

# Chair's Notes for Members 2022

## Scope

This report covers the financial year commencing April 2022 and ending in March 2021. Although some reference is made to activities which have taken place since then.

## Overview: Emerging from Covid

During the Covid period, the partnership was able to support the local community through the institution of a special response group and the continuation of a Village Link Bus service adapted to service user through a shopping and errand service. Other groups, including the Orchard Group and Friends of Longovicium, continued (largely unseen) to deliver important work. I'd like to reiterate my personal thanks and admiration for all working groups and members who, during 21-22 and for a second year, demonstrated adaptability, resilience, determination and innovative spirit by managing to implement new and existing activities in difficult circumstances. Over the last twelve months there has been a progressive but stuttering easing of restrictions. We hope that in the coming year will witness a return to business as usual.

Here are a few highlights from 2021-2022

- The switching on of the Christmas Lights and Santa Stroll were established in the first year of Covid and in 2021 they have become part of the annual calendar.
- A Covid safe version of the Lanchester Fun Run returned in September 2021.
- The start of 2022 witnessed the gradual return of physical meetings and events.
- From Jan 2021 we were involved with other organisations in the village in the planning of the Big Jubilee Picnic. This culminated in an outstanding event held at the EP school on 5<sup>th</sup> June. Hopefully this illustrated the value of the partnership as a vehicle for attracting and administrating funding on behalf of projects identified and delivered on behalf of residents.
- From March/April 2022 we have seen a flourishing of activity with the return of the Litter Pick, regular Paradiso Club events, a family quiz and external events/visits organised by Friends of Longovicium, Orchard Group and the Environment Group.
- A notable achievement was the Public Health Award which was conferred on Michelle Atkinson for her leadership of the Covid support Group. Congratulations and thanks to her and all the volunteers who provided practical support to many Lanchester residents.
- Friends of Longovicium commissioned a very effective and attractive website. Membership of the group is flourishing
- The maintenance and development work of the Orchard continued with a successful Easter at the Orchard event and visits from the refugee community in Newcastle. The five-year plan has been reviewed and updated.
- Luke – the Driver of the Village Link Bus – was nominated for a Covid Hero Award (Durham County Council) and we have just learned that the nomination was successful
- During Covid the partnership was able to support the recruitment of new editorial staff for the Village Voice. The paper had not been issued since April 2020 and was sorely missed as a vehicle for enabling residents to keep in touch with local events and developments. New editors were appointed by Lanchester Publications Ltd and the paper is flourishing after its first publication just before Christmas 2021

## **Trustees and Working Group Leads**

We continue to benefit from a very wide range of skills and experience. We miss Dorothy “Babs” Maskery (founder member and Trustee) and Steve Bailey (Orchard Group Lead, organiser of the Paradiso Club and driving force behind Lanchester’s Neighborhood Plan) both of whom passed away in the last eighteen months. We also thank Brian Masterman, who stepped down as a Trustee at the last AGM and who, for many years, contributed his expertise as a retired planning inspector to the very successful work of the Monitoring Development working group.

Effective leadership and governance are at the heart of the partnership. For 2022, we are delighted to announce new leadership for the Orchard Group – Christopher Davis. We hope to appoint an additional Trustee at the AGM – so broadening the skills knowledge and expertise available as we develop into the future.

## **21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of Village Link Bus**

The provision of Village Link Bus was one of the earliest achievements of the partnership. It has also been one of the most enduring. It is our greatest financial commitment. I’m very pleased to announce that following negotiations with the Area Action Partnership a significant grant has been secured which guarantees the service for another year. The service was able to operate throughout the Covid Period in consequence of the partnership policy that one year of funding is always held in reserve.

During Covid, although there were fewer passengers, Luke (our driver) worked tirelessly assisting regular users with shopping and other essential errands to the Post Office and Lanchester Pharmacy. For this service, he was nominated for a special Covid hero award. We recently heard that the nomination was successful. Recently new magnetic signs have been purchased to attach to the vehicle, it is clearly identifiable.

As passenger numbers slowly return to normal, the route has been extended to Lanchester Garden Centre on a Wednesday and a special one-day service to Willowburn is under consideration.

## **Financial Overview for 2021-2022**

**A detailed account of the financial situation is provided in the Trustees’ Report and Financial Statements, which are formally submitted for approval at the AGM.**

Over the Covid period, all our groups have remained financially viable thanks to balances carried over for last year, the grants they have been able to access for specific activities and to the generosity of members. We are as ever, extremely grateful for all the donations and grants which support the partnership.

Total charitable income for the year amounted to just over £11,000. This was lower than in the previous year which was exceptional because of considerable amount of Covid support grants which the partnership delivered and administered. Income this year was also depressed in consequence of the inability to hold fund raising events and the arrival of a significant AAP grant just after the end of the financial year.

	Core (unrestricted)	Restricted	Total
Opening Balance	£1,089	£19,347	£20,436
Closing Balance	£759	£11,432	£12,191
Change	(£330)	(£7,915)	(£8,245)

The financial priorities remain

- the replenishment of Core funds in order that the fixed costs of the partnership can be met (these include the provision of an effective website, stationery, printing, partnership insurances and sundry administrative costs)
- the resumption of fund-raising activities – in particular, activities which support the Village Link Bus

## Work with Partners

The Partnership wishes to thank all partners and individuals who have contributed either in kind or financially to its work in 2021-2-21. There is an impressive list and reflects well on our continuing ability to attract and administer voluntary funding which benefits the village and its residents.

Particular thanks this year are due to:

Lanchester Parish Council

- Christmas Lights and Santa's visit (now annual events)

Durham County Council

- Area Action Partnership (AAP) and other support for the Village Link Bus

Sir James Knott Trust

- A Very generous donation of £2,000 to the Village Bus

## Communication

During the year we continued to make very effective use of social media to signal events and generate wider interest in the partnership. We very much welcome the return of the Village Voice, and our working groups are making excellent use of it to report events. A new, more interactive, website has been commissioned which will allow for better interactive communication both with members and a wider audience.

## In Conclusion

The work of the partnership continues to develop and evolve. The last two years have demonstrated that we are a flexible and adaptable organisation which is capable of supporting voluntary projects designed and delivered by enthusiastic local people on behalf of the wider community for the well-being of Lanchester.

I would like to thank fellow Trustees and Group Leads for the hard work they have undertaken during the year and their help in compiling these notes and the official papers for the AGM.



Henry Edwards - Chair of The Lanchester Partnership