



## **Purpose of the report**

To give details of the achievements of the Parish Council over the last 12 months and to set out the Council's priorities for 2024/2025.

Newtown Linford Parish Council is made up of 7 members, 3 being the quorum number of decision making.

## **Your Parish Councillors**

Councillor Sue Pritchard (Chairman)

Councillor Tim Porte (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Sue Greasley

Councillor Robert Haylock

Councillor Vicki Lightfoot

Councillor Tara Pickles

Vacancy to be filled by Co-option following the resignation of Councillor Ronnie Bains in December 2023.

## **Your Parish Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer and Registrar of Burials**

Mrs Hannah Shaw

248 Markfield Road,

Groby,

Leicester.

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## **Overview**

Over the past twelve months, the Parish Council and its staff have continued to play an active role in day-to-day life in Newtown Linford, maintaining high quality standards in our areas of responsibility and developing working relationships with residents and partners.

Newtown Linford Parish Council are responsible for the upkeep of:

- All Saints' Closed Churchyard, Bradgate Road
- The Bob Bown Memorial Field and Play Park, Grey Crescent
- The Newtown Linford Cemetery, Groby Lane
- 57 street lighting columns on Bradgate Road, Groby Lane, Main Street and Markfield Lane and many items of street furniture as detailed in our Asset Register, which is reviewed annually.

We continue to ensure these assets are kept in good repair for the benefit of the residents of Newtown Linford and look for ways in which we can develop and improve these areas.

The Parish Council provides a Christmas tree at the Village Hall each year and are encouraged by the continued Advent Windows initiative which was again well supported by residents across the Parish. Our thanks go to resident, Ruth Brutnall who originally instigated the idea in 2020 and has continued to organise the event since. In 2023, we held our second Christmas Advent Event at the Village Hall in partnership with Newtown Linford Primary School. The evening was supported by Newtown Linford Choral Society who sang carols around the Village Christmas Tree. We plan to run the event again in 2024 on the first Thursday of December.

Chairman, Sue Pritchard, attends to the Village troughs regularly throughout the year and tends to some areas of the Cemetery on Groby Lane, including the planting of spring bulbs.

Sadly, in 2021, a change in structural testing requirements of Parish Council owned streetlights, meant the village hanging baskets, which are usually displayed at three locations on Bradgate Road and Groby Lane and the flower tower at the Village Hall, were not able to go ahead, as the cost associated with the revised testing requirements, meant our order became unviable. As this has affected a number of parishes within Leicestershire, Leicestershire County Council are now looking at providing a service themselves at a more preferential rate and we hope to see the return of the Parish Council funded floral display sometime in the future.

### **Main Achievements between April 2023 and March 2024**

There have been a number of notable events and achievements over the last 12 months:

#### **Bob Bown**

- Following a successful SHIRE Environment Grant application to LCC, Newtown Linford Parish Council in association with Newtown Linford Biodiversity, installed bird boxes, hedgehog and insect hotels at Parish Council maintained sites around the Parish including the Bob Bown Memorial Field. The bird boxes have been particularly successful during nesting season. In between times, NLB arranged the cleaning of the bird boxes and have reinstalled them for the 2023 nesting season.
- Charnwood Borough Council drafted new Heads of Terms for a 21 year lease of the Bob Bown Memorial Field at a rent of £300 per annum and this arrangement is now complete.
- A further consultation was held with residents and park users regarding possible new equipment for the play park. Councillors voted unanimously in favour of replacing the old wet pour surface which had suffered shrinkage, with a new 'carpet' style surface. Following a short delay, works commenced in April 2023 and are now complete, including the installation of some new park equipment. This does, however, leave a gap in play facilities in the short-term, however, we hope to continue with regeneration of the park over the forthcoming years and sooner if further grant funding can be secured.
- New signage was purchased and installed at the Bob Bown Memorial Field in response to non-permitted apparatus, such as rope swings, being installed from trees within the woodland.

## **Cemetery & Churchyard**

- Following a review of the Grounds Maintenance Contract for all three Parish Council maintained sites in December 2021, we are very pleased with the progress of our contractor, Michael Liggins of Firetree and the additional services such as hedge trimming and weed control. Firetree are committed to carrying out grounds maintenance without the need for pesticides, which can be harmful to the environment and wildlife.
- A new ash plot area at the Cemetery was completed in February 2024 and plots are now available to purchase.
- In liaison with All Saints' Church PCC, a new bench has been installed at the Churchyard in memory of Janet Neaverson.
- 60 hedgerow saplings were awarded to the Parish Council by The Woodland Trust to further aid wildlife and increase biodiversity and were planted at the Churchyard in March 2024.
- A review of our Cemetery Fees is currently being carried out to bring Newtown Linford Cemetery in line with other nearby authorities, particularly in relation to non-resident fees and to cover increasing maintenance costs.
- The Clerk successfully applied for Small Business Rates Relief for the Cemetery which resulted in an £800 rebate of rates paid over recent years. Rates are therefore, no longer applied to the Cemetery, saving the Council over £100 per year.
- The Parish Council joined the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management as a Corporate Member in 2023 and now benefits from their ongoing support and guidance.
- Further badger and mole deterrents have been installed at the Cemetery, Churchyard and the Bob Bown Memorial Field following disturbances to the ground.
- Replacement timber log roll was installed around a planted area within the Garden of Remembrance at the Cemetery. The previous log roll had rotted and the area needed attention.

## **Highways & Road Safety**

- The Parish Council have approached LCC Highways with regards to speeding within the Parish and an investigation has commenced. We hope to have an update soon. Covert Speed Surveys carried out by local Police Beat Officers have consistently shown poor compliance with the speed limit.
- NLPC successfully applied for Members' Highway Funding for new Parish Welcome Signs which were installed during 2023. Funding has also been allocated to purchasing post and rail fencing for the verges registered under the Urban Wildflower Verge Scheme and this scheme is now in progress.
- Councillors agreed to funding the fell of a tree stump following reports from residents that the height of the stump allowed people to gain access to their properties off the access track to the Bob Bown Memorial Field. This work has now been completed.

## **Organisations**

- The Parish Council has continued to support Newtown Linford Biodiversity group who formed in 2021. Cllr. Pickles attends regular meetings and the Groby Lane wildlife verge has been extended to double the size of the original area. NLPC continue to fund a fortnightly grass cut of mown pathways within the Markfield Lane wildflower verge, to allow pedestrians to explore the natural flora and fauna and a number of new signs marking the areas.
- The Parish Council Chairman continues to attend Village Hall Committee meetings as a representative of Newtown Linford Parish Council, who are the custodian trustee for the Village Hall. The Parish Council continue to support the Village Hall Committee to ensure this important village asset remains viable and Clerk took on the role of Booking Secretary.
- The Clerk has organised a number of successful village events in aid of the Village Hall which have all been well attended by residents and associates of the Village. In total, approximately, £4200 has been raised for the Village Hall to date.
- A regular 'Monday Marketing' continues to be posted on the Parish Council's Facebook page, which gives every local business and organisation represented on the group, a bi-weekly opportunity to advertise their services, menus, opening hours and updates etc.

## **Parish Council Business**

- Approximately 38 planning applications and 19 tree work applications have been considered during Parish Council meetings and comments submitted through Charnwood Borough Council's Planning Portal.
- The Vice-Chairman and Clerk attended Section 106 training in 2022 and the Parish Council have since expressed their wishes to be included in two separate Section 106 agreements should planning permission be granted, for the purchase of Average Speed Cameras at a cost of £100,000.
- An Annual Governance review has been carried out again in 2024 and revised Parish Council policies and procedures will be considered for adoption at the Annual Parish Council Meeting in May.
- The Parish Council's Facebook group has increased to 503 members. Through this, more residents from harder to reach areas of the Parish are becoming involved in village activity.
- Engagement continues with residents regarding many topics through regular updates on our website, social media and through village magazine articles.
- The Council applied and were successful in registering the Village Hall as an Asset of Community Value with Charnwood Borough Council. Assets of Community Value and the Community Right to Bid, offers greater opportunity for communities to keep such buildings in public use and ensure they remain a social hub for the community.
- The Parish Council enlisted IT and Cloud backup services through Astley Computers to ensure all Parish Council business is safeguarded against hacking or computer viruses/breakdown.

## **Village and Wider Parish**

- 200 packs of Hydrosnakes were purchased by the Parish Council in December 2023 at a cost of £1700, following further flooding events whereby flood defence stocks were depleted. Further flooding in January 2024 also resulted in the purchase of two submersible water pumps for use by residents in the event of an emergency. All items are stored at the Village Hall and a key safe is now operational, which allows access 24 hours a day by calling the Parish Clerk for the access code.
- The Parish Council have continued to support two verges registered with the LCC's Urban Wildflower Verge Scheme. Newtown Linford Biodiversity look after verges on Markfield Lane and Groby Lane, the latter having recently been extended. Bird boxes and insect hotels were installed at these locations and both verges have had NatureSpot Wild Space Surveys carried out. Details of the surveys can be viewed on the NatureSpot website and the Parish Council fund the continuation of these dedicated webpages.
- Further support has been given to Newtown Linford Biodiversity by funding a fortnightly grass cut of mown pathways within the Markfield Lane wildflower verge, to allow pedestrians to explore the natural flora and fauna and financial support for Village Hall hire costs for the annual NLB open evening. Newtown Linford Biodiversity have also been given space on the Parish Council website.
- The Parish Council supported a successful Village Coronation event in May 2023 to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III by granting up to £500 towards the associated expenses.
- A grant of £400 was awarded to residents of Roecliffe Riad towards the purchase of a defibrillator.

## **Key Priorities for 2024/2025**

### **Bob Bown**

- The Parish Council will continue to explore available funding opportunities to further improve the Bob Bown Memorial Field and Play Park, following the installation of new surfacing and equipment which was installed in April 2023.

### **Cemetery & Churchyard**

- Newtown Linford Parish Council would like to explore the possibility of a Garden of Remembrance for the scattering of ashes at the Cemetery on Groby Lane, which would provide a more cost effective service to both residents and non-residents.
- Memorial stones at both the Cemetery and Churchyard will be assessed by topple testing in the next financial year and any works identified will be addressed.
- A review of Cemetery Fees will be completed to bring Newtown Linford Cemetery in line with other nearby authorities, particularly in relation to non-resident fees and to cover increasing maintenance costs.

## Highways & Road Safety

- Following the implementation of waiting restrictions in Newtown Linford and the areas surrounding the three Bradgate Park entrances in March 2021, the Parish Council will continue to monitor the impacts and address any issues arising.
- The Parish Council will continue to monitor incidents of fly-tipping at key hot spot areas and will consider the option of reducing or adding signage to a number of known 'vehicle pull-ins' that are now covered by double yellow lines.
- Following issues with low lighting affecting the Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) on Bradgate Road, the Parish Council would like to explore the possibility of purchasing a mobile VAS sign which can be moved to various locations along that stretch of road and relocate the existing VAS sign to the 40mph limit on Markfield Lane where speeding issues have been highlighted. However, we first await the outcome of a current investigation being carried out by LCC Highways in relation to speeding within the Parish, particularly along Bradgate Road, Main Street and Markfield Lane.
- NLPC have resolved to, if possible, apply for Adverse Possession of a small piece of land which abuts the River Lin on the corner of Markfield Lane, where it meets with Main Street. Newtown Linford Biodiversity have expressed an interest in the management of this land. An application is being prepared for submission to HM Land Registry, however, current response times are expected between 18 and 24 months.

## Organisations

- The Parish Council will continue to offer grants of up to £500 each to Village organisations, currently limited to two grants in total per financial year. Please see our Grant Awarding Policy Terms and Conditions for further details.
- The Clerk will continue to act as Bookings Secretary for the Village Hall. Since taking the role on in June 2002, regular weekly bookings have increased by 140% which has greatly improved income generation and the viability of this much valued Village asset.

## Parish Council Business

- Newtown Linford Parish Council will continue to maintain and develop its existing assets and to consider acquiring further assets which would be beneficial to the Village and the people of Newtown Linford.
- Planning applications will continue to be considered at Parish Council meetings and comments submitted to case officers at Charnwood Borough Council.
- The Parish Council will regularly review their budget and will keep any increase to the precept to a minimum where possible, whilst maintaining between 3 and 12 month running costs in reserve.

## Village

- As structural testing is carried out on Parish Council street lighting columns and where the need for repairs are required, the Parish Council will continue to upgrade lanterns to LED to reduce our

carbon footprint and may consider additional LED conversions now the payback time is under 3 years due to the increased cost of electricity.

## Financial Information

In order to maintain Parish Council reserves between 3 and 12 month running costs, the precept for the 2024/2025 financial period has been set to £62,599.00 which is an increase of 5% on the previous year. For Band D properties, this equates to a £5.92 rise or 11.4p a week.

The precept set and Council tax Base rates for the current and previous five financial years' are detailed below:

2019/20 Base number of properties 533.9 divided into precept of £51,000 = £95.52  
 2020/21 Base number of properties 542.8 divided into precept of £51,500 = £94.88  
 2021/22 Base number of properties 532.3 divided into precept of £54,075 = £101.59  
 2022/23 Base number of properties 534.9 divided into precept of £56,779 = £106.15  
 2023/24 Base number of properties 537.1 divided into precept of £59,618 = £111.00

2024/25 Base number of properties 535.4 divided into precept of £62,599 = £116.92

Parish Councillors again discussed at length the increase in precept and other variants of a 3 year budget plan were also considered. Every effort was made to keep an increase to a minimum. The Parish Council now carry forward the maximum of 12 months running costs in general reserves, partly due to the increase in precept but also due to a sharp rise in Cemetery income (see below) during the 2023/2024 financial year.

The following is a summary of unaudited income and expenditure for the 2023/2024 financial period and includes the sum of £59,618 raised as part of the precept (Council Tax):

Area	Expenditure	Income
Administration including staff costs	£19,544	Precept £59,618
Bob Bown Memorial Field	£28,956.36	-
Cemetery	£6,896.95	£10,769.54
All Saints' Closed Churchyard	£5,237.00	-
Street Lighting	£7,027.80	-
Village Hall Rent & Maintenance	£3,066.00	-
Village Magazine Donation 2023	£700.00	-
Village Maintenance	£509.98	-
PWLB Loan Repayments	£4,936.12	-

## Newtown Linford Parish Council Staff

Newtown Linford Parish Council employ one member of staff, Mrs Hannah Shaw, who is the Parish Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer and Registrar of Burials who works 21 hours per week.

Our seasonal grounds maintenance team is an external contractor and we employ the services of a handy person for occasional work at the three Parish Council maintained sites.

## **Parish Council Meetings**

Newtown Linford Parish Council hold 10 or 11 meetings per year, including the Annual Parish Council Meeting and the Annual Parish Meeting in May each year.

Public and Press are invited to attend meetings of the Parish Council which start at 7.15pm in the Village Hall, Main Street, Newtown Linford, LE6 0AE. The dates of the next three meetings are advertised on our website: [www.newtownlinford.org.uk](http://www.newtownlinford.org.uk)

## **Chairman's Conclusion**

Newtown Linford Parish Council have again sought to improve our facilities and the general environment within the parish for our residents. We continue to work with Charnwood Borough Council to achieve those outcomes desired by our residents within the constraints of Borough policies. I am very grateful for the support that we have received from Borough Councillor David Snartt and County Councillor Deborah Taylor when difficult and controversial matters arise. However, we are particularly disappointed that the decision has been taken at Charnwood Planning Committee to allow the change of planned residential units in the previous Lady Jane Grey Mobile Home site from the proposed modest bungalows to 1 ½ story houses. We continue to face pressure on our Parish open spaces within and adjacent to the village and issues with traffic volumes and speed.

Our Parish continues to host a vibrant and helpful community and I should like to thank all those who contribute to the many Clubs and activities that give such opportunities for recreation to our residents and those organisations that seek to preserve the beauty of our surroundings.

Our Clerk, Hannah Shaw, continues to be the pivot of all our operations, both in adversity i.e. during flooding incidents and in the vital day to day liaison and organisation of all that we do. Thanks also to Hannah for providing great support to the Village Hall Committee as Bookings Secretary and as the driving force behind many of our events.

Finally, thank you to all my fellow councillors for the hard work you do for our residents and also the support and advice that I am privileged to enjoy from you. All Parish Councillors are unpaid elected representatives and I'm sure our residents (as well as myself) appreciate the time and effort you devote to making Newtown Linford Parish so pleasant a location in which to live and work.

Dr. Sue Pritchard  
Chairman