

Pelton Fell Parish Council:

Petition Submitted

How a Community Governance Review was triggered in the previously un-Parished Village of Pelton Fell, Durham

Headlines:

- The village of Pelton Fell is in the county of Durham, in the North East of England.
- This case study tells the story of how the Pelton Fell Community Partnership triggered a Community Governance Review (CGR) in Durham.
- Pelton Fell Community Partnership gathered the required 250 signatures from local government electors in the Pelton Fell area, submitting the petition to the Durham County Unitary Council which subsequently triggered the CGR.
- Outlined in this case study is how issues between the Pelton Fell Community Partnership and Durham County Unitary Council were overcome by building relationships through communicating with one another regularly, alongside the advice from the County Durham and the National Associations of Local Councils (NALC).
- Currently (January, 2016) the Pelton Fell Community Partnership are awaiting the outcome of the process of the principal authority collating its feedback from residents; this process should conclude by June, 2016.
- The lessons learnt so far from this campaign are that principal local authorities should be held to account at all times during a CGR.

Colin Reynolds, Campaign Champion from the Pelton Fell campaign said;

“At the end of 2014, there were 842 houses for rating purposes and 1,241 electors in Pelton Fell. Its population was estimated as 1,613 in mid-2013. Existing facilities in the village include: a general store with post office; two doctor’s surgeries; pharmacy; community centre; war memorial park with tennis courts and bowling green. At a time of huge county council cuts, a Parish Council could sustain many of these vital services in the village.”

What is the theme? – Why a Council is Wanted:

The theme of this case study has been applied from a campaign pyramid used by the National Association of Local Councils and the Department for Communities and Local Government since September, 2013 when the New Councils’ Programme began - to gauge progress with funded campaigns to create new Parish Councils in previously un-Parished areas. Pelton Fell is currently in the ‘green’ strata on the pyramid which represents campaign areas which have submitted a petition to their principal authorities and a CGR has been triggered.

Residents in Pelton Fell wanted a new Parish Council to give the areas a stronger voice for their small village. They no longer wanted to be instructed by Durham County Unitary Council in their dealings as a village. Parish councils are statutory, and almost always permanent, democratically elected bodies – adding further attraction to choosing this form of local governance. Recently, new Parish Councils have been formed in Sutton Coldfield, Bingley and Kidderminster.

“Community councils have a huge range of powers to deliver services and manage assets in their areas. For Pelton Fell, this model will work well to: develop and continue good relationships with local businesses; manage open spaces and campaign for and deliver better local services and facilities such as the Brockwell community centre, War Memorial Park and Congburn Wood; and ensure local peoples' priorities are considered by government and other appropriate organisations”

– Colin Reynolds, Pelton Fell Campaign Champion.

Contextual issues related to the theme:

Once a CGR has ended – and hopefully resulted in the principal authority agreeing the creation of a new Parish Council – an election date is usually set. A temporary or shadow council is usually then set up to agree reporting and a first budget with the principal authority which can be agreed at the first Full Council meeting of the Parish Council. The Pelton Fell Community Governance Review needs to end legally by September, 2016.

Pelton Fell is a village in County Durham, England. It is situated a short distance to the north-west of Chester-le-Street. It was the site of a 19th and 20th century coal mine and a small rail station primarily used to service both Pelton Fell and a village at the opposite end of Station Lane. Adjacent to the park on Station Lane, the Miners' Institute was built in 1889 and later expanded in 1909 to cope with the rise in population. The institute was used for many social activities and local clubs up until the 1990s when it fell derelict and was later destroyed by fire. There are now 4 newly built detached houses on the site. A council sponsored redevelopment of the village began in 2004, with a significant number of council houses, and a small number of private houses, demolished to make way for more modern accommodation, which is to be a mix of social housing and private housing. (see: http://peltonfell.org.uk/pelton_fell_history.php?page_id=3&id=107).

Who are the key partners/ stakeholders involved?

The main campaign group to create a new Parish Council in Pelton Fell has been the Pelton Fell Community Partnership. Without the Community Partnership and its Campaign Champion Colin Reynolds there simply would have been no campaign.

The County Durham Association of Local Councils accessed DCLG funding during 2015 from the NALC which helped to progress campaign activity with the production of campaign leaflets, Pelton Fell Community Partnership newsletters and a campaign Facebook page. The NALC campaign funded the County Durham Association of Local Councils and the Pelton Fell Community Partnership; this funding was instrumental in both triggering the CGR and helping to communicate the benefits of a Parish Council to Pelton Fell's residents. The DCLG assisted by providing the funding to the NALC to disburse to both CDALC as well as the Pelton Fell Community Partnership.

What are the key issues/challenges? – Progress with the campaign to date:

The Pelton Fell Community Partnership has done an excellent job in driving the campaign to create a new Parish Council in Pelton Fell. It was the body which gathered the petitionary signatures and it was the body in 2015 which submitted the petition to County Durham Unitary Council. The County Durham Association of Local Councils (in particular Steve Ragg) was of great assistance in helping advise the Community Partnership during every stage of the campaign. CDALC and the NALC both advised on technical issues around the CGR and how to play the inevitable party political minefield with Durham County Unitary Council.

“It is fair to say that the DCLG funding through NALC was instrumental in helping the Community Partnership to produce leaflets, hold public meetings and generally communicate to residents the need for a new community council and the benefits it could bring.”

– Steve Ragg, County Durham Association of Local Councils.

How have these issues / challenges been overcome?

The initial challenge of Pelton Fell until 2009 being a ward in the Chester le District Council approximated by the Lower Super Output Area referenced as County Durham 011F – was overcome with the creation of the new Durham County Unitary Council in the same year. In electoral terms, it is now part of the Chester le Street West and Central Ward of the Durham County Council – a Unitary Authority formed in 2009.

The Community Partnership revised its Creation of a Community Council Leaflet in both April 2014 and March 2015. This was followed by a Proposal for a Community Council - Consultation Document circulated 2015 (published as a double-sided Z folded pamphlet – printed externally). These communications helped to define the Parish boundaries. The Pelton Fell campaign group then issued a petition form and then a further letter to Durham County Council. The CGR of Pelton Fell leaflet was issued in early October, 2015, followed by a further letter to petition supporters. These funded communications continuously drove home to both the council and residents the benefits for all concerned of the creation of a new community council for Pelton Fell.



Caption: The Brockwell Centre, home of Pelton Fell Community Patnrnership.

Outcomes - Learning from the campaign:

What have been the key elements of success?

The Pelton Fell Community Partnership was responsible for driving the campaign to secure resident signatures in addition to triggering the CGR in Durham. Resident buy-in was secured through regular leaflet communications on the benefits, also. This constant information flow was largely also down to the County Durham Association of Local Councils' regular two way communication with the NALC and accessing of funding for the Community Partnership.

What has been learnt? Campaign lessons to share with others:

Campaigners recognise that it is one thing to submit a petition, but quite another to steer a successful campaign through a principal authority (even one with a pro-Parish creation policy), during the second phase of a Community Governance Review. The Pelton Fell campaign group also shared their lessons learnt during a presentation given at a national NALC event in Sutton Coldfield in January, 2016.

Who Can I Contact?

Campaign Champion: Colin Reynolds chair@peltonfell.org.uk / 0181 389 3399
Steve Ragg of CDALC: cdalc@durham.gov.uk / 03000 269 921.

Other information

More information on creating a council: The NALC's Create a Council web page - <http://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/create-a-council> .

The NALC's Power To The People resource here - <http://www.nalc.gov.uk/publications> .

Pelton Fell Community Partnership - http://peltonfell.org.uk/pelton_fell_history.php?page_id=3&id=107 .

County Durham Association of Local Councils - <http://www.cdalc.info/Pages/Home.aspx> .