

BUCKDEN ANNUAL ASSEMBLY 19TH MAY 2026

PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

Earlier this month there were local elections. With 13 candidates for the 15 seats on Buckden Parish Council, we were all elected, 12 existing Members and one new one.

I am grateful to my fellow Members to have re-elected me as their Chairman and I would like to thank Caroline Underwood for her support as Vice-Chairman during the last two years. She has decided to stand down from that position this year and I am delighted that Anne Howell-Jones was elected to be Vice-Chairman.

We have an excellent team of staff, led by our Clerk, Ramune, with Jess as Assistant Clerk and Nigel and Mark as Groundstaff. Nigel has recently decided to retire after 6 years with the Council, and we thank him for his service to the Council and to Buckden. This year has been a successful and active one for the Council and its Committees and Advisory Groups.

Our finances are in very good shape. For the year to 31st March 2026 our Income, mainly from the Council Tax, totalled £228,291.73, whilst our Expenditure was £206,948.34, giving us a surplus of £21,643.39. I would particularly like to thank Mark Williams and Emily Lankfer for their help to our Clerk in preparing excellent Management Accounts. This has been such a massive improvement in what has been presented to the Council. The careful management of our finances has enabled us to have a very small increase in our Council Tax Precept for this year, which will increase the charge you pay by just 0.1%.

The Village Maintenance Committee, Chaired by Anne Howell-Jones has continued with the very high standards of maintenance of areas across the village and to respond to urgent issues raised by residents. In all our work we support the green and diversity agenda. They have undertaken a full Safety review of the Cemetery (topple testing) and there has been an excellent response from the grave owners in resolving any issues. Anne will talk later about our work on the Play Area. We had a successful switch-on of the Christmas lights, although the problems we had with the contractors resulted in a compensation payment.

The Planning Committee, which I Chair, has met monthly and is consulted by both County and District Councils on all Planning Applications in Buckden, but we have also commented on one or two Applications outside the Parish which affect us, notably the recent application for a major industrial site north of Huntingdon.

John Thelwall chairs both our Advisory Groups for Large Scale Planning and Neighbourhood Plan. The former has been heavily involved in the development proposals for land in Silver Street and we have held a Parish Meeting to explain to residents what we know at present. Morris homes has agreed to come to another meeting when they have clearer plans.

The Neighbourhood Plan Group has been reviewing the Buckden Neighbourhood Plan which they hope will come into effect in Autumn 2028, following a referendum to ask if residents support the plan.

Our Highways and Sustainable Transport Advisory Group, chaired by Gerry Sansom, has established two new MVAS units in Lucks Lane and the Council has finally persuaded the County Council to install a 30mph Buffer Zone in Mill Road. They have put forward to the County Council proposals for more 20mph zones in the village and widening the cycle/footpath in Mill Road. Regular meetings are held with National Highways which have been very informative, particularly regarding the Black Cat changes. We are concerned at its impact on the Buckden Roundabout, together with the many other proposals for development.

The Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Advisory Group, chaired by Caroline Underwood, has carried out new planting of daffodils in Mill Road at the 20mph limit, upgrading the planting at Hunts End, planting trees on the High Street behind the BookSwap, a new hedge at The Towers and continuing the planting in Lucks Lane. There are plans to provide information boards setting out the purposes and details of the planning. The Group carries out its Annual Footpath check to ensure that any issues are identified and reported to the landowner or the County Council or dealt with by the Parish Council.

Our Allotments Advisory Group is chaired by one of the Allotment Holders, Mark Burgess, and reports that the orchard is ageing nicely and has been supplemented by a nuttery. The number of half-plots has increased, several younger families are taking on plots, new raised beds are about to be planted out and all plots are available. The polytunnel has proved very successful, the natural fence at the A1 end is now well established and forms a protective barrier against anyone trying to access the site from the A1 footway. The relationship with HDC is very beneficial, both in dealing with rats and delivering soil improvers. The one failure has been the inability to continue with the Community Plot.

There has been concern about the long-term future of the Allotments, but the Church Commissioners have offered to sell it to the Parish Council. We have accepted the price and negotiations are ongoing.

Anita Pancholi-McCann chairs our Hub Advisory Group which has been developing activities for the young people in Buckden, their next one being at the beginning of September. They have had considerable support from Buckden Towers and Shakespeare at The Towers, amongst others.

Our Flood Advisory Group, under the Chairmanship of Aidan Joy, continues to develop plans to identify flooding hot-spots in the village and, through a group of wardens, to give support when flooding does occur.

We also have Communications and Compliance Advisory Groups, whose work is as unspectacular as it is necessary, and my thanks go to Anne, Caroline and one of our newer Members, David Gregory.

Two years ago, Madelaine Fraser led the team which developed Buckden Repair Café. This is now being run by Natalie Bartlett, a non-Councillor, but with the full support of the Parish Council.

I must also mention “Roundabout” our village magazine which continues to be supported and underwritten by the Parish Council, although the team that has produced it for the last 13 years has regularly generated a surplus. That team: Ian Carter, Fiona Shirley and Lesley McAndrew did a marvellous job, and I would like to thank them. We now have a new team who seem to have landed very much on their feet and we wish them well.

The Parish Council also maintains good relationships with many other organisations both within and beyond Buckden, including our District and County Councils as well as neighbouring Parish Councils and, of course, the Village Hall Trust.

I began by thanking the Council’s excellent staff, but I will end by thanking my fellow Councillors – a better group I could not wish for. Thank you.