

Somerford Keynes and Shorncote Annual Parish Meeting 2015 - Chairman's Report

This is an overview of the projects and challenges that the Parish Council has been involved with this past year.

Water

Following the heavy rains of the previous winters, the Parish Council worked with the Cotswold Water Park WILD project (Water with Integrated Local Delivery) to review our ditches. Following this, WILD carried out some clearance works on the ditch across Macks Farm, south of Water Lane. Water does appear to be dissipating more quickly from the Spratsgate Lane ditch but the weather has not yet fully tested this, so only time will tell if this has really improved matters. The Parish Council appreciates the work that riparian land owners do to maintain their ditches and will continue to monitor water movement.

The Environment Agency has updated its flood maps for the Upper Thames area. As a result, the statistical flood risk for the parish is now considerably lower. The maps can be found on the parish website. Note that it does take time for this information to filter down to insurance companies.

Neighbourhood Development Plan

As stated last year, the Parish Council agreed to create a Neighbourhood Development Plan for the area that is enclosed by the (new) parish boundary. An NDP is a document that states what a community would like to happen in their area regarding matters relating to land use. Once completed, examined and passed by local referendum, it is a legal document that must be taken into consideration whenever planning decisions are made. A group, consisting of the Chairman, Cllr Munroe and John Sweet (chair of the 2012 Parish Plan), was established to create an NDP. Cllr Munroe will be giving a brief update on the progress of the NDP during this meeting.

Sadly, John Sweet has had to withdraw from the NDP team due to ill health. The Parish Council would like to thank John for all his hard work, especially with regard to conservation and environment, and we wish him well.

Defibrillator

The Parish Council was fortunate to be able to install a defibrillator at the Village Hall with financial assistance from South West Ambulance Service Trust (SWAST), the Village Hall Management Committee and Parish Council funds. In September 2014, Community Heartbeat ran a course for the parish in basic emergency first aid and when and how the defibrillator should be used as part of that process. We hope to run this course again if there is sufficient demand. Discussions took place with SWAST about how residents could take advantage of the defibrillator, if required, after calling for an ambulance and the resulting buddy system advice has been circulated.

Our thanks go to the Village Hall Committee for its offered contribution. I would also like to thank Des Sheen for completing the regular monitoring reports and Cllr Munroe for overseeing this project.

Lake 99

The ground works for Lake 99 are now complete. The final items such as picnic benches and tables, life rings and cycle racks have been ordered. Work is finally underway by GCC PROW to create the public footpath around the lake. The Parish Council plans to formally open the site during the summer. I would like to thank the Lake 99 sub-committee for its efforts in moving this project forward despite all the bureaucratic hurdles placed in its path.

Neigh Bridge

Neigh Bridge (and the northern part of Lake 63) is now part of our parish. We have heard this evening from the WILD project about the project that is planned for Neigh Bridge. The CWPT intend to introduce a pay and display system for the Neigh Bridge car park. We have raised our concerns about cars being parked in the village.

Cotswold Community

In January, the planning consultants acting on behalf of Amita, the owners of the former Cotswold Community site, held a public consultation on their plans for gravel extraction and permanent housing on the site. We are now waiting for a full planning application to be submitted.

Summary of Other Matters

- Cullimore / CWPT's application to extract gravel on land adjacent to KCP was permitted in June 2014 subject to a water management scheme being accepted by the GCC planning committee. This is expected to be presented to the GCC planning committee in the next month or so. Until then, we will continue to voice our concerns about increased water flows towards Shorncote and Somerford Keynes.
- LME's appeal for a new entrance onto Minety Lane was successful. This application, however, included an extension of the Spine Road cycleway to Neigh Bridge. Construction plans are currently being drawn up and we hope work will start on this soon.
- The Parish Council continues to report to and chase CDC and GCC on matters such as potholes, road signs, blocked culverts and other community issues. At times, this is very frustrating. Following a formal complaint to Amey, to whom GCC has outsourced many of its highways responsibilities, we have been promised action.

Fred Timbrell

It is with sadness that we report the death of Fred Timbrell in February. Fred served on the Parish Council for 32 years and continued to serve the community after standing down from the Parish Council in 2011.

Thanks

As always, our Parish Councillors have worked extremely hard this year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our Councillors and the Clerk. Tessa de Bertadano is standing down this year and I would like to thank her for her 20 years of service. A new Parish Council will be elected in May and, as a community, we are fortunate to have more candidates than seats so there will be an election. Finally, I would like to thank all those Parishioners who have offered us help and support over the past year.

Sarah Powell