sharing the costs of any agreed works that are within our spending power using CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) funds...***"

Comments received from residents at the time were generally very positive.

Our proposal remains "***to widen the pavement to at least 1.5 (preferably 2.0) metres, thus narrowing the road surface to enable only one stream of traffic to proceed at a time; this would be controlled by traffic lights. A similar arrangement exists on Junction Lane in Burscough."*** Although two years have passed since then, we have not been idle. Lancashire County Council has not shared our priorities and has refused to contribute funding towards a scheme. A surprisingly high estimate for the cost of a scheme was put forward by the authority's planners but we have not been deterred **and we have been successful recently in obtaining a commitment of half the estimated cost from the Borough Council's CIL funds.** The Parish Council receives only a small proportion of CIL funds raised from developments in the area (with the majority going to the Borough Council, so this is not taking funds disproportionately from other areas).

The County Council has now informed us that planning for the proposed scheme has been scheduled for the third quarter of 2025/6. In the meantime, we need to be able to demonstrate residents' general support for it, even though full details will not be available until detailed plans have been produced. Our **Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 14th May (8p.m start) at the Cricket Club will have the item on the agenda** and we look forward to discussing the scheme with residents face to face**.**

We are running an initial consultation exercise which is included on the following pages. This can also be completed on line following the link

https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/0ZJCVU/

or scan the QR code right

Firswood Road Bridge Survey

Q1. How often do you travel over the old railway bridge along Firswood Road?

Please tick	**Every day**	**A few times a week**	**About once a week**	**A few times a month**	**Once a month**	**Never**
As a pedestrian						
As a pedestrian with a dependant(s)						
As a cyclist						
As a motorist						

Q2. Do you feel crossing the bridge is hazardous?

Please tick	**Yes**	**No**	**N/A**
As a pedestrian			
As a pedestrian with a dependant(s)			
As a cyclist			
As a motorist			

Q3. Do you support the proposal to widen the pavement over the bridge and introduce a traffic light management system for vehicles?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Neither support or oppose ☐

Please let us know your thoughts about the proposal. Do not include any personal details.

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Q4. Do you live on Firswood Road, Lathom Pastures or Latune Gardens?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q5. Including yourself, how many people live in your household?

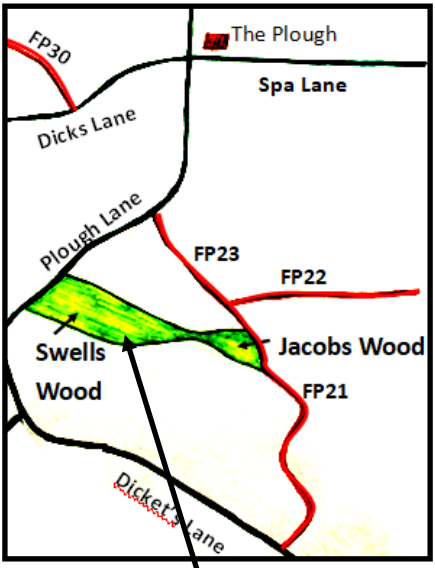
Adults ……

Children (under 18s) ……..

Please return completed forms by 31st May 2025, either :
By post to Mrs J Smith, 3 Old School, School Lane, Melling, L31 1FE
Or scan and return by email to:
clerk@lathomsouthparishcouncil.gov.uk

We're building a pond!

We're always trying to improve our Parish and we focus a lot on the two woodlands that the Parish Council own and look after. The great news we're sharing with you today is that we are creating a pond in Swells Wood where we hope wildlife will flourish. A digger was taken into the woods in late March and the brook was widened and an area dug out that will be the basis for our pond. We have sourced some water plants, funded by a Biodiversity grant, and will introduce them into our new pond where they will hopefully thrive.



It may not look too fantastic in the picture above but once we get vegetation on the newly machined land, some plants in the pond and a bit of a tidy up, it will look great.

Friends of Jacobs Wood
Spring Working Party

On Saturday 15th March we held our first FOJW working party. Eight volunteers arrived at 10am and began removing tree protectors from some of the trees in Swells Wood. It was a beautiful day with the sun beating down but everyone worked diligently. At a rough estimate we removed about 400 tree protectors from trees that didn't need them anymore or just empty tree protectors where the tree had failed to grow.

Unfortunately we ran out of time to complete the Sisyphean task but it was a happy moment when we looked back into the woods where we had been working so hard to see a very definite difference in the amount of plastic we could see around the trees in the woods. When we do our Autumn working party (probably 13th September) we'll start at the opposite end of the woods and try to "complete" the task. In all likelihood there will be tree protectors in the woods for another couple of years since some of the trees are less than 3m and still need protecting.

Hopefully by the time you read this newsletter the unwanted tree protectors will have been collected from the woods and sent for recycling in Blackburn. The next FOJW working party is scheduled for 15th June as this coincides perfectly with when the Himalayan Balsam starts flowering but has yet to seed. The plan for the Summer work party is to try our best to pull up every Himalayan Balsam plant, which is an invasive species, in the woods and it will hopefully remove the need to start spraying herbicide.

If you fancy getting involved then please join our Facebook group or get in touch with the Parish Clerk to register your interest and we'll sort out a mailing list for those that don't wish to have Facebook. Please join our Facebook group by scanning the QR code below with your smartphone camera app.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/845442787417269

Dog Fouling Issues

Dog fouling is an issue in many areas with some dog owners not cleaning up after their dogs. The Parish Council have no authority over this problem but it fully supports WLBC in taking measures to manage the issue as it has done recently on the junction of Firswood Road and Blaguegate Lane.

WLBC take dog fouling very seriously. The Public Space Protection Order - (West Lancashire Borough Council) 2020 has come into force under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014. This order supersedes the previous order from 2017 and covers every location across West Lancashire.

There are a number of areas in Lathom South where there is a particular issue with dog fouling. We remind dog owners who do not clear up after their pet, that they will be issued with a fixed penalty of £75.00 and may be prosecuted. We ask that used dog bags are either placed in a street bin or taken home—please don't leave them on the pavement or hang them in a tree!

What other matters come under WLBC?

WLBC is also the contact point for

- **Keeping West Lancs tidy**— litter, fly tipping, abandoned vehicles, graffiti, fly posting, street cleaning;
- **Dog control** -The Environmental Enforcement Team is regularly out on patrol throughout the borough. They oversee:
    - ◊ Controlling stray dogs
    - ◊ Enforcing dog fouling laws
    - ◊ Educating people about responsible dog ownership
- **Environmental Health** - complaints from the public about a wide range of issues that can affect people's health like noise, smoke, refuse, fumes, odour and dust.

Highways Issues

Highways issues are the remit of Lancashire County Council and should be reported directly to LCC so the issue can be dealt with promptly. The easiest way to log an issue with LCC is via the **Love Clean Streets** app. Simply download the 'Love Clean Streets' app for free from the **App Store** or **Google Play Store** on your mobile phone or tablet. Set Lancashire County Council as your home authority.

Use the Love Clean Streets app to report:-

- **Highways Issues**
  Attaching a photo to your report (optional) will help LCC inspectors to assess the situation promptly.
- **Road Cleaning**
  If you encounter debris or shards of glass on the road snap a photo, report the issue on Love Clean Streets and help keep your Parish clean and safe.
- **Vegetation and Trees**
  Again the Love Clean Streets app is the go-to tool for reporting vegetation and tree-related concerns along verges.

The Love Clean Streets app is simple to use and your issue can be logged in seconds

Don't want to use the App? No problem…..You can still report issues by phone on 0300 123 6780 or on line via the Report It website
Report it - Lancashire County Council

www.lancashire.gov.uk/roads-parking-and-travel/report-it/

Remember, your proactive reporting contributes to a cleaner and more pleasant environment for everyone!

Contact Details

Clerk: Mrs Jane Smith
3 Old School, School Lane, Melling, L31 1FE
Telephone: 07353 074691
Email: clerk@lathomsouthparishcouncil.gov.uk
Website: www.lathomsouthparishcouncil.gov.uk

Your Parish Councillors are:

- Andrew Beeston
- Andrew Chanter
- Roger Clayton (Chairman)
- Ernie Pallas
- Jacqueline Raeburn
- Darren Steele (Vice Chairman)
- Andy Taylor

All contact via the Clerk

Meetings held at 7:30pm at the
Cricket Club, Blaguegate Lane, Lathom, WN8 8TY
Meetings are usually held on the second Wednesday of the month but please check the website

Please contact the Clerk (details above) to raise any items you wish your Parish Council to discuss.

IMPORTANT DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

WEDNESDAY 14th MAY

Annual General Meeting 6.30pm

Annual Parish Assembly 8pm