

WEST QUANTOXHEAD ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY – 6 APRIL 2016

The Annual Parish Assembly was held in the Village Hall at 7.00 pm on the above date.

PRESENT: Councillor G Tizzard (Chairman)
Councillors T Dunn, R Hughes, J Roberts, N Purcell-Herbert, Mrs S Sherry and Mrs P Tolley
Ian Liddell-Grainer, MP
Somerset County Councillor H Davies
West Somerset Councillor S Dowding
PC Peter Bolton
Quantock Hills AONB Ranger, Rebekah West
Mrs C Richards (Parish Clerk)
16 Parishioners

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Mike Sanders; National Trust Countryside Manager Nigel Garnsworthy.
2. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 APRIL 2015:** The Minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman.
3. **GUEST SPEAKER: IAN LIDDELL-GRAINGER, MP:** Reported that he was due to have a meeting with the Chief Constable in a couple of weeks to discuss policing in West Somerset. Nationally the Country as a nation are doing pretty well compared to comparable countries in Europe. There are still issues to address but the Government are trying to get a balanced economy. There are a lot of issues over pensions/health, etc, which will mean that the Government will get even more unpopular. Most pressing issue is the referendum in June. He intended setting up a website as he was determined the public should get the facts and not the fiction as it is going to be one of the most important decisions we make in a generation. There will be some public meetings. Locally, there are challenges. Hinkley Point is complicated because of what is happening in France. Everything we said we would do nationally and locally we have delivered. Bridgwater is ready to go, we have built everything we said we would and have put in new road systems. EDF have spent 1.2 billion pounds here and have just given out big contracts. There are a lot of people depending on it. Talks are ongoing relating to devolution of services between Somerset County Council & Devon County Council; Somerset County Council has also talked to North Somerset Council. All Local Government under huge financial pressure. We are very rural and the Government does not differentiate between rural and principal councils. Have been fighting a campaign in London where we are getting a fair share but costs faced at District & County escalating. Broadband is an absolute nightmare. Connecting Devon & Somerset who are meant to be trialling this but I do not think it is a system that is working. There has been 52 million pounds worth of road improvements in Bridgwater. As constituents you have an important role in making a big difference, please keep information coming, it does not matter at what level.
4. **POLICE REPORT**

Statistics used to be for a specific parish but this has now changed and is now for a whole area policed out of Williton Police Station, which is known as Williton and Watchet area. There are some significant increases in the recorded statistics compared to the same period last year, in particular violence against person (up to nearly 40%), theft from motor vehicles (up to 30%) and dwelling burglary (up to nearly

134%). The Police are still patrolling beauty spots. A colleague was attacked when dealing with an incident in Watchet, we have some information on that, have asked for more and hopefully a person will go through the Court process. Dwelling burglaries: huge increase in % but actually it is not a huge number. If you have problems getting through on 101 regardless of what is going on dial 999. Hopefully response times are improving. Williton Police Station: still exists as is. At some point we believe that will change when some-one wants to buy it. There will still be response officers operating out of a central area. There is no timescale.

5. **WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL REPORT: COUNCILLOR S DOWDING:** Council Tax bills have risen, can only apologise. The re-evaluation of Hinkley B business rates and the loss of the Watchet Paper Mill have affected us. Planning: Solar farm in Washford has impinged on a lot of residents in West Quantoxhead and planners need to be more informative on this in the future. Supermarket in Williton was turned down again recently but I am sure it will come back again. Flooding: we have had our flooding problems again, it is everyone's responsibility, if you own or have a watercourse on your land it is your responsibility to keep it clear. It is the riparian owners responsibility to get areas clear. We are looking very closely at the slowing down of the water on the Quantock Hills. WSC have had meetings with the South Western Ambulance Service about ambulances being diverted to Taunton. There was a new Chief Constable with effect from 1 February 2016. Village Agent: we did have one, lost one, still on the cards that we may get another one. Taunton Deane Borough Council/WSC joint working: Officer teams are beginning to work together and are getting some good results/savings. Planning: not happy about it but it is working as well as can be expected and probably better than most thought. Building Control: there is an agreement between 3 or 4 other Councils, not just with Taunton Deane. Public conveniences: WSC are not shutting any, we are just not funding them.

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT: COUNCILLOR H DAVIES: Slinky transport produced a new scheme where they were coming to an area twice a week, Tuesdays/Thursdays for West Quantoxhead, if you need that service please register with them first. It does highlight that you are not on a bus route. County were going to reduce subsidies on concessionary fares. It was challenged and they have changed their minds for the time-being. West Somerset has 12 voluntary car schemes, more than anywhere else in County and we still have 50% reduction for using that scheme. The speed limit has increased from 30 to 40 as you come down into Carhampton from the Withycombe straight. Wibble Farm: Highways have undertaken a CCTV scan of drainage systems and sunk boreholes, hoping to restart works in May. No update on the dip in The Avenue, will ask again. Broadband: if you are below 2 mgb SCC have a voucher scheme they are bringing in to help you get costings through a different system. South West One: County Council, as well as the Police and IBM, have decided to come out of that. County could save possibly 4 million pounds a year by coming out of that. Fracking scenario: meeting at Washford gentleman from Bristol University very interesting. We were concerned what might happen. County have not given out any licenses yet. Closure of the Police Station: shortly perhaps July WSC will become a hub for the library, CAB, Registration Office, possibly Quantock Rangers and the Police. Devolution: one drawback is elected mayors. Also anxious about where will the County be, it could disappear. A coastal path was opened between Doniford and East Quantoxhead by Natural England earlier in the year. The road from Doniford to Williton will be closed from 14.4.16 for 9 working days to lay fibre optic broadband.

6. **QUANTOCK HILLS AONB RANGER REPORT:** Rebekah West reported they had been busy swaling for over a month now, managed to get 14 sites completed, only 3 sites to be carried forward to next year. They had been patrolling a lot at weekends/nights just to try and stem offroading problems. The quarry was cleared of rhododendrons over winter but still a little bit left to be done over summer on cliff edges. She confirmed that it had been 6 years since the rhododendrons had been cleared in areas and the intention was to let those areas recover and recolonise naturally, although this would take quite a few years
7. **NATIONAL TRUST:** (read out by Rebekah West): "Following the devastating wind blow event in 2014 and subsequent timber extraction, we have now completed the re-planting and access improvements in Staple Plantation. We have planted over 6000 young trees mostly oak, with some rowan and scots pine. We have deliberately left gaps between the planted blocks to allow for natural regeneration of other tree species. We have also put in 1.5km of tracks to give better access and more options for walking around the site and we have included an area for a picnic table which will take in the stunning views across vale towards Exmoor. Obviously this will take many years to begin to feel like a woodland again, but we hope in time this will become a place people can come to enjoy the wildlife, scenery and landscape. In order for trees to successfully re-establish on site it is important that we keep grazing pressure to a minimum. We have been working with the commoners to identify weak spots in the fence where sheep can get in and will be addressing these shortly. In the meantime it would be very helpful if when you are walking in the plantation you ensure the gates are kept closed. Over the winter we have again carried out repairs to the track to the car park including some tarmacking at the cattle grid end. Our volunteers have also been doing a tremendous job helping us keep up with the ongoing maintenance of the stone wall alongside this track. We have been continuing our programme of rhododendron control in Vinny combe and will be re-visiting this again in May/June this year. This will be a twofold approach of a contractor knapsack spraying re-growth from the cut stumps and NT staff and volunteers hand pulling the seedlings. This management approach seems to be working well in terms of controlling rhododendron and overall we have been pleased with the amount of heathland regeneration that is appearing within the combe following the extensive clearance in 2010. This year we haven't undertaken any swaling on the hills. Largely due to the very wet winter we have experienced not allowing us a suitable weather window but also the bird breeding season seems to have started much earlier this year so we have been reluctant to burn late into March potentially risking harm to wildlife. If you would like more information on any of the above or to pass on any comments or reports regarding National Trust land we are always pleased to hear from you. If you wish to make contact please call the Rangers Office at Fyne Court on 01823 451814."
8. **PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** Councillor G Tizzard:

Council Members: The Parish Council's membership is now Gordon Tizzard (Chairman), Richard Hughes (Vice Chair), Sue Sherry, Tony Dunn, Nigel Purcell-Herbert and Pam Tolley, with John Roberts being co-opted at the meeting held on 10 February, making the total membership to 7, which is the composition of the Parish Council. We welcomed a new Clerk from 12 November last year, Claire Richards, who took over from Jo Batts who served as Clerk for the previous 4 years.

Planning Applications: We have had 7 planning applications being at Mayfair, Weacombe Road; Keepers Find, Staple Lane; Coppleridge, Staple Lane; East Bank, Staple Lane; Wayside, The Avenue; 7 Bracken Edge and Home Farm Holiday Centre.

Highways: We have questioned SCC over the use of The Avenue/Weacombe Road by heavy goods vehicles. Nothing can be done about it as there is no restriction on the road, however SCC did replace the signs showing the road is unsuitable for these vehicles. Ongoing highway issues are the condition of the road at Wibble Farm, dip in the road in The Avenue and white lining on the Doniford Road.

Telephone Box: The telephone box has now been moved to the village hall site. The box will need some repair and shelves fitted in order to use as the new book exchange/information kiosk. Volunteers are needed to repair and fit the shelving and to look after the books.

9. **FINANCIAL REPORT:** Parish Clerk: Copies of the Estimates for the Precept for 2016/2017 were circulated. A precept of £2591 has been requested, therefore decreasing parishioners' 2016 Tax Bill to £15.84 from £17.60.

10. **REPORTS FROM VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS:**

VILLAGE HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE: RICHARD HUGHES: The Village Hall is very well used with 32 individual groups using it, 356 bookings. They are looking for a new Bookings Secretary & Treasurer. A meeting will be held in in May to discuss what we are going to do with telephone box and also looking for a team to help creosote the building. £637 was raised at the Christmas Bazaar, £236 at the New Year's Day bacon butty sale. Thank everybody who got involved and everybody who came along. The income was £4,893, with expenditure £4664, making a surplus of £228. We are doing a survey regarding the village hall and the responses will be analysed by the Somerset Community Council.

ST AUDRIES WOMEN'S INSTITUTE: VICKY NASH, PRESIDENT: In 2015 we celebrated 100 years of the W.I. an organisation to inspire women all over the UK. It has been an eventful year for St Audries were we commemorated this centenary by enjoying a Bring and Share lunch inviting members from other near W.I.'s. We have 28 members all of whom participate in our activities. It is important to us that we bring people together with our social events and care in the community. Always willing to give lifts in cars, get shopping and generally and most importantly communicating with the people of the village. We all need each other to help maintain this. Without the village hall our lives would become more insular and without the members of the Parish Council smaller again so many thanks to them and those associated with them for all the support they give to the village of West Quantoxhead.

11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS:**

Dan Clark drew attention to the NHS and stated he was rather surprised to find when we need to see a Doctor at Williton, there was a 3 week wait; if you are an acute case they will see you earlier. Ian Liddell-Grainger confirmed that in the area Williton is probably the one surgery that has the longest waiting times. Doctor Barclay is very much aware of the problem, they are not complacent and he is trying to resolve the situation.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm followed by refreshments.

Signed:
Chairman

Date: