



## **Leek Town Council - War Memorials Committee**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2026**

*Reports in italics indicate action following the meeting*

### **ROUTINE MATTERS**

#### **1 ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**Present:** Cllrs Hilyer (Chair), Cawley, Webster and Young, and Richard Benefer

**Apologies:** Cllrs Hoptroff, Nicholls, M Swindlehurst

**In attendance:** Denise Wheat (Town Clerk), Victoria Johnson (Administrative Assistant)

#### **2 MINUTES**

**The minutes of the meeting held on 2 June were approved**

#### **3 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The retirement of Ash Lovatt, the Lengthsman, at short notice and through ill health, was recorded with regret – the committee expressed its gratitude to Ash for his years of resourceful and diligent service in connection with maintenance of the memorials and preparing for events, particularly at the NWM.
- *A kind offer of financial support towards the Remembrance Day reception has been received*

#### **4 FINANCE**

**It was reported that**

- £244 had been spent in the current financial year on clock maintenance and lightning inspection
- The budget allocation between headings within the War Memorial precept are subject to reallocation as needs change
- Outstanding expenses relating to 2025-26 relate to commemoration of the commemoration of the NWM Centenary (YouTube, photographic record etc)

### **MEMORIALS**

#### **4 MEMORIAL WORKS**

**It was reported that**

**Nicholson War Memorial**

- There had been complaints about a dip in the highway adjacent to the Monument, SCC Highways had filled the hole temporarily with tarmac, and there would be a meeting on 21 July between representative of SCC, SMDC and LTC (including Chair of WMC): it was noted that the Conservation Officer should be informed as use of tarmac patch (or even of the whole area) would be a heritage detriment; the history of waterlogging of the whole area may be relevant.
- Repair to the steps waiting for a response by the contractor

**Ball Haye Green Memorial**

- A response was awaited from BBC Repair Shop on the Road with regard to the memorial arch
- Estimates were being sought for repainting the gates

**Leekbrook Memorial**

- There had been no response to invitations to bid for the work of regrouting the paving so independent tradesmen were being approached.

#### **5 NAMES ON THE NWM**

**It was reported** that a request might be made to include, on the Monument, the name of a Leek resident who is thought to have died from exposure to UK nuclear bomb testing. The Council's resolution(s) on the adding of names would be found and reported to a future meeting of the

committee along with any relevant application.

## **6 EXHIBITION IN NWM**

### **It was reported that**

- A response was awaited from SMDC about providing material for a revised exhibition within the NWM.
- The NWM was currently inaccessible because of storage of the three large poppy panels on the stairs (which were to be removed by the Lengthsman) but that, once that had been resolved, Cllr Hilyer and Mr Benefer would be checking that the building is ready for the August tour and, at the same time, identifying how the exhibition could be mounted.

## **7 LAND AT THE NICHOLSON WAR MEMORIAL**

**It was reported that** the Town Council's solicitor was waiting for an approach from that of Leek Town Lands.

## **8 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AT THE MONUMENT**

### **It was reported that**

- As agreed at the previous meeting, a letter of Town Council concern about the lack of cctv at the Monument/Sparrow Park had been sent to the SMDC cabinet member for Communities (copied of the Chief Executive) and this had been forwarded to the appropriate council officer.
- A letter had been received from a neighbour reporting continuing anti-social behaviour at the Sensory Gardens and asking, as this is often drink-related and as this is on private land, whether or not drinking could be prohibited (it is not part of a council designated drink-free zone).
- Redevelopment of the gardens with interpretation panels (see next item) would remove the secluded parts (behind the 'island') but it was important that a substantial measure of shrubbery should be retained.
- The Council should work with the neighbours of the garden including the Cattle Market Public house (a new landlord) and the Premier Inn.

**It was agreed** that the declaration of the area a drink-free zone should be explored with the district council (requests to abstain from drinking without sanction being unlikely to be effective).

## **9 INTERPRETATION INSTALLATION AT THE SENSORY GARDENS**

**It was reported that**, to inform further discussion of replacing the Sensory Gardens with an interpretation installation, the following images were presented.

The first is the Sensory Gardens taken from the Monument, the second is Cllr Ford's speculative image of what the display could look like: the design used in the mock-up is from the current display panel (currently with its back to the Monument).



**Comments on the project** included the need to

- secure architectural, planning and artistic advice on the project,
- consult on and determine the theme(s) and content
- preserve a significant element of greenery (eg behind the panels which would be significantly lower than in the illustration)
- not provide seating (there being ample benches around the Monument).

**It was agreed that** preliminary approaches should be made to National Lottery Heritage Fund about possible funding (also considering the War Memorials Trust, We Love the Moorlands (Staffordshire Community Foundation), Historic England).

## **10 DEVELOPMENTS AT BALL HAYE GREEN MEMORIAL GROUND**

**It was reported that**

**Playground:** work on repairing the zip-wire is expected on 4 August (and an individual has kindly offered to fettle the sticking gate); a report had been received about a problem with a bench – this was being explored.

**Leek North, Naturally:** a project was being developed to enhance nature in Leek North, including two initiatives at Ball Haye Green war memorial (which consists of the memorial arch, the field behind it and a small children's play area). The advantage of regarding these as being part of a coherent project is that bids for any part can be supported by reference to other developments, be presented as part of something of major significance; they enable joint use of equipment; they further the development of community spirit and cohesion, particularly in Haregate/Ball Haye Green. There are six elements to the Leek North, Naturally idea:

- Nature in Your Neighbourhood at **Ball Haye Green** /Carlton Terrace
- Barry Birch Memorial Copse at **BHG** (possibly in three sections)
- Community gardens on Haregate Road at the corners with Priory Avenue and Roche Avenue.
- Prince Street – a community garden on the uncultivated corner
- Haregate Community Centre community garden
- Badnall Street allotment (seen as being unlettable) as potential site for Rethink Mental Illness in lieu of John Hall Gardens

**Nature in Your Neighbourhood** involves Moorlands Climate Action, Keele University, LTC and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. It is (SWT) "a five-year innovative community-led project. Its focus is to support communities in the Staffordshire Moorlands to improve green spaces where they live and monitor habitat health. It's hoped that over time, this project will highlight how much boosted biodiversity benefits both people and planet. The project will support communities in the Staffordshire Moorlands to restore green spaces that are important to them, whilst also measuring the impacts these changes have on biodiversity and climate mitigation. Project action and learning will be communicated to the wider public using art installations throughout the Moorlands. This funding comes from the Climate Action Fund, a £100 million commitment over 10 years from The National Lottery Community Fund to support communities across the UK to take action on climate change and involve more people in climate action. This forms part of one of the funder's four key missions in its 2030 strategy, 'It starts with community' - supporting communities to be environmentally sustainable"

**Barry Birch Memorial Copse:** The Woodland Trust runs a Free Trees for Schools and Communities initiative (explicitly including local councils) which could be instrumental in the Barry Birch Copse, applying for either the Urban Pack of 15 trees (5 crab apple, 5 rowan, 5 hazel, perhaps supplemented by silver birch) or the Copse Pack of 30 trees (10 silver birch, 10 rowan; 10 wild cherry); both require, at minimum, land of tennis court size. The Trust does not supply domestic fruit trees, only a wild harvest pack (eg crab apple, blackthorn). Advice would be needed about this planting and family/community support would also be necessary. Affection for Barry should limit/eliminate vandalism.

## **EVENTS**

## **11 ROYAL BRITISH LEGION**

**It was reported that**

- ceremonies were held as usual at the NWM (Falklands War and the Battle of the Somme) and at the latter the RBL arranged for a satisfying bugle recording to be played rather than employing a musician
- the following has been sent by Cllr Hilyer to the Chair of RBL in Staffordshire  
"Leek is fortunate that

- Leek RBL organizes seven such events each year commemorating the Falklands, Somme, Passchendaele, Victory in Japan, Battle of Britain, El Alamein, Victory in Europe (the Council is responsible for Remembrance and Armistice Days although, of course, the RBL plays a central role, as it does in Armed Forces Day organized by SMDC);
- The Nicholson War Memorial is a dramatic and fitting site for these events: it was dedicated in 1925 to Lt Nicholson “and all others from the town of Leek and surrounding neighbourhoods who fell in the Great War”, which is to say that it is the memorial for the whole area whereas the earlier 1922 memorial at St Edwards Church is more specifically dedicated to the fallen of Leek.

“I think that you are aware that the Leek RBL is struggling to organise the events, particularly following the sad death of its Chairman Mick Brough. Leek Town Council recognizes that the ceremonies at the Nicholson War Memorial play an important part in the town’s life: in defining who we are, how we cherish what is known as the Monument, and how committed we are to remembrance and peace. These themes were prominent in last year’s celebration of the centenary of the NWM, in the parade, the rededication, and the exhibition. If there is any role that I and the Town Council can play in supporting RBL to regain its effectiveness in the district, please do not hesitate to ask. My colleagues and I would be happy to discuss the situation further and to join in any meeting that you think might be helpful.”

- Efforts are being made to boost Leek RBL membership and to identify a Chairman to replace the late Mike Brough.
- The relationship between the Council and the RBL concerning ceremonies (other than Remembrance and Armistice Day) have been reiterated – they are the responsibility of RBL with the Council happy to be represented and to afford suitable publicity.

## **12 TOURS OF THE NWM**

### **It was reported that**

- a tour of the NWM scheduled for 5 July proved impossible as the stairs were blocked by the large poppy displays which were to have been removed by the Lengthsman (see minute 3).
- The next tour would be on 2 August and would be advertised – a full complement of guides was expected: Jean Fisher and Bruce Daniel would be informed.
- In future only one of the three large poppy panels would be displayed – facing Derby Street – easing erection and removal and prolonging the life of the panels.

## **13 ILLUMINATION AND DECORATION OF THE NWM**

### **It was reported that**

- the Monument was illuminated (blue) for Armed Forces Week, and the three poppy panels were in place: social media responses were favourable
- the controls for the illumination were being passed from Protech to the Town Council (office staff and the WMC Chairman).
- The Chairman had been instructed in raising and lowering the union flags at the NWM.

### **PUBLICITY**

## **14 CELEBRATING THE CELEBRATION**

**It was reported that** planning was in hand to make a permanent record of the events of the Centenary Year including the parade, ceremony and exhibition, the echoes of that day at the Civic Service, and the Remembrance Day ceremony; the NWM website would be updated accordingly and, if possible, linked to the Council’s site.

### **DNM**

## **15 It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on 1 September 2026.**