

POTHOLES AND DRAINS

A perennial topic of complaint at Parish Council meetings is the state of the local highways and the frequently alleged failure of Cumbria County Council's local highways team to get on with the job. Though I am not setting out to be an apologist for the team I think it only fair to say that if anyone believes we receive a poor service in our local parishes they should step outside Cumbria for a moment and experience the state of rural roads in Northumbria as I recently did on my bicycle. They would return to home territory with a sense that maybe things are not as bad as they are sometimes be made out to be.

That said, there is always room for improvement as was acknowledged by our local Highways Steward, Glyn Wharton, who recently joined Hermann Moisl and me, representing Skelsmergh and Scalthwaiterigg Parish Council, in a tour of the parish designed to introduce ourselves and to show off some of the currently outstanding problems. During the tour we were able to point out surfacing needs at Garth Row and Dodding Green and drainage issues both below Garth Row and in Laverock Bridge Lane below Ponderosa (where the unstable safety barrier was also pointed out). Glyn took away a list of actions and priorities and we expect to see work being put in hand over the next weeks and months. The important thing is to have established a working relationship with the person responsible for our area. If individual problems do crop up do get in touch with either me, Karen Little or Hermann and we can channel the information to Glyn.

Glyn runs the Better Highways Team for our area which may also be alerted to pothole/repair issues via the Cumbria website: betterhighways.southlakeland@cumbria.gov.uk . I have used this successfully on a number of occasions and found that jobs such as attending to broken gullies and potholes have been done within a few weeks of reporting them. There is an interactive map to help locate the problem area which works rather well, once one gets the hang of it.

For those without access to the internet there is the Highways Hotline on 0845 609 6609.

Simon Elliott tells me that he has had a similarly productive meeting in Selside so I think we can say that at the moment there is a developing working relationship with highways locally.

But they are not miracle workers and nor do they have a bottomless budget , on some of the more difficult issues we will have to be realistic and patient.

John Chapman,

Chairman, Skelsmergh and Scalthwaiterigg PC