

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD IN THE TOWN HALL, COCKERMOUTH ON WEDNESDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2024**

Chair: Councillor J Laidlow, Town Mayor

Also present: Town Councillors Beanland, Bell, Bowman, Bridgman, Burns, Malloy, Samson, Telford, Tucker and Watson; Cumberland Councillors Semple and Tucker; Town Clerk Mrs J Ollerenshaw; 25 electors or speakers.

Meeting started at 19:00

**T01/24 Welcome.** The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited the Councillors to stand and introduce themselves.

**T02/24 Apologies.** Cllr Mark Fryer from Cumberland Council had sent apologies.

**T03/24 Minutes. Resolved** to approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2023. These were signed as a correct record.

**T04/24 The Mayor's Annual Report on behalf of the Town Council.** Cllr Laidlow had submitted a written report (Appendix A). This was summarised by her, and she spoke of the successful, well attended events. She welcomed the new Town Clerk.

**T05/24 Cumberland Councillors' Report.** Cllrs Semple and Tucker had submitted a written report (Appendix B).

Cllr Semple Said that he was also the Chair of the Lakes to Sea Community Panel. There had been an updated report from Jane Meek regarding the Old Court House, but there were ongoing legal issues so they were restricted in what could be said. He wanted to focus on what could be done together.

Cllr Tucker said that although she represented two thirds of the Town, matters affected the whole of the Town. She worked on the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Cumberland Council, as well as a number of other committees.

Cllr Telford thanked them for their hard work and for providing regular updates and being responsive to communications.

Mr Alan Smith asked for a response to a question that he'd asked at the Lakes to Sea Community Panel Meeting. Cllr Semple would contact Mr Smith directly.

**T06/24 Cockermouth and Papcastle Recreational Trust.** The Trust had submitted a written report (Appendix C). Mr Alan Smith, Chair of the Trust, said that they met twice a year to consider requests for funding. Cllr Beanland asked about the source of funding which Mr Smith explained had come from funds from the old sports centre.

**T07/24 Churches Together.** Jane Charman spoke of the Grassmoor Mission Community (GMC) and Churches Together in the Cockermouth Area (CTiCA). GMC covers 56 square miles. CTiCA

also covered the area and included other denominations. They worked together to share resources. They ran Linking Lives which reduced isolation and had set up the Grief Café to help people dealing with loss, there was a food bank in King's Church and an English Café for those people that have English as a second language. There were several clubs, crafty club, cosy club and others. These were all open to anyone in the community. She thanked the Town Council for their support and invitation to join in events. The church had been the headquarters during the floods and would always be there in a crisis.

**T08/24 Kirkgate Arts & Heritage** Emma Heys, the general manager, said that there had been progressive change since Covid and they relied heavily on volunteers. This autumn their volunteers had been recognised by receiving the King's Award for voluntary service. In the last 12 months they had held 465 events with over 8000 visitors.

They had increased the number of films being screened and now had a Wednesday afternoon film with subtitles. There were folk music, jazz events, blues and tribute acts and, with a local comedian, had put on 4 comedy events over the last year, which were well attended. Exhibitions by the Heritage group were temporarily paused but they hoped to restart soon. There had been daytime lectures and a cooking exhibition once a month, which had been popular as well as craft workshops. A youth theatre for 11-18 year olds runs weekly and they stage two shows a year.

They have installed a new kitchen, double glazing, boiler, improved access to the building and fire exits, replaced the bar area and redecorated. All of this has improved the customer experience. They have been successful in their application for two grants. Their money will be spent on improvements to interior and stage lighting, heat exchange system and lift refurbishment.

They have plans for the old athletics club. It will be demolished, and a new building erected to allow the Heritage collection to be housed. There will be consultation about how this will all work but this is early days in the plan.

Clr Laidlow asked if there had been an exhibition on Jennings. Ms Heys said that this would likely be around October.

Mr Alan Smith asked if there was a postcode analysis of who attended. Ms Heys said that she did analysis for new events, but they didn't do that constantly.

Mr David Sidall asked if the Kirkgate would be viable without grant funding. Ms Heys said that the money raised by events covered their own costs, but it would be difficult to sustain without other sources of income.

**T09/24 Cockerthorpe Juniors Football Club.** Des Wright, Chairman of the club had submitted a written report (Appendix D). The club was run by around 40 volunteers with around 400 children playing. The growth in girls' football had been fantastic. They played from the Tarn Close site and used the school facilities for training and the grass pitches for matches. They had no fixed base and the Tarn Close ground had no facilities, no changing rooms or toilets. They

had a development plan for Tarn Close which would include adding a small changing facility and increasing the playing area. There were funds set aside from the FA, but these would not cover the whole project and they would be mobilising and fundraising heavily in the coming year. Any help would be appreciated.

Mr Jim Hully said that the building would have to be on stilts because of methane on the site. Mr Wright thanked him for his input.

**T10/24 Mayfield St Joseph's School.** Sophie McCabe & Clare Child had submitted a written report (Appendix E). The children and staff were thriving in the new school. Mayfield is one of three special schools in Cumbria. They have been classed as Outstanding by OFSTED for three years in a row. They have held their own coffee mornings and their McMillan coffee morning raised around £300. They are utilising their outside area and now have a pet rabbit and are looking to create allotment areas.

The work experience opportunities in Cockermouth were excellent as the young people were in amongst the community on a daily basis. This is a boost to their confidence and sense of self-worth. They are putting on their own production of Grease and hope that people would like to attend. They are hoping to be able to add another four classrooms to the site. They want to allow greater opportunities for parents to come into the school. Children from 4-19 attend. They have made some good local links and have been helped greatly by Cockermouth School who have attended quickly to deal with their IT problems for them.

Cllr Watson said that the chair of the Bike and Skatepark Group had wanted to speak to the school to get their input and views on the project.

Mr Keelan said that the next meeting of the Group was on Monday if they wished to attend.

Cllr Tucker congratulated them on the Outstanding grading for three times in a row. Ms McCabe said it was down to the excellent staff. Ms Child said that each curriculum was tailored to the individual student's needs.

#### **T11/24 Other Business Notified.**

1. Question from Mr Alan Smith to Cllr Tucker. What funding opportunities have you secured or delivered in the past year in your ward, Cockermouth North?

Cllr Tucker responded that it had been listed in the report what funding had been secured.

Mr Smith responded that the Town was looking tired and there were problems with potholes etc.

Cllr Tucker said that Mr Smith should notify her of any specific problems.

Cllr Semple said that the money for Cleator Moor had come from the Government's levelling up fund.

Mr Smith wanted to know that they were banging the drum for Cockermouth.

Cllrs Semple and Tucker said that they already were and would continue.

2. Question from Mr Alan Smith to Cllr Tucker. Why hasn't there been a traffic management scheme delivered in Cockermouth?  
Cllr Tucker replied that there is due to be a meeting with Cumberland Highways about all of the outstanding highways' issues.  
Cllr Semple said that this was the ideal opportunity for the public to make them aware of anything that needed to be considered at the meeting.  
Cllr Tucker said that after the meeting with Highways there would be an informal, then formal consultation.
3. Question from Mr Jim Hully to Cllr Tucker. When will Cocker Bridge reopen?  
Cllr Tucker said that there was a lot going on in the background, but legal matters were involved so she was limited on what she could say. There were multiple agencies involved and as the river was an SSSI, great care must be taken. The Environment Agency was putting some restrictions on work. She could not give a definitive answer.  
Mr Hully asked what the state of the building was.  
Cllr Semple said that they were not experts on bridges and could only accept the officer's decisions.  
Mr Hully said that they ought to be meeting officers face to face as emails don't work.  
Cllr Tucker said that she regularly met with officers and could get answers by email to questions.  
Cllr Semple said that the legal issues were delaying progress. As soon as they could get in the building they would get on with the work. He agreed that communication could be better.
4. Question from Mr Jim Hully to Cllr Tucker. When will we have Market Place fish bone parking stopped?  
Cllr Tucker said that would be considered at the same time as the TRO meeting.
5. Question from Mr Jim Hully to Cllr Tucker. When will St Helen's Steet from Market Place to swimming pool entrance be re-surfaced?  
Cllr Tucker said that would be considered at the same time as the TRO meeting.  
Cllr Semple said that funding had been cut for resurfacing roads from once every 7 years to once every 40 years.  
Cllr Burns said that if the potholes were fixed properly then they wouldn't need redoing so often.  
Cllr Watson said that we now had two Cumberland Councillors covering the work that was previously done by 5 Allerdale Borough and 2 Cumbria County Councillors and he thanked them for their hard work.  
Helen Connolly asked that we move on from potholes.  
Robert Davies said that Town Councillors should write letters to the County Councillors to report potholes.  
Cllr Laidlow explained that there is an online reporting system.  
Cllr Telford said that residents do approach the Town Councillors who take matters up on their behalf.

6. Question from Mr Jim Hully to Cllr Watson. Leader of the Labour group Cllr Watson, please explain the increasing the council tax this year and what benefits will I receive in this and future years?

Mr Hully said that Cllr Watson had responded to him in writing, but he queried what a draft budget was.

Cllr Watson said that he was the co-ordinator of the Labour group, there was no leader. The precept was only a small fraction of the council tax bill and had gone up around 43p for an average property. The budget had been drafted by the previous clerk before she left, and it had been accepted by the Council. Several unexpected costs had arisen, so it was agreed to revisit the budget and the new clerk had produced the revised budget which was agreed unanimously. There is a statement on the Council's website which covers the reasons behind the increase. It was not a party-political decision.

7. Gaby Sanders asked if anyone could update on the Sidings application. 1) The ground survey report. 2) The gas main found on site. 3) The off-site planting in Harris Park. 4) Has there been a police investigation into the alleged fraudulent eco report. 5) Red squirrel sightings need to be sent to WLSI.

Cllr Laidlow said that these points need to be raised with Cumberland planning, but the Town Council can help with sharing the news about the squirrels on its Facebook page.

Cllr Semple said that it is still a live application. All the matters will go before the planning committee again. Cumberland Council has a new ecologist.

Cllr Telford said that the Town Council has objected strongly to the development.

8. Question from Alan Clouston to the Town Council. Why does Cockermouth not have a Town plan?

Cllr Laidlow says that it was brought up a few years ago and the Conservative group voted against it.

Cllr Malloy said it was thought that a Local Plan carried no weight, so wasn't worth it, but a Neighbourhood Plan would. The Town plan simply listed what we were already doing.

Mr Clouston said that a Town plan would give us control over planning matters and the Council should take steps to create one.

Cllr Telford said that it is being investigated, there are thoughts being explored to see what can be done.

Alan Smith said that Mr Clouston is correct, and a Town plan would mean that developers couldn't come in roughshod.

Mr Clouston said that he would hope that the Council would take this on board and try to move forward with a plan.

The Mayor stated that she could extend the meeting for around a further 15 minutes.

## T12/24 Open Forum

1. Mr Brian Coley said that a report had been prepared about improving the High Street and he asked if the Town Council had been involved. He asked if this was being progressed by anyone.

Cllr Bowman had been sent the report a couple of months ago but had not heard about it previously. She was still considering it. There was a "Get to know you" session being planned in the next 2 or 3 months, with the clerk, and this would be a good opportunity to share ideas.

Cllr Laidlow said that if the report was sent to the clerk, she could circulate to all councillors.

Cllr Tucker had shared the report previously and would circulate it again to councillors.

There were no further questions.

Meeting closed at 21:05

## The Annual Council Report 2023-24

2023/2024 saw some big changes within the Town Council.

We had the local elections in May, which resulted in six new Councillors being elected.

Our longstanding Clerk Mrs Sheila Brown also gave notice the same month that she was leaving and finished at the end of October.

Jane Ollerenshaw has taken over as our new Clerk and has settled in very well.

The usual Town Council events all took place, including competitions for all ages.

We decided to hold a family fun day in the memorial gardens last June, on what would have been Carnival Day. It was a huge success, and the same is planned for this year, with added attractions.

The Mayors Civic Service, Firework Display, Remembrance service, and switch on day were all very well attended, as well as Carols round the tree on Christmas eve.

The Mechanics Band support us on the majority of these events, and we are extremely grateful.

I have enjoyed my year as Mayor. It is a privilege to have represented our town for a fourth time.

Mayor Julie Laidlow



# APPENDIX B

## Cockermouth Annual Town Meeting 2024

Report from Cumberland Councillors Helen Tucker and Andrew Semple

### A historic challenge

Cumberland Council is one year old this month. As parents who have brought our children up in Cockermouth, we see it as exactly the challenge you have as a new parent: exciting, challenging, a few sleepless nights, constantly learning and adapting in the first few weeks and months. But of course, Cumberland Council is not “our” baby – it is yours too! We do appreciate there are many expectations that the people, the families, in Cockermouth have of their new council. After all, it’s half a century since the last local government reorganisation and a teenager in Mayo Street in 1974 is a grandparent now! It is an absolute privilege to be your elected representative at such a time of change and in this report, we’ll concentrate on what we’ve done together to invest in our town, our community.

### Lakes to Sea Community Panel

Our Community Panel – Lakes to Sea (council wards of Bothel and Wharrels, Broughton and Dearham, Cockermouth North, Cockermouth South, Keswick, Maryport North, Maryport South) is chaired by Councillor Andrew Semple. Community Panels are a way of listening to our communities and directing investment where it is needed most. This new process puts local people at the hearts of decision making and supports Cumberland Council’s focus on health and wellbeing. Our panel meets four times a year, to decide what our communities need and to direct investment towards projects that tackle those priorities. In our first year we have agreed our priorities which are:

- Transport for the Community
- Community Health and Wellbeing
- Community Involvement
- Community Resilience

The Cumberland Council Executive, in May 2023, recommended and agreed that all Community Panels have the delegated authority to approve grant applications funded from a new Neighbourhood Investment Fund. The intention also is to set up and nurture a Community Network of residents, businesses, third sector partners. We are currently recruiting independent members for co-option to the Lakes to Sea Community Panel.

In summary:

*In the last 12 months (see attached appendix for financial investments)*

- *Part of Cumberland Council’s aim to establish 8 Community Panels (sub committees of the Executive) to create local decision making and local focus*



- *Currently recruiting up to three co-opted members (five out of the eight panels are co-opting this year).*
- *Community engagement throughout the panel area to assist with the setting of priorities and key themes*
- *Distributed £60,183 across 20 organisations. Applications ranged from £300 to £10,000*
- *Set up community networks (engagement arm of the panels)*
- *Formed neighbourhood investment plan (new and will be developed in coming year)*

### *Moving forward*

- *Approx £60k neighbourhood investment funding for 2024/25 (amount tbc). The fund is available for communities to bid into, and the agreed priorities help panels decide where funding should go.*
- *Further development of the Neighbourhood Investment Plan - based around the identified priorities and key themes*

### *Further network events based on priorities and key themes*

This is our first opportunity to review and listen and we want to develop our Community Panel alongside everyone – it's not "our" panel, it's yours!

### **Building a new council**

We have played an active role in developing our new council through our membership of the following council committees:

Councillor Helen Tucker: Vice Chair Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, LEP Overview and Scrutiny Committee, People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Andrew Semple: Audit Committee, Planning Committee, Senior Appointments Committee, Staffing Committee, LEP Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

We look forward to the Annual Town Meeting and we'll be pleased to discuss our first year and, most importantly, start to discuss the years ahead.

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[andrew.semple@cumberland.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.semple@cumberland.gov.uk)

**Lakes to Sea Community Panel Investment Applications 2023 – 2024 – Cockermouth North & South**

Ward	Name of Group / Organisation	Purpose of Investment	Investment Awarded (£)
Cockermouth	Cockermouth Town Council	new planting equipment	£670.00
Cockermouth	All Saints' Cockermouth District Church Council	a larger venue for events	£10,000.00
Cockermouth	Friends of Fairfield Primary	creating a sensory hub	£3,029.00
Cockermouth	Kirkgate Arts	supporting Kirkgate Book Festival	£1,000.00
Cockermouth	Cockermouth & District Civic Trust	installing public information programme	£313.00
Cockermouth	Cockermouth Festivals Group	offering new things in 2024	£1,000.00
Panel wide	Healthy Hopes	administration staff for the team	£4,323.50
			<b>£20,335.50</b>

**COCKERMOUTH AND PAPCASTLE  
RECREATIONAL CHARITY**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**FOR**

**2023-24**

Registered Charity Number 1040902

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## ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHARITY 2023-24

### A. LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAIL

**A.1** The Cockermouth and Papcastle Recreational Charity is governed by a scheme sealed by the Charity Commission on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1994, with Registration Number 1040902.

**A.2** There are seven trustees, currently

Mr Alan Smith (Chair)	nominated by Cockermouth Town Council
Mr Robert Jackson	nominated by Papcastle Parish Council
Mr Brian Merris	nominated by Papcastle Parish Council
Mr Jim Samson	nominated by Cockermouth Town Council
Mrs Christine Smith	nominated by Cockermouth Town Council
Mr. Alan Kennon	nominated by Cockermouth Town Council
Mr. John Conlon	co-opted
Mrs Ros Earthy	co-opted

Vacancies in the number of trustees are filled by the nominating bodies (Cockermouth Town Council – four, Papcastle Parish Council – two) with two individuals co-opted.

**A.3** The administration of the Charity:

*Secretary:* : Mrs Sheila Brown, Woodside Lodge, Camerton, Workington, Cumbria CA14 1LY

*Bank:* Cumberland Building Society, Station Street, Cockermouth

**A.4** The Charity does not operate any committees.

**A.5** For the purposes of the charity scheme, the area of benefit is the Parishes of Cockermouth and Papcastle.

### B. THE PURPOSES AND WORKING OF THE CHARITY

The objectives of the Charity are to facilitate the provision for recreation or other leisure-time occupation for the benefit of the inhabitants of the area of benefit so as to improve the conditions of life for them.

### C. THE YEAR'S ACTIVITIES

#### C.1 CHAIRMANSHIP

The Chair is Mr Alan Smith

#### C.2 FINANCES

The increase in market's volatility in 2023/24 has continued.

### C.3 GRANTS FINANCED

a) The charity normally meets just twice a year, in May and October. Applications are invited through public notice and/or invitation.

b) In the year under review, [6<sup>th</sup> April 2023 to 5<sup>th</sup> April 2024], the charity made 11 grants ranging from £100 to £700 as follows:-

Civic Trust	£100	Programme/Walking guide
Titans	£150	Baby changing unit
Rock Squad	£500	Album
Festivals Group	£500	Family activities/Marquee hire
Papcastle Village Hall	£700	Printing of the Villager
Papcastle Social Committee	£150	Halloween Party
Papcastle Social Committee	£170	Christmas Party
Papcastle Social Committee	£100	Easter Activity
Cockermouth Football Club	£500	Running Costs
Kirkgate Arts & Heritage	£500	In my Shoes
Kirklands Care Home	£250	Activities

Total - £ 3,620

### C.3 SUMMARY OF RECENT GRANT PROVISION

Year of activity	No of grants	Value £
2005-6	8	2,150
2006-7	11	4,085
2007-8	10	3,500
2008-9	10	3,045
2009-10	5	1,850
2010-11	7	3,000
2011-12	7	1,300
2012-13	9	2,970
2013-14	4	1,900
2014-15	11	4,050
2015-16	8	3,308
2016-17	15	2,920
2017-18	12	3,033
2018-19	10	2,935
2019-20	9	2,880
2020-21	0	0
2021-22	9	4,344
2022-23	10	3,825
2023-24	11	3,620
<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>54,715</b>

#### Notes

(1) The accumulated balance at the year-end is available for the award of grants later

during the month of April.

- (2) Average value per grant (last five years) £376.12
- (3) Since its inception in 1994, the charity has made 268 grants to the value of £86,694

**C.5 ADMINISTRATION**

The Secretary is Mrs Sheila Brown.

<p>Considered and approved by the Charity Trustees and signed for them</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Date</p>
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# Cockermouth Junior Football Club



CHARTER  
STANDARD  
CLUBS



Chairperson	Vice-Chairperson	Secretary	Treasurer	Child Welfare Officer	Registration Secretary
Mr. D. Wright	Mrs N Wilson	Mr J Bailey	Mr. M Spiers	Mrs R Tibbs	Mr J Bailey

alison.des2@gmail.com

cjfcwelfareofficer@gmail.com

Subject: CJFC annual update to Cockermouth Town Council  
Date: 21<sup>st</sup> April 2024

## Background:

Cockermouth Junior Football Club is one of the biggest junior football clubs in West Cumbria with approximately 400 junior members from Cockermouth and the surrounding West Cumbria area with a team of over 40 volunteers and coaches. (The demand for club's services continues to grow as the town expands). We are an inclusive club where our overall success is measured by the development of our players' football skills and the enjoyment of the game by our players rather than the number of wins and losses. A further measure of our success is the number of junior members and volunteers we have involved with the club and how they develop and improve. We firmly believe football should be available to all young people and we provide financial support to those who need it. In support of this we provide support for families with financial difficulties.

We are particularly proud in the growth of girls' football within the club over recent seasons with us now having approximately 100 female players in the club.

Our ethos is to develop rounded players both in terms of their personal and football skills and tactical awareness by age appropriate means.

CJFC is a registered charity and receives no external funding; all club costs are covered by annual membership and monthly training fees which the club tries to keep as low as possible to ensure football is affordable for all.

## Facilities

The club uses facilities at Cockermouth School and has a lease from the Town council for the Sports Field at Tarn Close for both training and matches. We are currently 8 years into a 30 year lease for the Tarn Close facility which includes a mandatory agreement to erect a building on the site.

Since taking on the lease the club have invested more than £60k in improving the playing surface on the site and purchasing significant equipment such as goals and two isofreight storage containers.



# Cockermouth Junior Football Club



Chairperson	Vice-Chairperson	Secretary	Treasurer	Child Welfare Officer	Registration Secretary
Mr. D. Wright	Mrs N Wilson	Mr J Bailey	Mr. M Spiers	Mrs R Tibbs	Mr J Bailey
alison.des2@gmail.com				cjfwelfareofficer@gmail.com	

The club recognise Tarn Close as a community asset and provide support to a number of other clubs and institutions in the town at no cost. These include: providing the site for the annual Rotary school tournament and supporting the athletics club and the Tri-club with storage.

As a club our main challenges are:

- lack of a home for the club.
- lack of toilet and change facilities on the Tarn Close site (we have purchased a portalo to provide a minimum requirement);
- insufficient pitches to meet the needs of a growing club

This situation does not meet the minimum standards for the 400 existing playing members and is also restricting our ability to expand into areas such as disability football and also walking football for the elderly.

## Tarn Close Development Project

To address this the club have been progressing a project aimed at developing the Tarn Close site to install toilet and changeroom facility and to expand the football playing surface on the site. Any building on the site would be a Town Council asset.

This has been a long and complex process partly as a result of the complexity of the site and its previous use as an ash tip and also as a result of changing FA requirements.

The club now have a scheme design for the site which has been shared with the Town Council previously and has planning permission to build a small toilet / change facility as well as expanding the number of football pitches on the site.

The Football Association are fully supportive of the project and have some funds reserved to support the project.

The main challenge for the club is to mobilise the fundraising campaign for what is expected to be a project requiring investment of greater than £500k.

Advice from the FA in relation to other projects similar to this identified significant financial gain can be achieved if the project is led by the land-owner as this enables VAT to be recovered from the costs – which amounts to a contribution to the project of greater than £100k. The project is currently paused whilst this request is considered by the council.





## Mayfield St Joseph's Cockermouth

Our St Joseph's campus opened in September 2023, this is the sister site to our Whitehaven campus, whilst we now have 2 sites, we remain one school.

Mayfield School is an all age (3-19) school for pupils with severe and profound learning needs. Some of the pupils also have autism, sensory loss, medical complexities and/or physical difficulties. Mayfield School is an inclusive environment where all pupils feel welcome and valued. We do not offer a one-size-fits-all approach, we acutely tailor the education and support to our children and young people on a highly individual basis.

Mayfield School works hard to provide long-term, life-changing benefits to children and young people. We work relentlessly to develop our young people academically, socially and emotionally, working to boost confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing, and support future job and career success. Whilst also often working to support their physical and health needs.

It is a privilege to have our second site in Cockermouth, this site homes our older pupils, currently from 14 to 19 years of age. We currently have 43 young people and 25 staff members at our Cockermouth site, this is expected to increase to 60 young people and approximately 35 staff members over the next 2 years. We feel truly blessed, the young people have transitioned with ease, the children are thriving in this setting, the opportunities to work with the community are exceptional and we have been made to feel very welcome by the local community.

As we approach the start of our third term, and with this opportunity to speak with yourselves, it has provided a time to pause and reflect on the many things which have been achieved, and there are many, not all of which we will cover in this, but we will work to provide an overview.

We have held our own art exhibition, which was a great success, and this has formed a stronger link with the art department at Cockermouth School, who we will begin to work with termly, and we will access their expertise and facilities. We look forward to showcasing our art and design work as we complete joint projects and work with their sixth form pupils. We currently use their Design Technology facilities, and we are working to design and create the set for our summer term production of *Grease*.

We have hosted our own coffee mornings, our Macmillan coffee morning was one of our very first events, and more recently our 'Thank You' coffee morning, which was incredibly well attended by members of the local community. We plan to develop our own community café on a Friday, this develops such a wide range of our pupil's skills, from planning and preparing, to ordering and budgeting, and communication and customer service.

Our pupils have had an abundance of work experience opportunities, these opportunities are not as easily accessible from our Whitehaven site, and this is a huge benefit for our pupils and comes from being part of this vibrant community. Pupils have engaged in a wide range of work experience, and have been incredibly well supported by a range of employees, from *The Childrens Society Shop*, *Oakhurst Garden Centre*, *Sainsburys*, *the Library*, *Fairfield School*, *Goodfellows Tyres*, *Billy Bowman Music*. These opportunities enable our young people to experience the world of work, and develop their skills, knowledge and expertise for their working life.



We have ventured far and wide, and we work to expose our young people to enriching trips and visits, we love to visit The New Bookshop, and promote our love of reading and the library. We have also visited the Honda Garage, the Fire Station, and the Shoe shop, and we loved our festive cinema visit to the Kirkgate. We have also welcomed a number of visitors, including the Mayor, Rotary members, colleagues from other schools and the Police.

Earlier in the year we held our own World of Work (WOW) day, which was incredibly well supported by local employees. Our young people were making coffee, making bouquets of flowers, fixing bicycle tyres, modelling outdoor clothing to name just a few of the jobs they trialled. This will certainly become an annual event. This could not have happened without such great support for our young people and a commitment from the local community to help our young people to overcome their challenges.

I would like to acknowledge the remarkable support from the Rotary members, with their time and donations of laptops and resources and a mobile cooking unit, all of which enable our children to develop their skills. Their support has been overwhelming, and we are incredibly thankful.

We have so many plans in the pipeline, we work with Kirklands Care Home, we held an arts and crafts event and sang Christmas Carols together, and we plan to start our 'chatty café'.

We plan to work with the ukulele club again, their last visit had our children dancing in the aisles!

Staff and students are incredibly grateful of the support, and the inclusive community culture, we all want to continue to give back, with staff shopping locally and pupils wanting to partake in charities week and raise funds for local charities.

We really wanted to take this opportunity to provide this update, to share our gratitude and to confirm that we will continue to do all that we can to maximise opportunities for our young people, our community engagement work will continue to remain a focus.

Thank you

Sophie McCabe and Clare Child