

**Minutes of the Meeting of Great Longstone Parish Council
held at 7.00pm on Wednesday 16th April 2025
in Great Longstone Village Hall DE45 1TB**

Present: Cllr A Douglass, Cllr S Hornsey, Cllr Barrett and Cllr J Cox (from Item 72/25)

In attendance: Simon Headington (Clerk), UTE Editor and 28 members of the public were in attendance.

68/25 Election of the Chair

As both the Chair and Vice Chair were absent at the start of the meeting Cllr Barrett nominated Cllr Douglass as Chair. This was seconded by Cllr Hornsey and agreed unanimously. Cllr Douglass took over as Chaired for the rest of the meeting

69/25 Apologies for absence from members.

Cllr W Long, Cllr C Briggs, Cllr J Rigby

70/25 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest relating to items on the agenda. -
None

71/25 Discussion of Confidential Matters: (Public Bodies (Admission to Mtgs) Act 1960 S1(2))
Council decided that no items in this meeting needed to be discussed with the public excluded.

72/25 Report on potential lead contamination of the Parish Council Allotments

The Chair as asked the Clerk to present the information known to date about possible lead contamination of the allotments. Prior to the meeting a report had been prepared and shared with all councillors and allotment holders. (<https://greatlongstone-pc.gov.uk/report-on-investigating-the-risk-of-lead-in-the-soil-of-the-great-longstone-village-allotments/>)

The Clerk gave a presentation summarising the key points that is known, so far:

- History and Geology
 - There is a long, documented, history of lead mining in the area.
 - Great Longstone is within the Peak District, which is an area with high background levels of lead in soil and rock.
 - It is thought that lead contamination is widespread throughout the UK.
- Health
 - Lead is considered to be a non-essential element that is toxic to humans and animals.
 - Lead poisoning can be difficult to spot, and it is more serious in young children.
 - Lead absorbed by the body remains for life.
- Absorption into plants and then into humans
 - High levels of lead in soil does not automatically mean high levels in plants.
 - In some conditions Lead can be “locked up”. For instance, it might be possible that soil that is more alkaline can “lock-up” higher quantities of lead – making it harder for plants to take it up.

- Soil in this area has a relatively high Ph level (7.7 in soil sample tested from the allotments)
- Plants could be tested to see if levels are safe.
- Plants absorb lead at different rates, so some crops are less harmful to grow/eat than others.
- Crops such as tubers, shrub and tree fruit might be safer than root vegetables such as rhubarb, beetroot, parsnips and carrots
- Lead contamination can be reduced by peeling root vegetables and careful washing of crops (and hands and clothes).
- Legal
 - **Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908** place a duty on the Parish Council to provide allotments, if requested by the community, subject to suitable land being available and the cost not being prohibitive.
 - **Environment Act 1990:**
 - Local Authorities (i.e. DDDC) are responsible for identifying land that is contaminated
 - Once identified it is the polluter who is responsible for removing the contamination. If the polluter is not known, it is the landowner's responsibility.
- Testing done so far
 - Currently only 1 sample has been tested so it is not known if contamination is spread across the site, or this was an isolated "hot" spot.
 - The sample was collected by walking a "W" pattern across the allotments and stopping every few metres to collect soil from a shallow depth. Samples were mixed together in a bucket and some of the resulting mixt was sent for testing.
 - Officially the result was "higher than" 1,250mg/kg (as this was the level that the equipment was calibrated to measure to)
 - Unofficially the result was around 3,000mg/kg
- When is land considered to be contaminated?
 - When the levels are higher than would be expected for the area.
 - When there is a route and an opportunity for contamination to get into humans
- What are the normal background concentrations (NBCs) for Lead, Arsenic and Cadmium, in the Peak District? (all figures are mg/kg)

Metal	NBC Peak District	NBC Most Areas	Guidance on maximum safe levels in:		
			Allotments	Gardens	Garden with Crops
Lead	2,400	180	80	330	210
Arsenic	290	32	49	40	37
Cadmium	17	1	3.9	149	22

It is important to note that this is not a Great Longstone specific issue and that these are the possible levels for heavy metal contamination across the wider Peak District area.

72/25 Suspension of Standing Orders: The Chair suspended standing orders to allow questions from and discussion with allotment holders present for the meeting.

There was a lengthy discussion about the issues raised. These included:

- Why did the Parish Council carry out testing in the first place? People were directed to the paper that went to the Parish Council meeting in November 2024 – (<https://greatlongstone-pc.gov.uk/appendix-h-item-12-plan-to-assess-risk-of-possible-lead-contamination-within-the-soil-of-the-parish-allotments/>). (Copies had been shared at the start of the meeting). It was made clear that this was part of routine risk assessments and “duty of care” and not as a result of any specific incidents that have occurred in the allotments.
- Some allotment holders made it clear that they wanted to regain access to their allotments at the earliest opportunity and that they should be allowed to use their own judgement to assess any potential risks.
- Questions were asked about the new water supply and if this could be a source of contamination. It was explained that this has not been tested yet. The meeting felt that it should be as part of any further investigations.
- It was asked if other areas in the village might have the same problems. The answer to this is not known and the Parish Council has no responsibility for private land. The meeting will be reported in “Under the Edge” so readers will be aware of the information and can make their own decisions
- It was suggested that the allotment holders might like to form an Allotment Association as a way of best representing the group in dealings with the Parish Council.
- Issues such as ways of reducing risk in the future, including hand washing, avoiding carrying dust into the home and avoiding crops that are more likely to take up heavy metals from the soil were discussed. The issue of any potential risk being much more severe for young children was also discussed.
- It was asked about possible other sites for allotments in the parish, but it was explained that currently the Council has no other land that might be suitable. It was suggested that if another site is found to be needed that this could be considered as part of the wider Neighbourhood Plan process that is just starting.
- It was suggested that if anyone has particular concerns it might be possible for them to arrange to see their GP. However it was thought that lead levels in blood correlated to recent exposure, but the Health Professionals would be able to advise the best course of action.
- An allotment holder, following up on a previous email correspondence with the clerk, explained that he might be able to provide GEO Environmental services, including testing of soil and water samples at cost price, subject to the approval of his employer. It was suggested that a more detailed sampling programme could be developed that would highlight individual allotments in the results.

73/25 Standing Orders were resumed.

74/25 Action points following presentation and discussion about the allotments.

Proposal: That the Clerk be instructed to engage a suitable GEO Environment or Contaminated Land Consultant to report on the allotments.

Cllr Douglass **proposed** that this be amended and that the offer of GEO Environment Support from the employer of one of the allotment holders be accepted, subject to details that need to be discussed. Agreed – All in Favour

In addition, Cllr Douglass **proposed** that,

- given the advice of the DDDC Environmental Health Officer, that the allotments remain closed whilst further testing are undertaken – Agreed – All in favour.
- the PC investigate options to test produce from the allotments at a suitable time in the growing season. As little is known about this process there will need to be an understanding prior to making a commitment. Agreed – All in favour

75/25 Planning Applications:

Notification of Appeals: [NP/DDD/0524/0534](#) - Change of use of The Old School to dwelling.
To note that this appeal has been rejected.

76/25 Items of Late Correspondence

Invoice from Community Heartbeat Trust for the annual service fee for the Defibrillator on the Tea Hut – (£162 including £27 VAT) – Approved

77/25 Items from Councillors for information:

Cllr Cox reported that the new Bird's Nest Swing seat has been installed.

78/25 Confirmation of forthcoming meetings:

- 30th April – Annual Parish Meeting
- 14th May – Parish Council Meeting (Annual General Meeting of the Parish Council)

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.20pm