



## **ANNUAL REPORT**

**2025/26**

**Welcome to the Town Council's Annual Report for 2025/26**

**This report gives information about the Town Council, the money it spends and the activities it carries out and also includes reports from Council representatives on voluntary organisations in the town.**

**A complete list of all Town Councillors is included on the next page of the report, where you will also find details of how to contact them.**

**Vivien Little  
Town Clerk  
April 2026**

## Contact Details

### YOU CAN CONTACT YOUR COUNCILLORS DIRECT OR VIA

The Council Offices  
50 Main Street  
Keswick  
Cumbria  
CA12 5JS

Telephone: 017687 73607  
Website: [www.keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk)  
E-mail: [office@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:office@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk)

The offices are normally open as follows: -

Monday to Thursday  
9.30am –1.00pm

<b>Cllrs</b>	<b>Email address:</b>	
<b>Cllr Louise Dunn</b>	<a href="mailto:louise.dunn@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk">louise.dunn@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Cllr Natalie Evans</b>	<a href="mailto:natalie.evans@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk">natalie.evans@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Cllr Steve Harwood</b>	<a href="mailto:steve.harwood@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk">steve.harwood@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Cllr Chris Houghton</b>	<a href="mailto:chris.houghton@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk">chris.houghton@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Cllr Claire Houghton</b>	<a href="mailto:claire.houghton@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk">claire.houghton@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Cllr Denstone Kemp</b>	<a href="mailto:denstone.kemp@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk">denstone.kemp@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Cllr Benita Laphorn</b>	<a href="mailto:benita.laphorn@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk">benita.laphorn@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Cllr Jean Murray</b>	<a href="mailto:jean.murray@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk">jean.murray@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Cllr Rob Nelson</b>	<a href="mailto:rob.nelson@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk">rob.nelson@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Cllr Claire Peat</b>	<a href="mailto:claire.peat@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk">claire.peat@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Cllr Richard Scott</b>	<a href="mailto:richard.scott@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk">richard.scott@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Cllr Lorraine Taylor</b>	<a href="mailto:lorraine.taylor@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk">lorraine.taylor@keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk</a> >	

## THE COUNCIL

The Town Council consists of 12 Councillors who receive no remuneration. They are appointed through election or co-option and can serve for a period of up to four years before having to be re-elected. The Town Council is the sole trustee for both Hope and Fitz Parks Charitable Trusts.

The Council employs one full time and two part time members of staff (in addition to six gardening and maintenance staff employed in Keswick Parks):

Ms Vivien Little, Town Clerk  
Mrs Catherine Parker, Responsible Finance Officer  
Miss Ania Mlynczak, Support Officer

The Council meets 12 times per year, on the third Thursday of each month, and holds its Annual Meeting during May. It also meets separately in its capacity as Trustee of the Hope Park and Fitz Park (along with Townsfield) 6 times per year with an Annual Trust meeting, also during May. All meetings are advertised on the Council's website [www.keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk) and on the noticeboard situated at the front of the Council offices. A copy of the agenda and reports for each Council meeting can also be found on the website and at Keswick Library.

The public are welcome to attend meetings and to ask questions or make comments during the public forum. Both the Town Council and Trust meetings are held at 7pm, usually in the Council Chamber, 50 Main Street, Keswick.

## CHAIR'S REPORT 2025-26

### Councillor Louise Dunn– Town Mayor

It's been another busy year at the Town Council, with Councillors and staff working well together. Many requests are made of us, and the needs of the community are wide ranging. So, we have focused the resource of the small staff team and the councillors (all of whom are unpaid volunteers) on what's possible and what will make the biggest impact. Underlying everything we do is the wellbeing of this community. A vibrant local community enables a successful tourist economy.

There are two parts to our work; the first is to improve the services we provide directly as a Town Council. We have a little more control over this and have made good progress in a few areas.

This year we demonstrated our intent as a Town Council to consult more with the community by establishing new feedback mechanisms to add to the communications already established, such as open council meetings and regular updates in the *Keswick Reminder*. It is important that all the people of the town feel that the Council represents them. The face-to-face councillors' surgeries were not well attended and have been discontinued, but the new survey tool has been used to great effect to gather (hundreds of) opinions on subjects as diverse as the Christmas Lights Switch On and the plan for the Play Area refurbishment at Fitz Park. We have seen more people attending Town Council meetings and more interest in our work. I'd like to thank everyone that has provided us with feedback and support. Councillors are visible in the Town and on-line in community spaces on social media and are taking the time to listen, explain actions made by the council, and respond to enquiries. Disappointingly, the level of discourse in the social media space has degraded further in terms of accuracy and rudeness, however we will persist and respond to those who engage with good intent.

The Town Council events have been re focused on serving the local community, with a new Mayday event at Townsfield and the revival of the Keswick Sports. Both were well supported, and we hope that the events in 2026 will build on this success. We have also had a long look at the Christmas Lights Switch On event, which will change to something simpler and local this November. Thanks to everyone that contributed to the (lively) debate on this.

The second big part of our work is representing residents to the 'decision makers'. We advocate on behalf of the town with councillors and officers at Cumberland Council, the Lake District National Park Authority, our MP and the police (and others). The regular subjects remain the same - housing, parking, dog mess, public toilets, litter, anti-social behaviour, parking and bins. We direct people to the right persons within these bodies when they have a request, as well as contacting them

directly ourselves on issues that are clearly impacting residents. We have found that these bodies are increasingly responsive to the subjects we raise, and keen to find solutions, even if their resource is constrained.

Visitor numbers to Keswick are up according to Cumbria Tourism's data, which bucks the trend in Cumbria and indicates just how attractive the town is to visitors. Keswick relies very heavily on the tourist industry for jobs and the economic wellbeing of the town, but it's important that the needs of visitors are balanced with the local population. Highlighting the strains of a rural town with tourism-based economy, this year Keswick was classified as 'deprived' in two key areas: housing and access to services. Keswick Town Council has been actively working on both areas of deprivation.

Keswick Town Council and Cumberland Council are continually being asked to provide additional infrastructure such as housing for workers, toilets, more car parks, 'Aires' for motorhomes, extra litter collections and deal with issues caused by anti-social behaviour. More appreciation of the constraints on fixing these intractable issues would be helpful. Primarily there is a lack of funding, but in other cases it's the natural environment and National Park designation that constrains further development. There were several 'April Fools' jokes about building giant car parks on flattened areas of Latrigg and Skiddaw, which were funny, but they neatly highlighted the real-life challenges in finding a big space for a 'Park and Ride' that isn't on the flood plain or up a fell.

More joined up coordination is helping but more funding is needed as well as some creative transport solutions that make it easier for people to leave their vehicles behind. This year the Town Council has been vocal in its support for a tourist levy to help pay for the maintenance and improvements in infrastructure and services required to support mass tourism. It's important that any levy raised locally stays local and doesn't disappear into some giant pot somewhere ever to be seen again or used to improve the experience of visitors and residents. We have also been calling for action to provide more affordable and social housing for people living here permanently, through changes in housing policy enacted at a National and local level. All of this will be complex as there are no easy answers, but it's important to start talking about how changes can be made for the benefit of the town as a whole.

We have also been requesting more joined-up planning for large events that take place in the town, as often there is little thought to the knock on of closing car parks or the logistical impact of bringing thousands of people into a small place at the same time. Keswick is a community where people live and work, not a custom-built or self-contained event 'venue'. We hope to provide insight and help so that organisers can try and minimise the disruption that can occur, or (accepting that some disruption is inevitable) give people notice of where congestion or car park closures may arise well in advance. We are applying this approach to our own Town Council events as well (although they are more modest in scale generally). The Tour de France event in 2027 will be a catalyst to progress this work. After all, it is the

biggest free spectator event in the world, passing right through our town. There will be some great things to learn from the organisers about logistics for mass events (even if we don't have their big budgets). Their approach to establishing park and ride facilities on the edge of the National Park will be watched closely.

As the Council's year draws to a close, one source of frustration remains the lack of firm commitment from Cumberland Council to refurbishing and re-opening the Keswick swimming pool. However, it is now mentioned in the budget document for the next 5 years, which suggests that it is a serious contender and will happen eventually in some form. We have continued to show the decision-makers at Cumberland Council that not only is it necessary for residents, but also for the visitor economy. We have been ably supported by Keswick Cumberland Cllr Sally Lansbury and our MP Markus Campbell Savours. The appointment of a new operator for the leisure centre should progress things in the coming year. However, the financial environment has deteriorated further with the war in the middle east, so achieving it will not be easy. But we will keep on pushing the case.

To some extent the residents of Keswick will have to take matters into their own hands to improve services and facilities for the community. So, it is good to see early steps towards forming a community partnership between all the voluntary groups in the town. Keswick's voluntary organisations and churches provide an incredible network of support and activities that enrich our community. We also have a wonderful ecosystem of local and national business that are embedded in the community and support local causes in the community. Working more closely together can only be to the town's advantage to create the services and facilities we need for residents. Keswick Rugby Club's new clubhouse is a shining example of what can be done when a group of determined (and skilled) people set a target and pull out all the stops to achieve it. We will see more of these community fundraising projects emerging; this year the Keswick Park's Trust started fundraising for a revamped play area in Fitz Park with a hefty £400k target, and another group is planning an all-weather pitch in Keswick. We hope that these projects will gain widespread support.

As the year ends, I'd like to thank all the councillors for their hard work and pay tribute to our team in the office and in the parks who do a brilliant job. It has been my honour to be the Chair of the Town Council and Keswick's Mayor for a second year. It was a joy doing it second time round, with some experience under my belt. I will be stepping down and handing over the 'chain' to Cllr Natalie Evans in May. She will be an excellent Mayor.

Councillor Louise Dunn, Mayor of Keswick

## PARKS TRUST CHAIR'S REPORT 2025-26

### Councillor Jean Murray

It's been a very busy year for the Parks, with a number of planned developments either completed or nearing completion, and some exciting initiatives on the way. In **Upper Fitz Park** fencing and security gates around the staff building at the rear of Café HNW has been completed. Landscaping and hedge planting around the patio area at Café HNW have now matured and the area is a very welcome addition to the outside café seating,

Café HNW is a valuable community resource and relaxation space for residents, visitors and community groups. The Woodland Stage, built by Parks Staff, has proved to be a very popular music and entertainment area where local artistes add to the ambience of this very busy area.

The tennis courts and bowling green have been over-seeded successfully, and new growth has already begun and will be more apparent as Spring progresses. New retaining boards around the public bowling green using recycled plastic boards have now been completed and will be a more robust solution for the future of this well used area. Games will be up and running for Easter, weather permitting. Grass Tennis Courts will open at the end of April, to allow time for the ground to firm up.

**Lower Fitz** continues to be a very busy area with local Cricket and Football Sports Clubs, and the increasingly popular Park Run on Saturday mornings, and Junior Park Run on Sunday mornings. It is often a hive of activity, very popular with both residents and visitors, for dog walking, children's games, picnics, exercise, and rest and relaxation.

#### **New Adventure Play Area.**

The children's play area is immensely popular, but has been showing its age, and needing a lot of expensive maintenance for some time, and several pieces of equipment are becoming no longer viable. Spare parts are expensive and have to be imported from France, which also causes delays.

Keswick Town Council has launched a fund raising campaign to raise £400,000 for a new Adventure Playground. This is an opportunity to create a state of the art play area, with exciting opportunities for children of all ages and abilities to play, learn and enjoy an adventure. We have completed the tendering process for suppliers and have appointed Kompan as the providers of the new facility. They are the same company who have installed several innovative facilities in Cumbria, including the Shiver Me Timbers Play Park at Maryport, and the seafront play area at Grange over Sands. All of the equipment will be made from robust recycled materials and are produced with a very low carbon footprint, in line with our Carbon Neutral Policy. As well as challenging and adventurous multi-user play equipment, accessibility is integral to all aspects of the planned new facility, and there will also be a weather shelter, and quiet areas providing respite for users who need this.

Whilst we have seen some progress in applying for grants and raising the required funds, we have not been as successful as we would have liked in obtaining substantial grant monies at this stage of the project. However we are keen to progress this and make it a reality as soon as we can raise the necessary funds. We will be communicating with and consulting with children, parents, and all users to ensure that their input is fully integrated into the plans, as this project develops. We had a public consultation session in Fitz Park in November, where children and parents could view the plans and comment on them. We have also undertaken an online public survey, which has produced some very positive results, with respondents very keen to see this project developed.

We have two more public consultation sessions planned in April, when members of the public can view the plans and comment on them, and discuss the planned project with local Councillors and Trustees and a representative from Kompan.. Consultation sessions will continue to be held throughout this period whilst we are raising funds. We are due to start a robust publicity campaign about the project and this is in the final stages of planning at the time of writing.

**Elizabeth's Wood**, by Hospital Field has continued to develop and become more established and is used regularly by local schools as part of their outdoor education programmes, as well as being an ideal space for quiet reflection and relaxation. Here, with our partners, including Sustainable Keswick and the Woodland Trust, we have planted more than 300 trees, as well as encouraging wildflower and wildlife areas to develop naturally. There are sustainable pathways, and wooden benches to encourage visitors to this area to pause and enjoy the natural surroundings.

**Hope Park** continues to be the Jewel in the Crown for floral displays and imaginative planting and has again been awarded a Gold Award by Cumbria in Bloom. Thanks must go to our hard working Parks staff for the amazing work they do to keep up such high standards in this lovely place.

Max's statue continues to attract visitors and their canine friends from far and wide and has provided a great photo opportunity for residents and visitors alike. Café Hope now has an extended and fully paved outside seating area, with colourful benches, and lots of space to enjoy the views with refreshments. The fencing around the mini boating area has been replaced and the adjacent pathway has been upgraded and repaired. The pitch and putt greens have been treated and cut and the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tee boxes have been paved. Work is underway to repair and refurbish the Crazy Golf area, which is very well used.

An additional visitor attraction from Café Hope this year is a small area with ride on toy tractors for toddlers to use.

**Townfield** is well used and very popular with local residents. New gates and fencing have been installed together with benches for users. It is used by local people

predominantly and provides a social space, a dog walking area, a green space for children to play and access to the river for warmer days.

### **Cumbria in Bloom**

Once again, the dedicated work and skill of our Parks manager and staff have been recognised by the Cumbria in Bloom awards.

We were awarded a Gold Medal for Hope Park for Tourism and Small Woodland Copse, and a Gold Medal for Fitz Park and Café HNW for Tourism.

A fitting tribute to the expertise and care of our excellent Parks Team.

### **Events**

In May 2025 we held the first May Day Celebration in Townsfield, with events for local families, refreshments and live music. The day was a great success and we will be holding another May Day event at Townsfield on Bank Holiday Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2026.

Another first was the inaugural Keswick Games, held in August 2025 in Fitz Park. Several different teams took part in a number of competitive events, there were refreshments, and a barbecue. The weather was kind to us, and the day was enjoyed by a large number of residents and families. Thanks must go to Keswick Cricket Club for the use of their facilities and their participation in the day.

The Games will take place again this year on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2026 in Fitz Park. Scruffs Dog Show and Party in the Park took place across consecutive weekend days in Fitz Park in June 2025, and both were very well attended and enjoyed by residents and visitors.

This was the last Scruffs Dog Show, and this event has now ceased. Thanks must go to the owners and staff at Podgy Paws pet shop for their incredible hard work in organising and operating this event in Keswick for a number of years.

The Party in the Park was very well attended, again by both residents and visitors, with live music performances from local artists and an ABBA Tribute Band, which proved immensely popular. There were refreshments and market stalls, which provided something for everyone.

Party in the Park will take place this year on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2026, and everyone is welcome for a really great day out.

Thanks must go to the Town Council's Events Organiser, and the Councillors on the Events Committee for their hard work all year round to provide these events on behalf of local residents. Additionally, thanks to Councillors and Keswick Lions who volunteer as Stewards on the day at each of these events.

### **Carbon Neutral Policy Events**

The Trust has a policy of working towards a Carbon Neutral position within the Parks, and we have considered all developments carefully with this in mind. When machinery has to be replaced, we are replacing petrol or diesel driven machines with electric machinery, where technology allows this to be done. This is always a more expensive option, and has to be carefully considered, but where it is feasible, this will continue to be our priority. We now use environmentally friendly petrol in all our vehicles, although again this is at greater cost.

Parks staff have moved to environmentally friendly treatments, such as weed killers and fertilisers, again at greater cost, but Trustees are confident that this is the direction we should be moving in. We will continue to consider the environmental impact of all of the work that is undertaken within the Parks, as a matter of priority.

### **Tree management**

The annual tree inspection of the condition of trees across all of the parks has highlighted several issues which will need to be addressed in order to maintain the health of all of the trees and maintain safe use of the parks for all users. Some trees will have to be felled, due to honey fungus invasion, which cannot be treated. However, ash die back has been discovered in a number of trees, which also is untreatable and infected trees need to be felled. This is particularly apparent at Townsfield, although there are also incidents of this in the woodland area at Hope Park.

Permission is being sought from the Lake District Planning Authority to fell the affected trees. Where possible, wood from felled trees is machined and re used in projects across all parks, and new trees are planted to replace every tree lost to felling.

### **Parks Management**

There are ongoing issues across all of the Parks, including the cost of disposing of litter and dog waste, removal of which is costed by weight, and which increases year on year. We need to develop innovative ways to encourage all Parks users to take their litter away with them.

Unfortunately, the Trust also have to bear the impact of, and the cost of vandalism in our Parks, which is notably more frequent during school holidays, and which includes damage to signs and other installations, and destruction and damage to trees and planting. Much of this appears to take place under cover of darkness, or in the very early morning hours. Local PCSOs have initiated regular patrols, which can act as a deterrent, but they can't be there all the time, and opportunists are aware of this. We had a number of dustbin fires in Fitz Park during the 2025 summer school holidays, when paper waste collection bins from nearby properties were wheeled into the park and set on fire. This happened on a regular basis, including two incidents when bins were set on fire in the MUGA, causing damage to the playing surface. This necessitated the closure of this area on several occasions in order to

repair the damage, including one occasion when a repair was deliberately dug up and the area vandalised.

Police worked with Council officers and parks staff to deal with these incidents. Regular police patrols took place, some after dark, and Cumbria Constabulary signs were put up reminding offenders that arson can carry a life sentence, but the culprits were never caught. The fires stopped after the end of the school holidays. As Chair of the Trust, I am happy to be contacted by local residents about any concerns or compliments they may have about the work of the Trust, and any matters relating to any of our Parks. My contact details are on the Town Council website, as are all the Councillors and Trustees.

Particular thanks must go to Parks Manager Christine Fawcett, and all of the staff, for their dedication, hard work and enthusiasm in maintaining and developing all three Parks, often in very challenging conditions.

In conclusion, I would like to offer my thanks and appreciation to all the Trustees, and in particular to Councillor Chris Houghton, Deputy Chair, and Vivien, Catherine and Ania, for their invaluable support and assistance throughout the year.

Councillor Jean Murray  
Chair  
Keswick Parks Charitable Trusts

## FINANCIAL REPORT

Catherine Parker – Responsible Finance Officer

### GENERAL FUND SUMMARY

1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026

Expenditure	£
General Admin (Including Salaries)	89,707.00
Mayors Allowance	2,000.00
Grants Awarded	20,315.00
Christmas Lights	35,064.00
War Memorial	1,495.00
Open Spaces	1,000.00
Fitz Park	225,988.00
Communications (inc Councillor Surgeries)	360.00
Floral Displays	600.00
Town Events inc Scruffs	6,955.00
Events Coordinator	6,361.00
Allotments	292.00
Advertising	241.00
Audit Fee/Accounts Preparation	25.00
Contingency Sum	2,740.00
Annual Parish Meeting	109.00
CCTV Annual Maintenance - PCC	2,033.00
Grasscutting - Churchyards	4,000.00
KCERP – General Fund	6,500.00
KCHT – 2024, 25 & 26	3,000.00
Card Reader	139.00
Reserves Top Up	20,000
Bank Charges	25.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>428,810.00</b>

Income	£
Precept	401,904.00
Grant to Fitz Park (ABC)	20,000.00
Walker Park – Rent	14,130.00
Allotment Income	945.00
Keswick Events Contributions	7,845.00
Christmas Lights Contributions	2,680.00
Bank, CCLA & Unity Investment Interest	6,282.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>453,786.00</b>

***NB: Figures quoted are subject to prepayment/accruals adjustments and audit.***

## GRANTS

Each year the Town Council makes financial contributions to local organisations which provide valuable services that bring benefit to the local community. Grants were made to the following organisations during 2025/26:

Citizens Advice Allerdale	£500.00
Keswick Film Festival (Keswick Film Club)	£315.00
Keswick Football Club Girls	1,500.00
Keswick Museum & Art Gallery	1,000.00
Keswick in Bloom	4,000.00
1 <sup>st</sup> Keswick Scouts	1,500.00
Keswick Senior Citizens Club (The Drop In)	2,000.00
Keswick Youth Centre Services	£7,500.00
Theatre by the Lake	2,000.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>£20,315.00</b>

## REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

The Council appoints members as representatives on various outside bodies. This helps to ensure good working relationships with local organisations. The following reports have been submitted by the nominated representatives.

### THE BATTERSBY CHARITY

#### Council Representative – Councillor Steve Harwood

The Battersby Hall is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation administered by Trustees who are appointed representatives of the Church, Parish Council and Local Organisations. The current Trustees are :-

Rev. Charles Hope - Vicar of St. John's Church acting as Chair.

George Page on behalf of St. John's PCC acting as Secretary.

Brenda Mumford on behalf of St. John's PCC.

John Hayes on behalf of Keswick Rotary acting as Treasurer.

Nigel Hale on behalf of Keswick Lions.

Steve Harwood on behalf of Keswick Town Council.

The principle asset of the Battersby Hall Trust is ownership of the most prominent Grade II listed building in the town, The Moot Hall. The Trust also derives an income from investments over the years and rental income from the Moot Hall. This is used to support the principle objective of the Trust in maintaining this historic building and to support the education and essential needs of the local population. This is achieved by providing grants to individuals, charities and non profit making organisations.

The significant change this year has been the end of the lease on the building with the Lake District National Park Authority on 31 March 2026. Discussions were held with the LDNPA with a view to continuing their lease at a cost well below current market level. As a consequence of a significant reduction in their funding from central government this year they have not been able to extend their lease on the building. This has resulted in the closure of the Tourist Information Centre which operated from the Ground Floor. A marketing exercise was undertaken for a new tenant with offers invited from interested parties for a viable new use which retained an element of community use. A new lease has been granted with effect from 1 April 2026 to Twisted Willow who wish to relocate their current business from Wigton to the Moot Hall as their new flagship base. Their proposal is for the Ground Floor to be a cafe serving coffee, cakes and authentic Greek-Cypriot food with monthly dining events to create a unique cultural experience for Keswick. The First Floor will incorporate a pets lifestyle shop as a continuation of their Wigton business with a collaborative retail space for local artists and makers. The Second Floor will be a Community Hub with a flexible affordable space for workshops, classes and community events.

It is important to have a viable new use for the building to provide the income necessary to support the principle objective of the Trust as outlined above. Over the past year the Trust has made grants supporting the following :-

- Education support grants to 112 local families attending Keswick School.
- Education grants to support 8 School leavers in their ongoing studies.
- Grants awarded to local primary schools.
- Grant to Keswick Lecture Society
- Grant to Keswick Senior Citizens Club.
- Grant to Keswick Training Band.
- Grant to Keswick Youth Services.

## **KESWICK IN BLOOM**

### **Council Representative – Councillor Claire Peat**

Keswick in Bloom volunteers provide floral displays in the town centre, at road entrances to Keswick and along the main route to the lake.

#### **Entrances to Keswick**

This year KiB completed the refurbishment of the iconic KESWICK bed, replacing the KESWICK letters with contrasting-coloured begonias for the summer display and in the autumn replanting with an alternative to the Box hedging. The plants will need 3 years to before we have neat hedging that spells out KESWICK.

All the Hydrangea beds at the top of the Crosthwaite Road have now been cut back, having become very overgrown. KiB also planted 2 Rowan trees paid for by a bequest in memory of a former KiB volunteer. This area is also now regularly cut through the growing season funded by the grant from KTC.

#### **Lakes Road / Underpass beds**

There are 4 large beds either side of the underpass that were planted over 13 years ago. Last year the Keswick Parks team worked with KiB volunteers to do a severe pruning of many trees and shrubs. The Parks team again joined our volunteers in February this year to do a lighter pruning of the area. The beds looked really good last year as a result of significant work done and with the advent of spring it's beginning to look very colourful again. This is an area that always attracts many compliments from both residents and visitors.

#### **Town Centre**

KiB is responsible for 14 planters, 10 mangers and 2 raised beds in the town centre. This last year KiB also adopted the small garden in Church Lane by St Johns, supported by volunteers from the church.

## **Finances**

KiB did not apply for Council funding for 2026-27 but will need to for the next financial year. Our close working with the Keswick Parks team has enabled us to keep costs down and we have been fortunate to receive some donations.

## **Volunteers**

KiB currently has 11 active members, we recently recruited 2 new members but said goodbye to 4 long-standing volunteers.

## **KESWICK COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RECOVERY PARTNERSHIP and KESWICK FLOOD ACTION GROUP**

**Council Representative – Councillor Jean Murray**  
**Council Representative – Councillor Claire Peat**

2025 was thankfully a year without flooding, but not without its challenges.

### Office Relocation:

With the work needed on the Town Hall, we had to find temporary accommodation for a control base, kit storage, and office. We are incredibly grateful to Crosthwaite Church for accommodating us in their Parish Rooms, but look forward to returning to the Town Hall as soon as the works are complete.

### Lengthsman:

We're into our second year having a lengthsman on board. We tweaked the funding to allow for some hours over the summer, preventing the culverts from becoming overgrown with weeds and brambles during the growing season. One of the issues we find is knowing who the landowners are for some of the culverts, but we are building knowledge and contacts as incidents arise.

### Community Pump:

We discovered the community pump had been relocated to Highways' Lillyhall office. Lynne Jones and I went to try and negotiate its return in December, only for the engineer to have no record that the community had paid for the pump. Lynne has provided email trails with the Cumbria Lead Flood Manager at the time, but we need to follow this up. Keswick Ministries have agreed to store the pump in one of their garages at Skiddaw Street. There was some damage to the chassis of the pump so it was not on site when we went to visit.

### Thirlmere:

KCERP has been working closely with KFAG regarding the flood management regime at Thirlmere. In December, we had the unexpected announcement that United Utilities had submitted their application to renew the abstraction licences specifically stating they would cease the releases that give storm space. We thank the Town

Council for their support in objecting to the removal of this important flood relief measure. We have had 2 meetings including the Environment Agency and UU. In the most recent meeting, it was made clear that the release regime would not abruptly stop 1<sup>st</sup> April as expected. This is partially due to the licence process being slow, and not expected to be complete until September. All attendees at the meeting agreed that the releases should continue beyond the end of the current licence, until a new release scheme has been agreed and can be implemented. I am still unclear as to whether this means UU need to re-apply for the licence, to allow for a new consultation – as the removal of the KFAG releases is material to their current application.

The EA has commissioned a firm to model various scenarios that would allow for a forecast-driven release regime, which will take a few months to come back. For this to be a viable option, UU will need to ensure that all valves are fully operational – currently the upper scour valves are only tested blind operating one at a time for fear they may not be able to close them both again. UU have now commissioned a firm to cost the refurbishment/replacement of these original Victorian valves, and all are hopeful that this will go ahead. KFAG remain sceptical of the forecast-driven option, depending on the quality of the forecast and UU's ability release sufficient water in advance of a storm. There are other obstacles to overcome, such as agreements with the landowners along St John's Beck who would need to agree to the amount of water released for flood relief if the beck goes out of bank.

#### Operational Procedures:

The processes during a weather event are constantly being refined. This year, contact from Cumberland has been greatly improved. We are also reviewing communication channels to get the information from tactical and strategic group meetings during named storms, which has always been poor. CVS (Cumbria Volunteer Service) have stepped up to provide information, and have also set up regular meetings between coordinators across the county to share information, and have learning sessions. We'll be attending the EA's Penrith office in April to see their incident room, and understand the role of the duty officers who speak to us if the rivers reach various trigger points and when warnings are due to go out.

The amber weather warning in December was the first time we'd needed to look at setting up the control centre and deploying volunteers. The processes worked well, and thankfully town ended up just outside the band of disruptive heavy rain, despite Honister seeing over 360mm over the 48 hour period.

KCERP thanks Keswick Town Council for their continued support.

**KESWICK TOURISM ASSOCIATION**  
**Council Representative – Councillor Chris Houghton**

**No report received.**

**KESWICK YOUTH CENTRE**  
**Council Representative – Councillor Natalie Evans**

**No report received.**

**SUSTAINABLE KESWICK**  
**Council Representative – Councillor Natalie Evans**

This report presents a brief summary of our activities over the past 12 months. A more detailed report will be prepared for our AGM in July which we will share in due course.

**Energy**

- We have continued to support Futureproof Cumbria's work to provide households in Keswick with home energy efficiency, retrofit and renewables advice. This has included a **heat pump event** at Crosthwaite Parish Rooms, **home energy pop-up advice sessions** at the Theatre by the Lake and **thermal imaging visits** for residents.

**Biodiversity**

- We have continued to engage with Cumberland Council regarding the management of the **Springs Road Flood Basin** and we have carried out maintenance activities e.g. tree pruning, verge cutting, hedge laying.
- We ran a **wildflower seeding event** at Springs Road with pupils from Keswick school, with support from the Woodland Trust.
- We ran an **Apple Day** at Springs Road in October 2025, using funding from the Food Cumberland Partnership. The day was a major success and we had over 200 people participating. We intend to run this event again in 2026.
- We've recently received **National Lottery Funding** to pay for an informative sign for the Springs Road site and will be working up the design soon.
- We provided volunteers for a wildflower plug planting event at **Manor Brow**, organized by Cumbria Wildlife Trust and Cumberland Council, funded by Fibrus.
- We organized a bioblitz at **Elizabeth's Wood**, with support from Woodland Trust and the Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre.
- We continued to manage the **wildflower meadow at Borrowdale Road**.

**Transport**

- **Keswick Eco Car Club** has been running successfully since January 2025 with 16 members, supporting a range of people including young families, canine therapy and the voluntary social car scheme. From Jan 25-Dec 25 the total hours during which the vehicle was in use was 1487 (approx. 17% of the year). We are looking into options for a second vehicle, to be located at Skiddaw Street Car Park.
- We provided feedback on the **LDNPA Active Travel Bid**.
- We hosted Emma Moody from LDNPA for a round table discussion about **sustainable travel**.

## Waste

- We attended a **tour of Cumberland Waste and Biffa sites** in Carlisle to understand the process of our household waste and recycling.

## Outreach

- **Five talks** to outside groups, including two to Penrith Action on Climate Transition (PACT), two to Kendal Quakers at their monthly vigils. And one in Keswick.
- Three **Green Screens** – November, January, and March: two at QMH: *Leaving it Better* and *Power Station* both very well attended; one in Keswick Film Festival *Common Ground*. Also free KFF showing: *Saving our Rainforests*.
- **Robert Craig's** Green Get Together talk: *Doing dairy Differently* on regenerative farming with First Milk and Nestlé. Inspiring and well attended. This was followed by a tour of Torpenhow Organic Dairy Farm organized by one of our core group members.
- Continuing relationship with **St Herbert's** eco-leaders and their new teacher, Corrie Reynard, who have been renovating their school pond with excellent support from the National Trust. This too has been inspiring work as the children are very keen and committed.
- During **Great Big Green Week 2025** Jo and Joe worked with Bethany Winwood, at **Keswick School**, in project called *Brilliant Cumbria*, funded by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. There were twelve year 9 students in the group with whom Jo and Joe worked on two activities: wildflower seed sowing at the Springs Road Flood Basin, enabled by Pete Leeson from the Woodland Trust, and 'Philosophy for Children' sessions for year 7 students. The philosophy sessions explored the question: *Do I have a responsibility to care for the planet?* Six sessions (one per class) were facilitated by a pair of year 9 students, as well as by Jo, Joe and Bethany. The aim was not to debate and win, but to listen, think and learn. We have agreed to repeat the project this year.
- Also in **GBGW**, working with Rev. Charles Hope, Terry and Mike Hambrey put together a special service at the end of GBGW on the theme of Caring for our Common Home, at which Jo, Joe and Mike each gave a reflection, and the choir sang a beautiful anthem.
- We were also happy to promote two local farm events on **Open Farm Sunday** during GBGW: Low Netherscales Farm at Embleton, where a new farm shop had recently opened selling local organic produce, and Low Stanger farm at Lorton.
- The monthly **Climate Cafe** meets now at the Quaker Meeting House rather than the Drop-in Centre to discuss our concerns over the environmental crisis. This year topics have ranged from the *challenges of adaptation to hope to ecocide*.

## Communications

- We have continued our **fortnightly columns**, *Notes from a Warming World*, in the Reminder. By the end of the year we shall be up to No.111. These have been mainly on global issues as press releases have dealt with our local activities. Subjects have covered *Net Zero, Climate Denialism, COP30, Climate Migration, Heatwaves, Tipping Points, The High Seas Treaty* and *Deep-Sea Mining*. These articles are also published on our **website**. And they are also sent to 120 people worldwide.

- We issue **press releases** prior to and after all of our events.
- We are active on social media and have **255 followers** on our Facebook site and **330 members** of our public discussion group. We are also using Instagram.
- We keep in touch with our supporters by email; we have **165 people** on our mailing list.

### **Campaigning / Lobbying**

- We lobbied Markus on the topic of the **Planning and Infrastructure Bill**.
- We responded to the **LDNPA Partnership Plan Consultation**.
- We submitted a response to the planning appeal about the **Rockcliffe Gasification Plant**, supporting our fellow sustainability group in Carlisle.

### **Other**

- We have been supporting **Keswick Town Council's Events Committee** to ensure events are more sustainable.
- We are continuing to participate in the **Cumbria Sustainability Network** and have recently attended the **Zero Carbon Cumbria Summit**.
- We participated in a focus group with ACT about the **LDNPA Local Development Plan**.
- Thanks to one of our core group members, Elle, we now have a new **logo** suite, based on the previous one but much more striking. We have purchased a **banner** and an **A-frame** featuring the new logo, to support our events.
- **Finances** are sound with monthly income from regular donors, takings on the door at events and grants.

## **CUMBERLAND COUNCIL** **Ward Representative – Councillor Sally Lansbury**

### **Parishes I represent on Cumberland Council:**

Keswick  
Borrowdale  
St Johns, Castlerigg and Wythburn

### **Cumberland Council Committee Membership**

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Climate and Nature Advisory Group  
Lakes to Sea Community Panel (Chair)

### **Outside Bodies**

Lake District National Park Authority  
Lake District National Park Strategy and Vision Committee  
Lake District National Park Partnership  
Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership  
Action with Communities in Cumbria Oversight Group

## **Trusteeship**

Keswick Community Emergency Recovery Partnership

## **Community Group Memberships**

Sustainable Keswick – Core Group Member

Keswick Community Partnership – (in development) Core Group Member

## **Update on Combined Mayoral Authority.**

### **What we know now:**

The first meeting of the combined authority was on 18 March, with full functionality from 1 April.

- John Barradell is the interim Chief Executive
- David Allan is Labour Mayoral candidate (currently he is the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner)
- Mike Starkie is the Conservative Mayoral candidate (Ex Copeland Mayor)
- Libbie Bateman is the Lib Dem Mayoral candidate (ex CCC Cllr and rural representative)
- No other candidates are confirmed yet – could be Independent, Reform, or Green Candidates - still to be announced.
- The constitution is being established through a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the process is managed through a Joint Executive Committee:
- The CCA will be responsible for transport – taking that over from Cumberland and Westmorland along with the existing budgets. Skills and training will also move to the Mayoral Authority so Enterprising Cumbria will also be absorbed into the new authority
- CCA is funded by Govt @ £11.1 million p.a. x 30 years total £333 million. There is also capacity funding to cover costs of set-up @ £2.8m in Year 1 and £3.2 m in Year 2.
- Offices proposed to be based at: Redhills in Penrith.
- There may also be a Mayoral precept but this has not yet been announced.

## **Preamble**

In these notes, I intend to show some of the local issues I am currently working on. It is not a comprehensive list and cannot hope to cover all the issues that I deal with as your ward councillor. New cases arrive in the inbox every day, ranging from highways, parking, litter, waste, housing, nuisances, social care, homelessness, and many other issues. I work hard to represent the interests of these three Parishes, on both Cumberland and the Lake District National Park Authorities and the Lake District National Park Partnership.

## **Cumberland Council Lakes to Sea Community Panel (Chair)**

The community panel holds four official meetings each year but many other 'catch ups' and informal meetings and reviews take place.

The work of the Community Panel contributes to the achievement of the Council Plan priorities of:

- Addressing inequalities
- Creating local economies that work for local people
- Supporting community resilience and the climate emergency
- Delivering excellent public services

The L2S Community Panel has a local investment fund which provides grant support for local organisations working in the following areas:

- Transport for the community
- Community Health and wellbeing
- Community involvement
- Community resilience

In addition to funding, Cumberland's Community Development Officers are able to provide support and guidance to local third sector organisations.

In the Parishes I represent, funding has been provided to Keswick Town Council, Keswick Bee Keepers, Keswick Rugby Club, Lakeland Rowing Club, Bee Unique, Thirlmere Recreation Hall, Fitz Park Trust, Keswick Youth Club and Keswick Choral Society. An application is also pending for Borrowdale Institute roof.

### **Current Keswick casework**

- Howrah's path improvements are complete – the path has a much better base, crossfall and camber to improve drainage. It will still flood and the surface will deteriorate but it should drain off more quickly and it will be up to all of us to report wear and tear and shortfalls for ongoing regular maintenance
- I continue to work on helping our local volunteer groups, through the development of a Keswick Community Partnership. Things are moving forward nicely towards our first objective of a directory of local groups and activities
- Work on traffic management is constant and a challenge. Traffic flow, parking, campervans, speed and safety issues are all regular aspects of the role
- Castlerigg Stone Circle Area Action Plan for the Summer Solstice
- St Herbert's School field flooding issues appear to be close to resolution as Royal Mail are completing the final legal requirements for their land to be excavated in order to create a new overflow to create drainage into the Greta
- I continue to support Sustainable Keswick and the Local Nature Recovery Partnership with biodiversity and emission reduction projects

### **Current Borrowdale focus**

- A review of the whole stretch of road surface of the B5289, from Keswick to Rosthwaite is scheduled
- Drainage issues in Seathwaite are being actively investigated
- Resurfacing of several parts of the road are planned beyond Rosthwaite and over Honister
- Pedestrian safety along various parts of the B5289 is under review but is complex as many perceived footways are not recognised footpaths. I have a planned review of these in April with Cumberland Officer in April
- Repairs to Longthwaite Lane were at last negotiated with YHA / National Trust and local householders and the road has been resurfaced. Next the bridge requires repairs
- Repairs to Chinese Bridge are scheduled
- Flooding on the B5289 corner of Castlehead Wood is nearing a solution as agreement with the neighbouring landlord is in the legal process stages, in order to allow pipework to ensure the road can drain across the land into the Lake
- A Borrowdale and Buttermere Valley Management Action Plan is being developed, (Partnership of LDNPA, ACTion for Cumbria, National Trust, Parish Councils and Cumberland) – A community enquiry is underway. This will involve active involvement of the community in identifying issues and looking to the future. It includes representatives from Keswick. A group of demographically selected people will take part in a series of meeting and activities which will add to Parish Council work and inform the LDNPA and Cumberland on the community's strengths, wants, needs, opportunities and threats (For Above Derwent, Borrowdale, Buttermere and Keswick)
- Tactical Visitor Management Plans – not to be confused with the above mentioned longer term work – This work is a shorter-term focus on improving the situation this year and covers anti-social behaviour, temporary toilets, fires, safety, litter, fly camping problems and PSPOs
- Grant funding to repair Borrowdale Institute roof is being sought

### **St Johns in the Vale, Castlerigg and Wythburn focus**

- The proposed changes to the Thirlmere release policy is being challenged by many stakeholders. UU are attending the Parish meetings. KCERP and KFAG are also actively involved in lobbying for the releases to continue as agreed policy
- Issues on land changes following the UU pipeline installations are still ongoing.
- There has been a request for an additional bin to service the demand from dog owners and to cope with miscellaneous litter from walkers
- The Institute has received funding for a bike rack to support active travel and reduce car reliance
- Thirlmere West Cycling Project is ongoing and will provide linking routes which give a safer and more enjoyable cycling experience

## **COUNCIL ACTIVITIES**

### **Vivien Little – Town Clerk**

This year the Town Council has remained stable, with no resignations and no new Councillors, meaning that the current Councillors have had a good chance to get to know their roles, and what they can do. However, this time next year we will be close to our four-year elections. Have you considered standing for Town Council? Would you like to work towards making a difference in Keswick?

Meetings continue to attract public attendance, with residents again raising a number of issues for the Council's consideration. We have been working closely with Sally Lansbury, Cumberland Council's representative for Keswick on matters that have been brought to our attention by members of the public, including fly camping, bin collections, dog waste, the swimming pool, parking on the Back Streets as well as countless other topics. We are grateful for all of Sally's help as she has been tirelessly working for the benefit of the residents of Keswick.

Keswick Town Council makes most of its decisions at the monthly meeting; there are only two standing committees which cover Events and Staffing. However, there are a number of Working Groups which do a lot of work in the background, bringing their work forward at the full Council meetings.

The Events Committee have continued to organise many events in Keswick, and Yvonne Booth has brought her experience to improve the events greatly. Her experience in organising her own events made her a great addition to the team, and she has taken over organising and expanding the events seamlessly. The first MayDay event at Townsfield was a great success, with a lot of positive feedback from locals.

We were able to put on our usual successful Midsummer Festival, with 'Party in the Park' on Saturday and Scruffs on Sunday. These were both extremely well attended, and have worked to become family friendly events with the addition of the charity Bee Unique, and their equipment. This was the tenth Scruffs dog show, and it turned out to be the last, as the work involved to put on this show relied heavily on the staff at Podgy Paws, as well as Council staff, and Councillors felt that it was time to put the focus more on events for locals.

The Keswick Games had their first run this year, and although not as well attended as we might have hoped for, a blazing hot day ensured that it was enjoyable for all involved, and we have already had a good deal of interest for this year, with the inclusion of a fell race and an expanded number of teams. We feel that it is a great event, and will put in the work to ensure it grows to be an event Keswick will be proud of.

The Christmas Lights Switch On happened on its usual Friday in November, with the Keswick Community Housing Trust turning on the lights, supported by music from

the very popular Kasios, who we hope to invite to future events. However, we did realise that the event is now so popular that the Market Square struggles to hold the numbers of people who do want to come to the Switch On. This led to concerns about health and safety, and whether the event should continue in the same format. A survey went out, with around 400 responses from mostly locals, which gave us an idea of what people would like to see from the event. The overwhelming response was that it should be an event for locals, and that over half the respondents would be happy to see a smaller, more family focused event. The Events Committee have decided to trial holding the Switch On mid-week for 2026, with the Switch On being on Wednesday 18 November for this year, and will be reviewed afterwards.

The Staffing Committee continues to meet regularly, looking after the welfare of all the staff in the main office as well as the parks staff.

Planning continues to be a major part of the Council's remit – as a consultee the Town Council is asked to comment on all planning applications which affect the parish. A small group of Councillors (the Planning Group) ensure that all members of the Council are fully informed on applications which come before them for comment, giving their free time to research these. The biggest news on this front was that this year

The Visitor Management Working Group has begun to work more closely with external commercial event providers, who have been seen to use Keswick, with not necessarily any visible benefit to the people of Keswick. It has been heartening to see that some of them are willing to work with groups across Keswick. We have begun to put together a list of all the events that use Keswick as a base, in order to get a fuller picture of just what goes on, and the impact that it has on Keswick. They will then use this information to work closely with the event providers, to enable them to understand the impact on Keswick.

The Housing Group continues to raise issues around local occupancy, and recently attended a meeting with Markus Campbell-Savours MP, and Friends of the Lake District to hear information about the FoLD report 'Fairer Housing, Stronger Communities', which proved to be a well researched, fascinating report, highlighting the issues which are well known in the community.

The Council continues to look after the War Memorial on Penrith Road.

The Town Council is the sole trustee of Keswick Parks with all Councillors meeting in their 'trustee' role every two months. Town Council staff also support Keswick Parks with Fitz Park and Hope Park having their own separate budgets. Visitor numbers to Keswick remain high, meaning the parks continue to be extremely busy, but staff keep the parks looking at their best through challenging circumstances.