**Minutes of Claxton Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 19 May 2022 at the Village Hall**

**(Subject to amendment until signed by the Chair at the next Annual Parish Meeting in 2023)**

**Parish Councillors (3) present:**

Councillors David Hamblin (Chair), Jason Cantrill, Mike Balmer

**Also in attendance:** District Councillor Vic Thomson. Cllr Balmer acted as Clerk

**Members of the public: 5**

1. **Welcome to the meeting by Parish Council Chair**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Claxton Parish Annual Meeting.

**2. Apologies for absence**

Cllr Harwood had sent her apologies, owing to being away from Claxton.

**3. To agree and sign minutes of Annual Parish meeting held on 19 May 2021.**

Minutes were approved and signed.

**4. Parish Council Chair’s report (David Hamblin)**

The year has been one of steady progress by the Council on several fronts as we all emerged from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. We have returned to in-person meetings at the Village Hall. Zoom, however, did mean that we were able to carry on as a Council when otherwise this would not be have been possible.

Pat Clare stood down as Chair at the last Parish Meeting after 10 years of service to the community coming in as Chair of a new Council in 2011. I have since endeavoured to continue the work Pat started but which had to be curtailed during the pandemic. Pat standing down created a vacancy for a Councillor and I was pleased to be able to welcome Susannah Catchpole joining the Council. I would like to thank all my fellow councillors for their support and work throughout the year as we re-established more normal working practices.

Mike Balmer has continued to have a joint role as temporary and unremunerated clerk alongside being a councillor. I especially thank him for his unstinting work but, to his relief I am sure, we have just appointed Charlotte Rust as our new clerk who will start with us shortly. Susannah has also just stood down as a Councillor but is remaining to see through the Playground project. The subcommittee we formed including several villagers is working well to achieve this. A questionnaire has just gone out digitally and we are working on the paper version for those whom we do not hold an email address for. We encourage everyone to fill it in please. This will enable us to use the findings to support grant applications. We very much welcome interest in becoming a councillor and joining us in our work.

Our thanks go once again to Vic Thomson, our District Councillor, who has continued to give us committed support. His regular reports have helped us keep abreast of issues. Kay Mason-Billig, our County Councillor, it is fair I think to say we have seen less of and we would welcome reports in a similar vein to Vic’s to help us keep in touch with issues at County level. That said, we are very grateful for her help in securing funds towards our project with Highways to renew and enhance speed limit signs in the village. The Council continue to press for more intervention from the authorities on speeding traffic. The speed monitor continues to be shared with Langley & Hardley and now that some of their councillors have stood down, we will see how this will work in the future.

The latest stats provided by Mike show that at some 1 in 5 drivers are above the speed limit when driving through the village and 4 in every 100 are seriously over the limit such that the risk of a fatal collision is extremely high. We will probably be looking to recruit a team from the village to run speed checks in conjunction with Norfolk Police and will actively seek volunteers.

Mike Balmer has produced published and delivered two Parish newsletters during the year keeping the village fully informed on both our activities and those of other village groups.

Lastly, this year we have the remarkable occasion of the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee to look forward to and plans are in hand for a full day’s celebrations here on Thursday 2nd June. The Village Hall, Claxton Parish Pits Trust, Social Club and Parish Council have all given grants to enable this to happen and we hope that a lot of people will enjoy the day planned here.

**5. Police Community Support Officers report**

No report as such, though the Chair and Cllr Balmer had both met PC James King in Claxton the previous day to discuss issues of concern, mostly speeding traffic. PC King will consider setting up in Claxton sometime soon to monitor traffic habits and intervene as necessary. He also hopes to attend one of our Community Cafe mornings, possibly in July.

**6. County Councillor’s report**

There was none.

**7. District Councillor’s report**

Another extremely difficult year. The Pandemic is still with us and a war in Ukraine means still more uncertainty. Things have changed, things are delayed across the board. But during the year at SNDC we tried “to keep the lights on”. We supported the economy with £50 million of grants to businesses. We also focussed on supporting Individuals and empowering communities. Communities jumped in to help, and responded to a call to help Ukraine refugees. The SNDC Help Hub extended its time, working smarter and more collaboratively, working remotely and using online for work and meetings. Staff were redeployed - leisure centre staff helped with vaccination, hospitals, and our Help Hub. As we learn to live with Covid we need to promote growth, care and cooperation and a living agenda.

On the Council Tax Rebate Scheme so far 10,129 households have had their £150 rebate processed and the remainder of customers paying us by Direct Debit (DD) will be processed next week. The money will be arriving in bank accounts from Monday. We have been working with a company called Ascendant Solutions which has allowed us to process all of our customers through the same system. The process has been quite complex as we have to ensure we do not pay second homes, empty homes, or companies, for example.  All addresses that do not qualify have to be identified and removed.

Once uploaded to the Ascendant system we have been able to extract the DD payer details, and identify them as Green or Red.  Green customers we can pay immediately. Red means the details don’t match and we have to make more checks, as we don’t want to pay money into a bank account that doesn’t belong to the householder. Once the DD payments have been finalised, the next stage is for us to invite the non-DD payers to claim their payment.  We will extract their details from the Ascendant System and send them a unique letter with instructions on how to claim.

To date we have paid the vast majority households where we already hold their bank details. Broadland: 40,409 Households = £6,061,350. South Norfolk: 39,178 Households = £5,876,700. As from today we are starting to contact those households where we don’t hold bank details asking them to provide us with details to facilitate payments. We have set up a dedicated team to deal with queries from households and they can be contacted on 01603 430600, or 0808 178 7141 (option 8).

We have agreed that both Councils will move to a new energy efficient office on Broadland Business Park. One officer team has already saved £1 million.

Nutrient neutrality covers the Wensum Valley and The Broads. We cannot approve any planning until we have mitigation for nitrates and phosphates. Nutrient pollution is a big environmental issue for many of our most important places for nature in England. In freshwater habitats and estuaries, increased levels of nutrients (especially nitrogen and phosphorus) can speed up the growth of certain plants, impacting wildlife. This is called ‘eutrophication’ and it is damaging protected sites. As such, some sites are classified as being in ‘unfavourable condition’. The sources of nutrients generally include sewage treatment works, septic tanks, livestock, arable farming and industrial processes. Where sites are already in unfavourable (poor) condition, extra wastewater from new housing developments can make matters worse. By designing development alongside suitable mitigation measures, that additional damage can often be avoided. This approach is called ‘nutrient neutrality’. It essentially allows developments to be permitted without impacting on the condition of the important wildlife / protected sites.

My Members Grant of £1,000 is available and the Community Action Fund is available for applications from £1,000 to £15,000. The aim of this funding is to:

• build capacity within communities so that groups are enabled to be self-sustaining without ongoing practical and financial support from the Council,

• stimulate local economic growth, and

• facilitate creative partnership approaches to helping people in need at the earliest opportunity.

There will be lots of information about Recycle, reuse, and composting coming for the rest of the year. SNDC is switching bin lorries to hydronated vegetable oil, which will cut our carbon by 68%.

Are you interested in being a plastic free village? Here are a few links that the parish council may find useful

* [Norfolk Recycles](https://www.norfolkrecycles.com/communityaction/reduce-single-use-for-communities/)
* [Plastic Free Communities](https://plasticfree.org.uk/)
* [Plastic Free Schools](https://plasticfreeschools.org.uk/)

Ever wondered what happens to your recycling, once our bin crew collect it? Watch this short video to find out how it's sorted, once it arrives at the Materials Recovery Facility: [http://ow.ly/O4MH50IkK5J](https://t.co/1LpHwy7g0T).

Find out what you can and can’t recycle here [http://ow.ly/Q6Zt50IkK5I](https://t.co/OglIPE8bqD" \t "_blank).

Great news… You can now recycle empty crisp packets (and other plastic bags and wrapping) at local supermarkets. Let’s all do the right thing. Find your nearest participating supermarket [http://ow.ly/RNsC50IwSYx](https://t.co/O6eBDxOtZJ) [#NoTimeToWaste](https://mobile.twitter.com/hashtag/NoTimeToWaste?src=hashtag_click) [#ImprovingTheEnvironment](https://mobile.twitter.com/hashtag/ImprovingTheEnvironment?src=hashtag_click) [#RepeatTheCycle](https://mobile.twitter.com/hashtag/RepeatTheCycle?src=hashtag_click).

Foil pill packaging - I have sent Clerk an invite to receive newsletter about this project. This will be the quickest way to order in future.

In our Spend Local campaign we are asking our residents to make a conscious decision to spend a little extra every month with local businesses. The idea is that a small change by many people makes a big difference. For example, if each adult in Broadland and South Norfolk spent an extra £5 a month with local shops and businesses, this would add £1 million per month to our local economy.  This small change in behaviour can make a big difference in supporting local businesses and jobs, and ensuring our high streets, shops and villages continue to offer us all great products and shopping experiences. The data behind this is on this website page <https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/communities/love-local-spend-local>

**8. Village Annual Reports:**

**Village Hall (from Adrian Gidlow, delivered by Mike Balmer)**

When the hall re-opened we initially offered free sessions to help get people back into the pattern of normal life and encourage new users. This has worked very successfully and our income is now higher than it has ever been before (as reported by our treasurer). All this despite the fact that our charges have not increased for over 9 years,

The installation of a public seating area with planters and the erection of 2 new village notice boards have just been completed.

We have also developed our own website which has already generated additional bookings.

All in all we are in good shape all around. This is mainly due to the hard work and dedication of the committee and financial grants received which have allowed us to contribute to other worthy village causes.

We are currently working hard to ensure the jubilee celebrations are enjoyed by all.

**Social Club (from Andrew Mussell)**

No Report received.

**Church (from Paul Carter)**

2021 continued to be a difficult year for the PCC due to the ongoing challenge of managing the Covid risk and its impact upon society, the Claxton community and the congregation. However, despite these challenges the PCC continued to function and to manage its affairs in a positive but realistic manner. This provided us with the opportunity to reflect upon our role within the Claxton community and across the Rockland Benefice. In particular, our ongoing support for the work of the Ministry team lead by Revd Canon Nick Garrard and supported by Revd. Helen Garrard and Revd. Mandy Ansell. Together they provided regular services at the church as well as virtual worship and events whilst ensuring that all the major festivals were supported, and services delivered.

We are the custodians of a Grade 1 listed church which is of historical and cultural importance to the community. The PCC’s aspiration is to ensure that this church and its churchyard continue to be relevant, well maintained and enjoyed both by the local community and by all our visitors. We want this ancient place to appeal not just as a place of worship to provide spiritual comforts, but somewhere where all can enjoy the peace and tranquillity of an ancient building surrounded by a diversity of flora and fauna.

With regard to this vision, during 2021, we participated in the Diocese of Norwich and Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) Churchyard Conservation scheme managing the 1.5-acre grassland to encourage the flora and invertebrates. A survey of the churchyard was completed, and a report produced following several visits by an NWT surveyor. The positive outcomes from our wildlife management of the churchyard, together with our ongoing work within the community prompted a submission to A Rocha UK and we were awarded the Bronze Eco Church award in December 2021. We believe that the comments recorded in our church ‘Visitors Book’ and the ad hoc conversations with visitors to the church and churchyard, confirm how our stewardship is appreciated and positively contributes to the health and well-being of such visitors.

However, despite these positive outcomes we recognise that to deliver our strategic aim, the PCC has to adopt a multi-layered approach to sustain the appeal of the church in these times when congregations are diminishing, and regular church attendance has become unfashionable. Therefore, given these cultural changes in society, our strategy is to widen the attraction and relevance of the church and churchyard both within our local community and beyond. This requires us to act as individual prime movers to facilitate, support, energise and lead various community groups, thereby helping to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents and others. Given these challenges and our limited resources, as a PCC we continue to support the work and ministry of our incumbent whilst being charged with the responsibility of maintaining the fabric of an ancient building over 900 years old.

**Our operational work:** Although our PCC electoral roll is only 8 persons, together we have helped form, develop, support and sustain the following village-based community groups:

* the Claxton Community Café;
* the Claxton Charitable Pit’s Trust;
* the Village Hall Committee;
* the Claxton Book Group;
* a Community Choir;
* the South Yare Wildlife Group; and
* the Little Fish pre-school outreach group.

These examples demonstrate how the PCC is integral to the wider community and how it helps to catalyse and deliver those activities which help make Claxton a better place to live and enjoy for all its residents and visitors. We believe that working in partnership with other Community Groups with common aims and objectives will help us all improve the ‘Claxton experience’ for the village and its visitors.

To help deliver against these objectives, during 2021 we secured funding from the Claxton Pit’s Trust and the necessary faculty permissions from the Archdeacon, to replace the existing churchyard bench, provide a cycle rack and install a new church information board to illustrate the church and churchyard. This project is now complete and should add value to the Claxton experience for all who visit the church and churchyard.

Our ongoing obligations to maintain the church continue into 2022, with a project to replace the sedge ridge and repair the reed thatch of the church roof. The cost of this project is approximately £11,000. The initial planning for this project commenced in the summer of 2021 with securing by competitive tender a thatching contractor. The planned delivery date for completion being August 2022. Fund raising activities and grant applications are underway and/or are awaiting responses from the charitable organisations approached for financial support. Financial assistance has been pledged by both the Pit’s Trust and the Village Hall Committee, demonstrating community partnership working to help maintain one of our principal village assets.

We were able to deliver our annual Wassail during advent as the precursor to our Christmas Day service and celebrations. This event is now well established in the Claxton church calendar and provides the ideal opportunity to bring people together at the church to enjoy live music, readings and carol singing in the atmospheric surroundings of an ancient building.

We continue to work within the Claxton community to establish and develop relationships to help contribute to the health and well being of local residents and visitors by making the most of the gifts and assets we have available. We thank all those who contribute to this process including Carolyn and David Moar, Rob Harwood, Mike Balmer with their work in the churchyard. All PCC members, Claxton Parish Council, Claxton Pit’s Trust, Claxton and Carleton St. Peter Village Hall Committee and all those supporters who help keep the church clean, decorated with flowers and functioning. This would not be possible without the work of our Ministry Team led by Revd. Nick Garrard to whom we are most thankful for all they do to maintain the relevance of the church and its mission.

**Community Café**

No Report received.

**Pits Trust (from Terry Kendrick, delivered by Mike Balmer)**

The Trustees during the year were Terry Kendrick, Chair and independent member; David Hamblin, Secretary and Chair of Parish Council; Mike Balmer, Treasurer, independent member; Paul Carter, representing Claxton Parochial Church Council; Jason Cantrill, Parish Councillor; Suzy Catchpole, Parish Councillor; Jos Harwood, Parish Councillor; Kevin Parker, independent member representing Ducan’s Marsh

Claxton Parish Pit Charity (the Pits Trust) is registered charity No 243172. The Trust receives income from three regular sources; Ducan’s Marsh, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, for which grants are received from Natural England as well as grazing rent; Number 3 The Warren, a semi-detached house in the village which is let; and a share of the income from the solar panels on the Village Hall which were funded by the Trust.

The **Governing Document** of the Claxton Pit Trust follows a standard Charity Commission model and is available on the village web site for all to read. Trustees are not remunerated and do not claim expenses.

During the year the incoming Independent Chair led a refresh of governance documentation based upon the governance review undertaken by the outgoing Independent Chair. The outcomes from this process are a risk register and a brief strategic plan. The risk review noted key risks and considered appropriate management strategies to mitigate these risks. The strategic plan considered future Trust activities in the coming years within our projected levels of income.

The Trustees have met six times in 2021/22.

The Treasurer prepares a **financial report** for each meeting showing income and expenditure. The Trust is required to have enough reserves to meet any likely shortfall in income and the target of two years’ expenditure has been set. Accounts are provided annually to the Charity Commission and made available to parishioners.

Managing the Trust’s assets ensures the Trust is in a position to help where needed. The house at 3 The Warren is the primary asset of the Trust and was refurbished in 2015. It is let through professional property managers. Minor maintenance items were completed during the year.

Under an agreement with Natural England, Ducan’s Marsh is subject to Higher Level Stewardship management which while providing grant income requires us to pro-actively manage the site in line with their guidance. The marsh is let for grazing for part of the year under this arrangement. Open days for the village and visitors have been suspended during the Covid pandemic. The maintenance, access and enhancement of the site continued during the year. This included the installation of extra nesting boxes.

The creation of a **community orchard** on the former allotments continues, with ongoing management of the site. Trees have been purchased and planted during the year.

A small number of Requests for Support have been received in the year. The Trust has offered help for laptop purchase to support online learning and has provided public transport financial support for attendance at college in Norwich. The Trust provides the cost of a 24-hr lifeline emergency response service provided by South Norfolk Council through Contact Care and a number of residents continue to be supported. All residents of Claxton are eligible. The Trust welcomes further requests which are considered in confidence. We also make grants to organisations. This year we provided funds for a replacement bench, an information panel and bike rack within the churchyard which was essentially complete by the end of the financial year.

An unaudited financial statement for 2021/22 will shortly be available on the Village website and notice board.

**Community Orchard (Paul Carter)**

The original trees are now fully established. Paul and Rob Harwood have strimmed the site to keep it under control in advance of the plansting of a wild flower meadow. Recently a batch of fruit trees (plum, greengage, apricot and pear) were planted and the site will need a fresh strimming soon. Regular watering of the new trees is needed to help them establish themselves. The final stage will be planting in the Autumn. A positive development is the reduction in evidence of the site being used as a dog latrine. There was discussion about the access track behind 5-12 The Warren, which is now open but heavily overgrown.

**9. Local groups & organisations reports**

**South Yare Wildlife Group (David Hamblin on behalf of Peter Armitage)**

Over the year there had been 3 organised talks, over a mix of Zoom and face-to-face. There had been walks to Hellington Reserve (including a picnic) and a winter walk to Rockland. Work has gone on with landowners to establish a B-Line through hedge planting, following the Chet. A family wildlife day in Poringland was very successful. The Group are supporting the rebuilding of the bird hide on Rockland Broads, and a number of events are planned for this summer.

**10. Public participation**

There followed a general discussion among the participants.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending. The meeting closed at 8.32pm