

West Life

*The Newsletter of West Auckland Parish Council
Autumn 2021*

BYPASS? WHAT BYPASS? (or when is a by-pass not a by-pass?)

During the lead up to the 2019 General Election, Dehenna Davison promised a bypass for Toft Hill amongst her aims for the area if elected. Following the elections, she did become the MP for the Bishop Auckland Constituency – which includes West Auckland and Toft Hill.

In the Summer of this year, Government ‘Levelling Up’ money became available and local councils were invited to submit bids for funds to support projects. Ms Davison encouraged Durham County Council (DCC) to make a bid for work at Whorlton, Shildon and a bypass for Toft Hill.

There is no denying that Toft Hill needs a bypass to take the A68 away from its main street, the primary school and the awkward T junction at the Three Tuns pub. However, the whole plan was so rushed that our County Councillors were not even consulted and neither were the landowners who would be affected by a new road until days before the bid was to be taken to a DCC meeting for approval. West Auckland Parish Council were totally unaware of these plans until contact was made by DCC asking for support. The proposed route is hardly a bypass, more a link road between two points on the A68, one at the junction of Hartbrigg Lane halfway up Etherley Bank which would result in a rather large roundabout. The other point is next to the Sportsman Inn at the far end of Toft Hill.

Why is this a concern? The simple answer is that West Auckland and Spring Gardens have been completely overlooked and ignored. How can our MP show such determination to fulfil an election promise to Toft Hill residents without understanding the full picture? It is the same road and the same traffic passing through West Auckland and causing equally serious problems. How can she not know this? Even the DCC officers don't seem to understand. It is not necessarily the volume of traffic through West Auckland but rather the size of vehicles having difficulty negotiating the narrow points at Toadpool and Chapel Street. When the earlier stretches of bypass were completed, the work included a roundabout at Oakley Garage on the A688: the intention at that time was always to complete the bypass system at some point in the future with a final road from that roundabout towards what is now the A68 café, although DCC deny this was ever the case.

West Auckland Parish Council and County Councillors have mounted a campaign to persuade DCC to ‘return to the drawing board’ and plan a proper bypass – one that benefits West Auckland, Spring Gardens and Toft Hill. A petition has been circulating the village and has gained much support and many signatures: copies of this petition will be delivered to Dehenna Davison's office and to DCC. There are houses in the village still to be visited and the more signatures the better: if you haven't had the chance to sign yet and would like to do so, please contact a parish councillor.

Remembrance Sunday

There will be a Remembrance Service held at the Pant War Memorial in the village on **Sunday November 14th**. The Service will commence at 3.00pm but there will be a parade from the car park outside the Well to the Pant for anybody who wishes to take part. Participants should be at the car park by 2.45pm.

The service is of course held outside but do please respect each other's space amongst a sizeable gathering of people. Light refreshments will be available at the Monteith Community Parish Rooms following the service.



A Well Crafted Dedication To Our Heroes



Local sheet-metal worker, Philip (Bazz) Barron, has kindly made the recently donated and installed seat at The Pant in remembrance and gratitude to those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice to protect us all in wars over the years. Bazz spent approximately 20 hours of his own time forging the metal to donate this truly outstanding example of his craftsmanship to the village.

2021 Elections

Following the local elections in May this year, Rob Yorke and Mark Idwal-Roberts were elected as County Councillors for West Auckland and 11 Parish Councillors were elected unopposed for West Auckland Parish Council.



Colin Mairs decided to retire from the Parish Council and did not stand for re-election in May. Colin has served on the Parish Council since its formation in 2004, holding the office of vice chairman and then chairman during that time. Colin deserves a huge vote of thanks for all the energy and work he has put into the Parish Council for the good of the village over the years. As a result of Colin's decision, there is a vacancy on the Parish Council.

If there is anybody who would like to consider joining the Parish Council please contact Sharon, Parish Clerk for more information. It is possible to co-opt a new member onto the Council without a full election: if you would like to become a councillor and help with the continuing work of making the village a great place to be, please get in touch.

West Auckland In Bloom



Once again, the West Auckland in Bloom team have done a superb job in keeping the village bright and attractive with their planting and refreshing the tubs and flower beds throughout the year.

In July a group of judges visited on behalf of the Northumbria in Bloom competition: there was great delight when the team recently discovered that they had won a Gold Award.

Jean Pattison writes: *The volunteers of West Auckland in Bloom were overwhelmed at receiving Gold for the village in the Northumbria in Bloom competition.*

With the support of the Parish Council, Rob Yorke, Mark Idwal-Roberts, Believe Housing, residents and businesses in the village, whether

it was funding or other means – even a word of praise from somebody just walking by – it all helped boost the ego of the volunteers to achieve this honour for the village

*We could not have done this had we not had extra help from the **Find and Fix Group** and the **Clean and Green Team**, from Durham County Council.*

We didn't believe it was possible to achieve Gold on our first entry into this competition so it came as a complete shock – but a lovely one! – and made us so proud to have done this for ourselves, although the main joy was that we had done it for this village and its residents

There is only one level higher than Gold and that is Outstanding Overall.....so that is what we are aiming for next year!

Thanks should also go to Durham County Council for their regular grass cutting around the village and attending to the original shrubs and plants on the Green.

In further news from the West Auckland in Bloom team, a Coffee Morning held at the Monteith Close Community Parish Room in August raised over £1,000 whilst the latest spring bulb planting took place in October. This planting scheme has been taking place for a few years now and it really does enhance the look of the village in spring as the display gets even better each year.



A Macmillan Coffee Morning is being held on Saturday, 6th November at The Well 10.00am - 1.00pm. Please support this worthy cause.

West Auckland Youth Club

The new West Auckland Youth Club has finally been able to start running: it was planned in 2020 but had to be put on hold due to COVID and its restrictions.

It is based in the Working Men's Club on Front Street and will be run by fully qualified, experienced and committed youth leaders. The Youth Club will be open on Tuesdays each week with Junior sessions for ages 8 to 11 running from 3.30 to 5.00pm and Senior sessions for 11 years and over from 6.00 pm to 8.00 pm. The Working Men's Club will not be open for any other activities during Youth Club sessions and all bar facilities, gaming machines and games tables will be securely locked off and kept out of bounds.

New Street Recreation & Play Area

Another project put on hold because of COVID restrictions was the improvement to the facilities at the Recreation Ground near Oakley Cross School. However, earlier this year phase one was started. This includes replacing old and damaged items with new equipment which will hopefully be well used but well respected at the same time. It will not be possible to constantly repair any equipment that is mis-used and damaged in the future. Phase two will include one or two more items for older children

West Auckland Boxing Club



West Auckland Boxing Club, run by local resident Stephen Nicholson, opened last year in the former Youth Club building at Millbank. Despite Covid restrictions which hampered activities at the start, the club has since been able to make good progress offering coaching and fitness sessions for all ages. Whilst it is a boxing club – and wouldn't it be great to see

a future champion emerge from West Auckland – it is also about good fitness training and the club received support from the Parish Council to purchase equipment earlier this year. The club has an excellent coaching and training team who are always on the lookout for that extra inspirational input to encourage their boxers. In May, Cheshire born Paul Butler, a former world boxing champion who has held multiple regional titles, visited the club. In August Sam Eggington the WBC Silver Middleweight title holder from the West Midlands and Robin Reid the former IBO and WBC World Champion from Cheshire also paid a visit. They spent several hours offering advice and demonstrating boxing techniques

The Club is all about introducing youngsters to a new sport, encouraging discipline, providing quality coaching to see how they progress and offering fitness training to anybody who wants to improve themselves. Future plans include travelling to tournaments and possibly staging a local event themselves.



West Auckland Parish Council Contacts

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Meetings held in Monteith Close Community Parish Room at 7.00pm on the 2nd Monday of each month (except August)

Visit our website:

<http://www.westaucklandparishcouncil.org.uk/>

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