

Preston Brook Parish Council

**MINUTES OF PRESTON BROOK ORDINARY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT 8:30PM ON TUESDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2024 AT PRESTON BROOK VILLAGE HALL,
SANDY LANE, PRESTON BROOK, CHESHIRE, WA7 3AW.**

Members Present:

A Price, J Walton, C Murray, K Dainty, M Marlow, P Bolton, L Hewlett.

Also Present:

Luke Trevaskis - Proper Officer, and 3 members of the public.

1. Apologies

Cllr Lauren Sanders

2. Declarations

Cllr Alan Price and Cllr Cathy Murray noted an interest in Preston Brook Village Hall.

Cllr Kerry Dainty and Cllr Liam Hewlett noted an interest in the proposal for future partnership working with Heatherfield Heritage on the 250th Anniversary of the Preston Brook Tunnel, and the Planning Application 22/00203/FUL.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the prior meeting were approved.

5. Police

Members noted that there had been a meeting held between the Police Crime Commissioner and local councils to address key issues.

6. Public Realm

Members noted the update regarding the maintenance works scheduled for Bridgewater Grange.

The Council resolved for the PO to select a contractor to maintain the new planters, acknowledging that this budget line would result in an overspend by year end.

Members received an update regarding the Horse Chestnut Tree, noting that Halton BC had agreed to undertake additional tests to identify the extent of the rot.

The Council resolved for the PO to source a contractor to collect and move the boulders at a cost to the Council, acknowledging that this budget line would result in an overspend by year end.

The Council agreed to install a new heritage finger-post to replace the current post for the Village Hall at the corner of Sandy Lane. Members agree additional fingers for other wayfaring, acknowledging that this budget line would result in an overspend by year end.

Members considered various other projects that had been proposed throughout the Parish, namely to improve the appearance and heritage value of the amenity space. Members agreed to bring back additional projects, and finalise a list in January for delivery in FY2526.

7. Finance

The Council approved Month 7 budget report and bank reconciliation for FY2425.

8. Planning

The Council noted that liaison between Halton BC and the developer regarding Planning Application 22/00203/FUL had still not concluded. The Council agreed to proceed with a further objection, outlining concerns that local heritage had not been adequately appraised, boundary wall treatments were inappropriate, in addition to the visual presence of the development (and particularly the Terramesh and Gabion structures) from the canal side. Most importantly, the Council confirmed its stance on S106 monies that should be guaranteed for the Parish, and delegated to the PO to instruct a solicitor to draft a letter confirming the Council's intent to pursue a Judicial Review should a fairer share of S106 monies not be guaranteed for the Parish. PO will action further objection, and instruct a legal firm.

9. **Ward Councillor Report** - none received. Members noted how helpful Cllr Hughes has been in resolving parish issues.

10. **Highways** - members discussed the adopted highway at the Wharf and its relation to Planning Application 22/00203/FUL.

11. **Village Hall** - members discussed the current position of the Village Hall. Members noted the treasurer had been back in touch, and the PO noted that a response from the PC was still outstanding.

12. Conservation Status / Neighbourhood Plan

The Council noted the success of the first Neighbourhood Plan Consultation evening held earlier that night between 6-8pm where approximately 50 residents attended and expressed an interest in forming a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. PO to make contact with interested parties and arrange a further meeting for Spring 2025.

Members agreed that the Conservation Status application proceed, irrespective of any additional information.

Members considered a invitation from Halebank Parish Council to support efforts to make a case to Halton Borough Council for a greater share of CIL. Members agreed to explore options once quotes were received.

13. 250th Anniversary of the Preston Brook Tunnel

The Council considered the historical context of the Bridgewater Canal system and agreed to hold an event to mark the 250th Anniversary of the Preston Brook Tunnel.

Background:

The Preston Brook Canal Tunnel, listed as a Grade II heritage structure, was first designated on October 31, 1983. Its listing underscores its historical significance, particularly its role in the development of the

Bridgewater Canal during the Industrial Revolution, and its profound impact on Britain's economic landscape.

Spanning 1,250 yards and designed by pioneering canal engineer James Brindley, the tunnel is a crucial component of the Bridgewater Canal, often hailed as the "first true canal" in England. Completed in 1770, this canal was ingeniously designed for navigation, featuring artificial cuts and locks that optimised trade efficiency. Unlike earlier waterways, which were constrained by natural paths, the Bridgewater Canal was meticulously planned to facilitate the swift transportation of coal from the Worsley mines to Manchester, establishing a model for subsequent canal construction across the nation. The Bridgewater Canal was pivotal in setting the model for canal construction during this transformative period. The efficient movement of goods via canals helped establish Britain's dominance in industrial production, with the canal network acting as the arteries of trade, fuelling urbanisation and technological advancements throughout the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

The tunnel played a vital role in linking the Bridgewater Canal to the Trent and Mersey Canal, thus creating a vital trade route that enabled the efficient movement of coal, pottery, and other goods between Manchester and the Midlands. This connection marked a significant leap in infrastructure, reducing transport costs and stimulating economic growth across Northern England.

Preston Brook played a crucial role in the construction of the Bridgewater Canal, serving as a key point for connecting the canal to the navigable River Weaver. The successful engineering of the canal through Preston Brook demonstrated innovative canal-building techniques and the canal as a whole set a benchmark for future infrastructure projects in Britain, influencing future canal developments across Britain during the Industrial Revolution.

The tunnel's 250th anniversary in 2025 highlights its enduring historical importance as a feat of engineering that remains a reminder of Britain's industrial heritage. This milestone offers an opportunity to celebrate not only the tunnel's engineering achievements but also its role in shaping the region's economic and social history. This celebration will likely serve to emphasise the tunnel's role in the region's economic and social history, and this community reflection on the tunnel's impact will highlight its enduring legacy as a critical piece of Britain's industrial heritage.

Introduction:

Preston Brook Canal Tunnel will celebrate its 250th anniversary in 2025, marking a significant milestone for one of the UK's earliest and longest-standing canal tunnels. Built as part of the Bridgewater Canal, construction first began in 1769, with approximately 300 local men employed, with the tunnel construction completing in 1775.

The first boat through the tunnel carried 50 tonnes of coal to Barrington Wharf (Acton Bridge) and returned with 'farm goods' that likely included various agricultural products, such as grain, livestock, or dairy items, reflecting the trade connections between local farms and urban markets.

The anniversary is expected to be a momentous occasion for local heritage groups, historians, and canal enthusiasts, celebrating both the engineering achievement and the tunnel's enduring legacy in British canal history.

Celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Preston Brook Canal Tunnel is essential for recognising its historical and cultural significance. This milestone provides an opportunity to educate local children and adults about their heritage, fostering a deeper understanding of the area's history and the role the tunnel

played in the Industrial Revolution. Such educational initiatives can strengthen community ties, enhance social cohesion, and inspire a sense of pride in local identity.

Moreover, recognising and celebrating heritage can aid in securing conservation status by demonstrating community value, which can attract funding and support for preservation efforts. Engaging the community in heritage activities fosters stewardship and encourages collective responsibility for protecting local history, which is one of the Parish Council's key directives, ensuring that future generations appreciate and maintain their unique cultural legacy.

Ideas:

Some ideas are listed below of activities and entertainment discussed for the Preston Brook Canal Tunnel 250th anniversary celebration:

1. **Open Wharf Stalls:** Local artisans and vendors can sell crafts, food, and canal-related products.
2. **Historical Fairground Games:** Traditional games from the 18th century, such as ring toss or bean bag throw.
3. **Skill Demonstrations:** Craft demonstrations, including roses and castles painting (decorative boat painting).
4. **Historical Boat Tours:** Guided talks on historical boats, allowing visitors to explore and learn about canal trade. Possible boat trips up and down the canal to transport people to and from the event from neighbouring parishes along Bridgewater Canal.
5. **'Legging the Tunnel' Demonstration:** A reenactment showing how horses would pull boats through the tunnel and/or people would use their legs to push.
6. **Outdoor Historical Videos:** Screening short films that provide historical context about the canal and its importance.
7. **Clydesdale Horse Interaction:** Allowing visitors to stroke and groom traditional Clydesdales, educating them on their role in canal transport.
8. **Traditional Music Performances:** Live music by artists like Tom Kitching.
9. **Historical Artifact Displays:** Exhibits showcasing artifacts related to canal trade and the Industrial Revolution.
10. **Family History Booths:** Workshops where families can learn about their own local history and connections to the canal.
11. **Guided Historical Walks:** Tours around the canal area highlighting significant landmarks and stories.
12. **Craft Workshops for Children:** Activities such as making boats from recycled materials or decorating canal-themed crafts.
13. **Canal Cleanup Events:** Engaging the community in preserving the canal environment as part of the celebrations.
14. **Trade Related Activities:** Hands on activities associated with the goods that would have been transported on the canal, such as cow milking, pottery wheel, yarn spinning, and wheat chaffing.
15. **Interactive Storytelling:** Sessions for children and families featuring tales from the canal's history.
16. **Art Installations:** Inviting local artists to create installations inspired by the canal and its heritage.
17. **Traditional Dress Competition:** Inviting local people to dress in 18th and 19th century dress to symbolise the bygone era.
18. **Launch of Classroom Boat:** Promotion of the aspiration to have a permanent classroom boat on the canal.

These activities can not only entertain but also educate attendees about the historical significance of the Preston Brook Canal Tunnel, fostering community spirit and awareness of local heritage.

14.ChALC

The Council noted that it had previously agreed that 'ChALC' should become a standing item.

The Council once again congratulated Cllr Cathy Murray on becoming the latest member of the ChALC Executive Board - securing the second highest number of votes from all attendees at the Annual Meeting.

The Council agreed that support should be shown for the new consultation to permit remote meeting attendance.

The Council noted it has not yet received a response from NALC in relation to the motions the authority submitted to be heard by member councils, which were deemed not acceptable as proper motions by the ChALC board.

Members agreed to meet up with other local parishes to discuss shared matters of concern.

15. Next Meetings

It was noted that the next meetings of the Council would be held on:

Tuesday 28 January 2025 (budget and precept meeting)

Tuesday 25 February 2025

Tuesday 25 March 2025

16. Public Forum

Residents had nothing further to add as many had spoken during the Neighbourhood Plan meeting earlier that evening.

Signed as a true record

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Chairperson