

Good evening and welcome. This report summarises the PC business covering this period.

The council is 7 Councillors allowed and it's good that we have always had a full council unlike many around who struggle to fill vacancies.

Each meeting has a mainly regular agenda covering road and path maintenance, parking planning and financial business.

At every meeting parishioners are able to speak to raise point of interest. Aside from the usual, there has been a request for a decorated tree on the green for Christmas. This is on the agenda for this evening.

Another concern brought to the council has been the contentious changes to the local shop following a change of ownership, major changes to the front elevation were made and also changes to the rear of the property. All without planning permission on a listed building. Permission, with conditions, has been given for internal and work to rear. The shop front and side window are still under consideration at Breckland Council. Planning and enforcement officers seem not to have acted quickly and robustly enough to resolve this if indeed enforcement is required. However, it is good to have a fully stocked shop and good opening hours.

Other planning applications have been presented to the PC, observations and comments have been made and a decision has been made by the planning department. There is still no start envisaged for the development between Weasenham and Wellingham Road. It is still not yet been decided what is happening with the possible revision of the Breckland and Norfolk County Council proposal, discussions have been 2 or 3 unitary authorities. What this means is that how Parish Councils liaise with unitary authorities will be of some interest.

Donations were made to the British legion wreaths supplied by the PC have been recycled into drapes to hang in the church. Churchyard grass cutting has been supported by the PC. A donation was also made to Litcham Common to cover insurance and tool costs for use by a volunteer group, which meets once a month. New volunteers are welcome. A major donation was requested for the removal and returning of the Church bells. A donation of £1000 will be made after other grants are made.

The precept for the year was agreed at £11,000, which was not an increase.

Each Council meeting considers road and path problems, hedge and verge cutting and lighting. Any problems can be reported to the clerk of the cllrs. This will then be passed to the relevant authorities.

Parking is still a concern especially at School dropping off and picking up time. The school is always reminding staff and parents or taxis to park considerately and switch off engines.

Long meadow owned by the PC has now been registered with the National Wildlife trust. They will monitor the meadow and advise on any maintenance required. The meadow has been untouched except for some grazing, for many decades.

Finally, I would like to thank Cllrs for their support, to the clerk for help and effort in keeping us working correctly, efficiently, legally and financially sound.

Thanks to Cllr Brown and his work with the council who unfortunately decided to leave the council. But welcome to Paul Madden, our new Cllr.

Litcham is a thriving community, and it would be good if more community minded residents could step up and get involved with local projects.

Thank you

Mike Oldfield

Chairman to Litcham Parish Council

Dear Parishioners

On behalf of Litcham School, we would like to thank you for the invitation to the Annual Parish Meeting and extend our apologies for not being able to attend in person.

Our students and staff have been engaged in numerous activities and achievements over the last few months, some of which we are pleased to share with you.

Trips over the last few months have included:

Secondary Phase

- Bonn, Cologne and Aachen German Christmas markets modern languages trip
- Austria Salzburger residential ski trip
- Ardeche adventurous activities residential trip
- Houghton Hall art trip
- Bramley lakes outdoor adventurous activities trip for new Year 7 students
- Sainsbury Centre Gallery art trip
- Birmingham NEC 'Big Bang Fair' which is the UK's biggest celebration of STEM for young people.
- Wild Ken Hill outdoor activities trip
- Pensthorpe outdoor activities trip
- London experience trip
- Festival of Knowledge at the Norfolk Showground.

Primary Phase

Thanks to the generous support of the Friends of Litcham School, all pupils in the Primary Phase had the wonderful opportunity to enjoy a pantomime performance at the Corn Exchange.

A group of our pupils also take part in weekly Forest School sessions, travelling by our school minibus—a provision funded by our SEND department. During these sessions, the children engage in activities such as cooking over an open fire, team-building exercises, exploring and investigating nature, problem-solving, and building their confidence in the great outdoors.

Our Year 5 and Year 6 pupils are looking forward to their upcoming residential trip, where they will take part in a range of exciting activities such as archery, den building, boat making, bat walks, crafts, team challenges, and orienteering.

Throughout the summer term, classes will be going on a variety of topic-related trips to enrich their learning. Planned destinations include the Sealife Centre, Wroxham Barns, and Gressenhall Museum.

Duke of Edinburgh Award

We have had 50 Year 9s enrolled on Bronze level and a further 29 year 10s moving up to Silver. Year 10 successfully completed their Silver practice expedition last month and Year 9 have been undertaking First Aid training and learning all about route planning and the countryside code during lunchtime and afterschool clubs. All of our enrolled students have been working really hard at their Physical, Volunteering and Skills sections, with activities ranging from learning Welsh to litter picking, photography and sports coaching. Over the next three months they will all be out on expedition, with our Silver cohort venturing to the Peak District in July.

Rotary Club Young Writer competition

Students from the primary & secondary phase took part in the Rotary Club Young Writer competition. Florence M (Golden Eagles), Krystal H (7W) and Nicoletta A (9W) won first prize in the junior, intermediate and senior sections, of the local heat for their stories. Krystal went on to achieve *Highly Commended* in the district final of the competition and Florence and Nicoletta *Third place*. All three students received book tokens and an amazon voucher for their win.

Papillon Project

Litcham School's Papillon Project allotment continues to be successful and at the end of the summer term we held our annual Open Garden and had a great time showing visitors around. The students worked very hard, and we are thankful to our Papillon Project volunteers for their essential support.

A small group of students and staff attended the prestigious Papillon Project celebration evening at Raveningham Hall. They listened to speeches from Sir Richard Bacon the Patron of the Papillon Project, Matt Willer, the founder of the Papillon Project and Adam Rose from BBC Gardener's World, who said that he wished he had had something like the Papillon Project when he was at school.

More information about the Papillon Project can be found at their website www.thepapillonproject.com

Sweet Success: Chocolate Day at Litcham School

Litcham School became a hub of creativity, collaboration, and cocoa-fuelled brilliance as students immersed themselves in the much-anticipated *Chocolate Day*. From the moment the day began, the atmosphere was alive with energy and ambition, as teams whisked their way through a schedule packed with ideas, innovation, and sharp teamwork.

A huge thank you to **Caroline Williamson (Senior Packaging Developer)** and **Dan Brocklehurst (Head of NPD)** from **Kinnertons Chocolate Factory**, whose invaluable contribution brought the day to life.

Church Links

At Litcham Primary Phase we cherish our close ties with All Saints, which has long been an integral part of our yearly cycle of celebration and community engagement. Recently, our pupils and staff participated and enjoyed the Easter service.

We are also working with the church in support of the 'Beautiful Bells' project.

The 'Beautiful Bells' project is not only a testament to the commitment of our community to preserving its heritage but also a unique opportunity for a collaboration that will enhance the educational experience of our pupils. The key here, is how the project can best support our pupils in their learning, their sense of place and community and in their wider wellbeing. This has manifested itself in the project activities from June 2025 onwards, namely:

- Holding a STEM Day with the contactors and project partners to provide curriculum enrichment opportunities and developing skills and awareness of possible future career paths for our pupils.
- Using the restoration of the bells as inspiration to deliver a series of handbell ringing workshops for our Year 3 pupils, culminating in a performance at the schools' 2025 Christmas Carol service at All Saints.
- For our pupils to work with the Activity Coordinator to develop and 'test out' the new 'Beautiful Bells' Discovery Trail and linked interpretation board.
- Working with colleagues and students at Litcham Secondary Phase on the 'Make Your Mark' school art workshops - using the graffiti in All Saints as a catalyst and inspiration to create a graphic mural on the side of Litcham Secondary and Primary Phase.

Such opportunities as this don't come along very often and we are delighted to be involved. I am confident that these activities will boost our children's sense of wellbeing and rootedness in their local community - enabling them to become ambassadors for the heritage of All Saints and of the village more widely.

VE Day 80 at Litcham School

On Thursday, 8th May, Litcham School went all-out to commemorate this year's 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day. Pupils across both phases at our school had lessons teaching them about life in Britain during World War Two and to mark VE Day. Our Secondary Phase pupils found themselves learning about a world of Pounds, Shillings and Pence; not an easy task and it left them all feeling rather relieved that we now live with decimalisation! The primary phase enjoyed decorating themed biscuits for a school 'Street Party,' making bunting to adorn the school, and holding a commemorative assembly.

We marked the national two minutes silence at 12 noon and then at lunch time we filled our Secondary Phase Hall with bunting and music from World War Two, whilst we sat down to a delicious meal of Roast Beef and Yorkshire Puddings, with Rhubarb Crumble and Custard for pudding, all made by our fantastic catering team. There were photographs and stories on display of many of our staff's relatives who served in World War Two and our pupils really enjoyed seeing how we are all connected to the events of 80 years ago. Our Cadets and other uniformed groups came into school in their uniforms to mark the day and our Year 4, 5 and 6 'cadets' joined us for lunch too and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Many staff made a huge effort to dress up 1940s style, with particular mention going to our fabulous TAs who revived the 'keep calm and carry on' spirit of the Land Girls. A wonderful day was had by all.

Kindest regards

Stuart Wilson
Head of School

Jade Taylor
Acting Head of Primary Phase

The school would like to acknowledge the chairies that have supported our visits over the last year.

The West Norfolk & Kings Lynn Girls School Trust awarded £2136 which funded two of our students and the cost of their passports so they could attend our 2024 Ardeche trip in June 2024.

We have also received funding of £500 from Tesco Stronger Starts, this will help to fund some students doing their Duke of Edinburgh. Along with a grant from the Duke of Edinburgh's Award 'The Resilience Fund' for £1125.00, to help assist students.

Litcham Jubilee Hall CIO Report To Parish Council

May 2024 to April 2025

The Jubilee Hall charity committee and volunteers have had another busy year continuing to restore and repair the hall, source funding and deliver events for the community that raise funds and encourage community engagement.

The committee has welcomed two new members, Martin Dorman who has taken on the formal role of Secretary, and Elaine Skinner, who is a very active volunteer for the events held in the hall.

Work undertaken during 2023 to get builders' quotes to carry out the total restoration and renovation of the Jubilee Hall in accordance with the plans developed by the charity in 2017, and reviewed in 2022, had identified that the project would cost between £300k to £600k.

At the end of 2023 the committee agreed an interim strategy to use the existing funds and those raised throughout the year to restore the hall to a warm, welcoming and **useable** space. This would allow the hall to be used, evidence that there was a need for a village hall for the community and support the applications for grants and matched funding to carry out the full restoration of the building.

In the past 12 months the small committee, supported by some very generous members of the community and tradespeople, have managed to complete the following work on the hall to meet the strategy and it is now a bright warm and inviting building:

- Completed the installation of the fully fitted kitchen, including new vinyl flooring
- Equipped the kitchen
- Removed the old hall floor tiles and had new carpet tiles installed
- Repaired the curtail rails and rehung all the curtains
- Repaired leaky taps and pipework
- Replaced toilet seats
- Replaced broken glass in front doors and in toilet windows
- New lighting at front, side and rear of building
- Full service of the electrics and heating system with a new fuse board installed – all heating is now working. Energy assessment completed
- New light fittings in the main hall
- All equipment PAT tested
- Pavement levelled outside front door
- Drain to road repaired. Kitchen drain repaired
- Exterior stripped, primed and repainted, which has made a huge difference to the appearance of the building
- Front windows and pillar tops rebuilt and painted
- New lock on front door
- Running repairs on leaks in the tiled roof
- New flooring in the hallway

There is still work to be done in both the toilets, on the wooden window frames and on the heating system. This will be completed as and when funds allow.

The hall has had at least two colonies of honey bees living under the flat part of the roof at the rear of the building for several years which, whilst it is nice to have regular guests, are a Health and Safety issue for users of the hall. After months of deliberating on how to manage them, the committee called on a local beekeeper, who together with a beekeeping builder spent a difficult day removing the roof and relocating as much of the two colonies as possible to new hives. Unfortunately, one of the colonies has returned and a decision needs to be made about their fate.

In order to achieve all these things the small committee and local supporters have worked tirelessly to put on events and activities to welcome people into the hall, raise funds and awareness of the facilities.

The events have included a plant sale and coffee morning, several Bingo and Quiz evenings, a whole village Yard Sale, Murder Mystery evening and a Grandma's Games evening that have been successful and thoroughly enjoyable

The hall has had private hire events including a birthday party and visits from two Paranormal Groups.

There are limited regular bookings of weekly Weight Watchers, Village Green Ukulele Beginners group and the monthly Parish Council Meeting. We hosted a baby massage group for a short period, but unfortunately there are currently a lack of young clientele to support this activity.

In December a successful application to the Breckland District Council Spark Fund allowed the provision of a free, warm space community lunch on the second Tuesday of January, February and March in the Jubilee Hall. The lunch included a choice of three varieties of soup, bread rolls, some amazing desserts and unlimited hot drinks, all cooked, prepared and served by the hall committee members and helpers.

There were between 20 and 30 guests at each event and in February representatives of BDC visited the event and were very impressed. Due to the success of the first three events, and by request of the guests, the committee have continued the community lunches, as a paid event, for a further three months. The April lunch was attended by over 30 guests many of whom commented how the hall provides a meeting point with a lovely atmosphere for all the community.

In the past year the committee have sourced external funding from Breckland District Council, Tesco Community Support Scheme (blue tokens), Ink Cartridge recycling, Easyfundraising shopping scheme and a school clothes bank donation.

Currently an application has been submitted for a significant amount of matched funding, to a charity funder, Garfield Weston, to replace the slate roof.

Mention must be made of significant bequests from two of the founding Trustees of the Litcham Jubilee Hall charity, Liz Christie and June Bevan, both of whom left significant amounts in their wills to continue the work to restore the Jubilee Hall.

The committee members would also like to express sincere appreciation, on behalf of the Litcham Jubilee Hall charity to the incredibly generous members of our community who have made personal donations of money, equipment and time to support the restoration of the Jubilee Hall.

Unfortunately, despite all this work and activity by the committee, the hall is currently not being hired on a regular enough basis to make it self-funding or sustainable.

If the hall is not used by the community, this historic building at the centre of our village will return to it's previous sad, derelict state and could be lost permanently. Using the hall will not only bring in the funds that are needed to maintain and improve the facilities, but it will bring people together and build community spirit.

"The Jubilee Hall is your hall and it needs to be used"

The Trustees consider that the main activities of LITCHAM JUBILEE VILLAGE HALL are in accordance with the objective and that they are of public interest.

The Trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charities Commission on Public Benefit.

Litcham Bellringers

Report for Litcham Annual Parish Meeting on 19 May 2025

Litcham's church bells have been rung regularly over the past year. We practice on alternate Tuesday evenings and aim to ring for at least one church service a month and also to mark special occasions. Occasionally visiting groups from other areas will come to ring the bells.

Four residents of Litcham are members of our band with other ringers coming from surrounding villages. We have established contacts at Litcham School and are hoping to develop these so that more youngsters have the opportunity to give bellringing a try.

Following previous updates, I'm delighted to be able to report that our application to The National Lottery Heritage Fund has been successful, and a grant of approximately £135,000 has been awarded for our project. The total budget is a little over £160,000, with the balance of funds having been raised from a number of sources. In particular, we are grateful to Litcham Parish Council, the Friends of All Saints Church Litcham charity, the Norwich Diocesan Association of Ringers' Bell Restoration Fund and many individuals for their generous donations. We are also grateful to all those who have helped us by buying National Lottery tickets!

Work will centre on the tuning of the bells and replacement of the very worn fittings, together with restoration of the church clock. (In future, our ringers will have nothing but themselves to blame if the sound of the bells isn't tuneful!) There will also be a big emphasis on promoting and sharing the heritage of the bells and church. In particular, we will be doing a lot of work with the local schools. In addition there will be environmental aspects, with churchyard conservation workshops planned in partnership with the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, and the installation of swift nesting boxes in the tower. (In case you're wondering, swifts will quite happily nest right next to church bells!)

Our plan is that the public will be able to view the bells and clock mechanism once removed from the tower, before they are taken off site. This will probably happen in late June, and the exact date will be advertised once it is known.

The likelihood is that the bells will be away from the church for three or four months before being reinstalled.

A lot of work has gone into the grant application process and we would like to express our thanks for all who have contributed, whether by taking part in the consultation process last year or providing advice/assistance over the past months.

Tim Angell

Litcham Common Management Committee

Report for Litcham Annual Parish Meeting on 19 May 2025

Litcham Common is a Local Nature Reserve and a County Wildlife Site. The Management Committee's primary responsibility is to manage the site for wildlife, taking particular account of its importance as an area of lowland heathland. At present, funding is received from Natural England under a Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement. The agreement was due to end in February 2022 but has been extended for a period of five years, giving us time to investigate future funding options, although there is uncertainty about what will be available.

The Management Committee was established in 1984 when Norfolk County Council and Lexham Hall Estate entered into a legal agreement regarding the management of the common. Although the agreement continues, the County Council no longer provides funding and has not sent a representative to attend committee meetings for some years. The present Committee is made up of Neil Foster and Venetia Foster (representing Lexham Hall Estate, which owns the freehold of the common), Mike Oldfield (representing Litcham Parish Council), Aaron Brown (representing the Norfolk Wildlife Trust), Juliette Short, Roger Watts, Adam Pain, Rory Hart and Tim Angell.

Conservation grazing is a key part of the management strategy. We have a herd of four Dartmoor ponies, which have the right qualities of hardiness and an appetite for the rough grazing found on the common. Local volunteers play a vital role in the work that we carry out, and we are very grateful for all they do.

At present we have five cattle grazing the common. The ponies and cattle complement each other with their different grazing techniques and this helps maintain a diversity of vegetation.

Ongoing management work is carried out in accordance with the terms of our HLS agreement with Natural England and we receive advice and support from the Norfolk Wildlife Trust. The Wildlife Trust produced a management statement for us in 2017 and this is available to view on Litcham's website. Work carried out over the past twelve months has included the felling of a relatively small number of mature trees and the continued clearance of scrub that has encroached onto the open heathland areas. Trees and scrub have been cleared in specific areas where petty whin (a rare gorse like plant) grew in the past, as part of a project that we hope will expose long buried seeds and enable them to germinate. In December 2024 the Norfolk Ponds Project assisted us in restoring three of the ponds on the common.

We will be taking part in a Norfolk Wildlife Trust event in July, sharing our experience of managing the nature reserve. This will involve a walk round the common on Tuesday 1 July. We are also hoping to organise a "fungus foray" this autumn.

A lot has been achieved in recent years and we are confident that the common is in a good position to flourish in the future, both for the benefit of wildlife and local people.

Tim Angell

LITCHAM COMMUNITY CAR SCHEME

JUNE 2024 to APRIL 2025

Organiser : Clive Isitt

Volunteer Drivers : Ian Harrison, Mike Troupe, Phyliss Troupe and Brian Elford

During the 11 months I have been the coordinator for the Community Car Scheme there have been 93 bookings, averaging just over 8 a month, although the most bookings in one month was 17.

Ian Harrison has done the majority of the bookings during my time as coordinator.

I have had a couple of calls from residents in Weasenham regarding the transport as they were patients at Litcham Health Centre and were given my number and this was also the case from a resident in Castle Acre, and after checking with the Parish Clerk concerning the Weasenham calls, I had to say that we only transport residents in Litcham and the Lexhams.

One point that has recently come to my notice is that on odd occasions the drivers have had very long waits with patients at hospital appointments, in one case it was over 6 hours, although the patient was not aware, it just happened that extra tests/scans were needed and nobody could inform the patient or driver how long it was going to take. My point being, is, I wonder if an extra payment could be made to maybe cover the cost of a sandwich and a drink for the driver if long waits are required.

Clive Isitt.

Litcham Common Conservation Group
Report for Litcham Annual Parish Meeting on 19 May 2025

Litcham Common Conservation Group was set up in January 2004 to assist with conservation work on the common. The group is relatively informal, with no written constitution or formal membership list, and uses the Litcham Common Management Committee bank account to hold funds. We are a member of The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), a national organisation for voluntary groups such as ours.

Having received no income in the previous year, a grant of £400 was received from Litcham Parish Council in 2024/25, towards the cost of insurance, tools and equipment, for which we are very grateful.

Volunteers meet on the second Saturday of each month and carry out a variety of tasks. Over the past year work done has included removing invasive scrub and trees, clearing footpaths, removing ragwort and picking up litter. We have had good numbers attending tasks and always manage to make a difference.

Other Conservation Group members carry out regular welfare checks on the ponies that graze the common, on a rota basis. We have more than enough people to ensure that the ponies are checked on a daily basis. We are fortunate to have some volunteers who are very competent and confident in handling the animals when we need to round them up for visits by the vet or farrier.

Tim Angell

Litcham Childcare report.

It was reported that the Childcare in Litcham has 50 places and currently has a waiting list for places.

The centre has been hit with new costs and legislation and are due to Ofsted inspection soon, in which the centre is preparing for.

It is becoming increasingly hard for funding for children.

Parish Council Meeting - 19-05-2025

LRINC has donated £1,300 in the form of charitable relief over the last year.

At the start of 2024, with higher-than-average rainfall, there was extensive flooding on several plots adjacent to the Dereham road and on some bordering the common. The trustees worked closely with the Norfolk Rivers Drainage Board (NRDB) to help sort out the drainage issues on Dereham Road particularly at the junction with Dunham Road. More recently, with the permission of the Litcham Common Committee, the charity has also financed the clearing and re-excavation of the existing ditch on the common, which runs the length of the Dereham Road allotments. Hopefully these interventions have now solved the flooding issues.

Following the theft of IBC tanks from two of our rainwater stations last spring, we managed to secure addition funding from the S106 grant to increase security measures. These have been implemented, and the stolen tanks have been replaced ready to collect water (when it decides to rain!).

Allotment rents have remained unchanged for many years, and some irregularities existed between plot size and the fees payable. A review of rental charges was carried out during the autumn to standardize payments. As a result, there was a small increase in rent this year, which will help to cover the cost of the annual hedge cutting on the Dunham Road.

Several plots became vacant over the course of 2024. Two of the larger allotments were subdivided to form eight smaller more manageable plots. All but one of these new plots have now been rented, and we have many new tenants. As well as increasing income for the charity, it is hoped that the smaller plots will be better maintained improving the overall appearance of the allotments.

Last year the trustees took out public liability insurance for the allotments. As part of this a risk assessment was completed and this is displayed on the LRINC noticeboard and distributed to tenants. In addition, the small pond/water hole adjacent to plot 23 and 30 have been fenced off to comply with our public liability insurance.

All tenants have been notified that as from October 2024 that it is their legal requirement to register all poultry with Defra.

Work has been carried out by Andy Hinds from the Norfolk Ponds Project (financed by Natural England) to dig out a large pond in the woodland beck area to encourage biodiversity. Several trees have been cut down which has really opened the area up. Natural England will continue to monitor and maintain the ponds over the next 6 to 8 years.