

Lakes Parish has the largest land area of any parish in South Lakeland District, covering 13,428 hectares.

It has a population of approximately 7,300 and covers some of the most visited areas of the Lake District National Park including: Grasmere, Ambleside, Troutbeck and Langdale. Tourism is a mainstay of the local economy.



White Platts Recreation Ground, Ambleside

Background

Prior to 2011 South Lakeland District Council (SLDC), Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) and National Trust all ran public toilets in Lakes Parish. The biggest provider was SLDC with six toilets across Grasmere, Ambleside and Chapel Stile in Langdale.

In 2010 and 2011 SLDC reviewed their portfolio of public toilets and decided to continue to run some, but not all those in Lakes Parish. Four were scheduled for closure.

The Project

Lakes Parish Council had been subsidising the SLDC run toilets by £13,000 per year and felt that, in an area with many visitors, they were essential.

In April 2011 the Parish Council took over the running of three of the four toilets due to be closed; two in Ambleside and one in Chapel Stile.

What has been achieved?

Taking on additional assets

Following the Parish Council's early success with managing the toilets SLDC transferred their Grasmere toilet and remaining Ambleside toilet to them on 1st April 2012. SLDC now no longer runs any of the toilets in the parish.

In addition, since April 2012 the Parish Council has taken on the management of White Platts recreation ground in Ambleside which is also owned by SLDC.

The recreation ground contains tennis courts, crazy golf, bowling, gardens and toilets and should bring in approximately £30,000 profit annually which will subsidise the public toilets in the parish. Any surplus above £30k net profit will be shared equally with SLDC.

SLDC give an annual contribution of £10,000 to Lakes Parish for the running of the toilet facilities, in addition to the £30,000 annual profit from White Platts.

The Parish Council have started a programme of toilet refurbishment during 2012 and users will be charged 20p which will help to cover the running costs in the future.

Improved services

Local people and visitors will benefit from both the toilets remaining open, and improved facilities following the refurbishment process.



Rothay Park Public Toilets



Chapel Stile Public Toilets

The Learning

The Parish Council has developed different solutions for different toilets.

For example the Chapel Stile toilets are run as a partnership between the Parish Council, Langdale Valley Association (a local community group) and Langdale Leisure (a local hotel and timeshare business) with volunteers opening and closing the toilets and the hotel providing cleaners. The Parish Council provides funding towards the cost of cleaning and pays for the rates, water, electricity and toilet roll.

In another case, a set of toilets in a car park opposite a garden centre remains closed but an agreement has been reached for the garden centre's toilets to be used by car park users.

The Parish Council has been able to implement local solutions to the management of the assets they've taken on and have sub-contracted cleaning and other work to local companies or individuals. They experiment in keeping costs down, such as providing single sheet toilet roll dispensers rather than jumbo rolls of paper, which encourage users to be more economical in their usage!

To date improvement costs have been covered with funding from SLDC, a grant from a local charity: Ambleside Welfare Charity, which owns the building one of the sets of toilets are located in, and a one-off rise in the precept.

The Parish Council Clerk has had to work an additional six hours per week to accommodate his increased workload and, on occasion, has needed to work outside his usual hours. When one user got locked in a toilet in the evening the Clerk was contacted and had to find a local key holder who could let them out.

The Parish Council has been empowered to take on additional responsibilities and may consider running other services in the future. They have had a productive relationship with SLDC throughout the process and on occasions when they have wanted to take a different approach, have continued to find ways to work together.

Contact Details

For more information, please contact:

Michael Johnson,
Lakes Parish Council Clerk
Tel: 015394 31656
Email: lakesparishclerk@yahoo.co.uk

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ACTion with Communities in Cumbria, Offices O-Q Skirsgill Business Park, Penrith, Cumbria CA11 0FA
T: 01228 817224 | www.cumbriaaction.org.uk | info@cumbriaaction.org.uk | Follow us @ACTCumbria
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