

WEST QUANTOXHEAD ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY – 5 APRIL 2017

The Annual Parish Assembly was held in the Village Hall at 7.30 pm on the above date.

PRESENT: Councillor G Tizzard (Chairman)
Councillors R Hughes, N Purcell-Herbert, J Roberts and Mrs S Sherry
Rob Skinner, Quantock Hills Area Ranger, National Trust
Izzy Sylvester, Village Agent
Mrs C Richards (Parish Clerk)
11 Parishioners

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: District Councillor S Dowding; Somerset County Councillor H Davies; Nigel Garnsworthy, National Trust Countryside Manager and Andy Stevenson, Quantock Hills AONB Ranger.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 APRIL 2016: The Minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. POLICE REPORT

The Chairman reported that Police Officers and PCSOs will no longer attend Parish Council meetings as a matter of course. The local beat manager should be informed that a meeting will be taking place, and someone may attend if they are free, but it certainly cannot be guaranteed, and should not be expected. Crime figures for each neighbourhood can easily be found on-line. If there is a specific problem which a Parish Council wishes to discuss with a local officer, then an officer may be able to attend if given sufficient notice.

The last report submitted by PCSO Peter Bolton as at 15 February 2017 was – “Looking at the call card (logs) between Jan 01 and 15 February - there have been around 257 calls to Police for the Beat area covered from Williton Police Station. I cannot equate that to crimes. These are calls to Police via 999 or 101 and there are frequently multiple calls for the same incident depending on severity. I was able to view rolling stats Jan 2016/Jan 2017, which show that there were 2,466 calls last year and 2,599 this year (year on year) +5.4% year on year. Total crimes show, for the same periods, that there were 457 crimes last year on year and 585 this year (year on year) which equates to +28% year on year. As long as I continue to have access to the above type of information, I will always try to get some information to you, but I think the intention is that the Parish Councils get their own information, albeit in a different format, by looking at the public site of Avon and Somerset Constabulary. I have had a look at the generic site which you have access to, it says that crime is down, which is probably referring to crime over the whole of the UK”.

4. WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL REPORT: COUNCILLOR S DOWDING: (Report submitted in absence and attached at Appendix A).

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT: COUNCILLOR H DAVIES: County Councillor Davies was unable to attend due to the purdah period leading up to the Somerset County Council elections on 4 May 2017.

5. IZZY SYLVESTER, VILLAGE AGENT

Izzy advised her job was now centred around the Williton Doctor's Surgery. Recent work has included working with younger people where it has been found they are

monopolizing their parents for money; that is becoming more prevalent. Debt is a large part of her work in the locality. The main part of her job is to support older people, 75% of people are over 75 years of age. Very exciting thing happening for the Charity in that a huge amount of European funding money is coming in the short term for training opportunities to get people back into work. Another project, the Department of Education is employing a Programme Manager to raise aspirations for young people. At the end of winter we worked with the Community Foundation and hand out some last grants to people to put towards heating bills they had been unable to pay.

6. **NATIONAL TRUST REPORT: ROB SKINNER:** reported that he took over from Steve Sidworth in May 2016. Staple Plain car park: some new timber had been installed to stop people driving over the edge, also some new benches, one finished and 2 to finish off. Rhododendron control: ongoing in Vinnycombe after clearance in 2010/11, they have had some contractors in over the summer who have stripped that, also working with volunteers to pull saplings. Cutting/spraying all over the hill is an ongoing job. The heathland is coming down into Vinnycombe which is really good. Douglas spruces and conifers are being replaced with broadleaf trees. Helicopter spraying of areas of bracken was successful. Nightjar surveys had been undertaken which showed the highest concentration of nightjars are at this end of the hill. More nightjar surveys will take place this year, similarly looking at a healthy bird survey and a bracken survey with the AONB Service. A tree survey was undertaken in March, preliminary data encouraging. This year: planning to do some repairs on stonewall on track up to Staple Plane and keep on top of the rhododendrons to stop them spreading and taking over the heathland.

Members of the public highlighted problems with roe deer stripping gardens and bringing ticks and Rob agreed to feedback these comments to the Deer Management Group. Richard Hughes drew attention to the shedding gate on the boundary to the deer park and asked if work could be undertaken to render it usable and Rob agreed to look into this. Concerns were expressed about cyclists on the hills and horses on footpaths and Rob said he would speak to user groups.

7. **QUANTOCK HILLS AONB RANGER REPORT: ANDY STEVENSON (Report submitted in absence and attached at Appendix A).**
8. **PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** Councillor G Tizzard:
Council Members: The Parish Council's membership remains the same as at last year's Parish Assembly with 7 members: Gordon Tizzard (Chairman), Richard Hughes (Vice Chair), Sue Sherry, Tony Dunn, Nigel Purcell-Herbert, Pam Tolley and John Roberts with our Clerk Claire Richards.
Planning Applications: We have had 6 planning applications being at St Etheldreda's Church; 9 Bracken Edge; West Bank, Staple Lane; Gorse Bank, the Avenue and 2 for Coppleridge, Staple Lane.
Website: The Parish Council now has a website – www.westquantoxheadpc.co.uk – which is still work in progress. Please take a look and if there are any comments you wish to make or would like to see something included please let the Clerk know.
Bus Service
The Parish Council would like to thank Somerset County Councillor Hugh Davies for his tremendous work in respect of the bus service. There is now a free bus service, provided by Hinkley Point, for local residents which runs 3 times a day – a timetable is in each bus shelter. Please support.
Somerset County Council Elections
These are due to be held on 4th May 2017.

Highways

Various matters have been brought to the attention of Highways during the year. The most recent was overhanging vegetation from the quarry onto The Avenue.

9. **FINANCIAL REPORT: PARISH CLERK:** Copies of the Estimates for the Precept for 2017/2018 were circulated. A precept of £2532 had been requested, therefore decreasing parishioners' 2017 Tax Bill to £14.23 from £15.84.

10. **REPORTS FROM VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS:**

ST AUDRIES WOMEN'S INSTITUTE: VICKY NASH, PRESIDENT: "The WI an organisation to inspire women it brings us together in areas like West Quantoxhead. As well as being given opportunities of learning on holiday at Denman College we can also enjoy WI life on our doorstep in local towns and villages where we are always made very welcome by friends with similar interests. St Audries represented 6 WI's in the recent 'Keep Williton Hospital Open' debates. We have 25 members, fitter than we may look, as we almost won the pancake 'race' in Kilve. Our members have learnt many things hearing a wide range of speakers from 'What is Rotary?' origami, 'Home Start' and a very moving 'Hope for Tomorrow' on living with and recovering from cancer. Our recent coffee morning was well attended by many villagers. The members who manned the kitchen, raffle and stalls much appreciated as this is our only fundraiser of the year. It is often asked if a women only organisation is strictly legal these days. Gentlemen please see me afterwards if you wish to join. It is important to us that we bring people together with social events and care in the community. We all need each other and so our members thank the Parish Council and those associated with them for all the support they give to the village of West Quantoxhead

VILLAGE HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE: RICHARD HUGHES: Bookings are very successful with the hall being well used and we are keeping an eye on our costs. Hire costs are very competitively priced for use by groups. Thank the Parish Council for precept of £250. They are looking to replace some of the aids in the disabled toilet. Successful Christmas bazaar, thank everybody who came and helped. The Management Committee are still looking for more Committee Members. The AGM is on 4 October 2017 when a comprehensive report for the whole year will be available. A website will soon be up and running.

11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS:**

Vicky Nash reported that it was very difficult to walk down the bank to the bus at the bus stop on the A39 (Williton side) as there was no footpath. Councillor Tizzard said he would speak to SCC Highways.

It was reported that the road sign on Weacombe Road by the turning into Luckes Lane had gone and Councillor Tizzard advised this had been reported to SCC Highways but he would look into it further.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm followed by refreshments.

Signed:
Chairman

Date:

WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL REPORT: COUNCILLOR S DOWDING:

Good progress has been made on the formation of a new Council for the District Council Elections in 2019. This is not an amalgamation of Taunton Deane and West Somerset Councils but a brand new Council with approximately 25% fewer councillors and staff. Staff, Councillors and office sites may or may not be the same as at present. There will be no discernible changes to Council services. There will be considerable financial savings. The final decision lies with the Minister.

Hinkley Point C has commenced and site staff is expected to be 2000+ by the end of the year.

There is still over £7 m in the Community Impact Mitigation Fund. Economic development in West Somerset has benefitted by £0.5m recently. The Quantock Hills AONB has nearly £39,000 left from a fund of £106,000 for landscape enhancement in the Quantocks area. Council Tax notices have been sent out and the increase for West Somerset is 3.5%. The Council has balanced its books for 2017/18 but will be unable to do so in the next financial year. West Somerset has to save £0.8m out of an effective budget of £1.7m after waste services are excluded from their tax income.

The Local Plan to 2030 was finally accepted by the Council in November 2016.

Devolution for the West Country is stalling over the Government's insistence on there being elected Mayors but not for large rural areas.

Williton Police Station will be soon incorporated in to the West Somerset Council Offices at Killick Way. In Williton there will be a small cell block for the temporary holding of suspects before being taken to Bridgwater custody suite for processing. The library will move into the Council offices at the same time.

The online West Somerset lottery was launched on May 16th 2017 which will provide much needed funding for local good causes.

Gliddon's planning application for 3 units behind the Williton Post Office gained approval which spells bad news for the future of Lloyds bank (which may of course disappear regardless). The most disturbing aspect to me (as a member of the Planning committee) is that legally we are not allowed to factor in the retention of any Bank as a material planning consideration which makes a mockery of the word Planning. The appeal is being heard week commencing 22 May 2017.

The flying of drones and their use on the Quantock hills are proving to be a problem which will almost certainly become much worse. Please report any incidents in which drones are being flown in dangerous manner to humans and livestock. This is best to AONB offices at Fyne Court.

Double yellow lines on Tower Hill Williton are still being sought but Somerset Highways, as always, raise every objection possible.

During the year in my capacity as member of Police and Crime Committee I have visited Black Rock Firearms training centre at Portishead. Here you may rest assured that Avon and Somerset Police are trained in use of firearms and counter terrorism (They also train other Police Forces which off sets A and S costs) It includes a range with the capacity to shoot at real moving vehicles. I also attended part of a two day course on the reaction to and response from a terror scenario of simultaneous 15 deaths at Morrison's depot in Bridgwater by a suicide killer and the same number of deaths and hundreds of casualties after a chemically enhanced bomb at Cabot Circus shopping centre in Bristol. So far as one can ever prepare for such an eventuality Avon and Somerset Police and other blue light services together with the Armed forces in the area, NHS and Coroners will all cope as well as can be expected. The biggest unexpected threat was seen as the potential for alarm and misinformation spread by social media after the events.

Cybercrime, especially that targeted at teenagers and over 60's, is fast rising up the crime league. Please report ALL instances of cybercrime such as "genuine appearing" communications from HMRC or a Bank or a friend. A recent case of Child Sexual

Exploitation (CSE) resulted in a paedophile contacting a middle class teenager on-line, then hundreds of exchanged text messages, culminating in her rape/murder just 15 days later. The trio of mental health, alcohol and drugs is leading many families - and especially children - into a downward spiral of housing problems, child sexual exploitation and huge demands on the NHS. It is no wonder that local authorities and the Government are unable to meet these ever increasing financial demands".

QUANTOCK HILLS AONB RANGER REPORT: ANDY STEVENSON

I took over from Rebekah West as the full time Ranger on the Quantocks in August and so I haven't got a complete knowledge of the previous year.

During May 2016 we celebrated our 60th Anniversary of being designated an AONB and the first in England. A week long programme of talks and events were held covering a range of subjects including the archaeology and natural history of the Hills. We attended a number of events during the year including the Nether Stowey May Fair and the Quantock Show at Cothelstone, and led on or organised a range of events throughout the year such as the Bat walks, Deer Rut Walks and the Stargazing evening. These prove as popular as ever. Also our group of Volunteer Rangers has started leading a series of walks each season, carrying out talks and manning information points at the more well used car parks during holiday periods.

Sadly our Big Bid Heritage Lottery application was turned down this year but we will be re-submitting this year to aid a range of projects over the Hills and wider afield over the next few years.

With EDF mitigations funds we have hosted a number of rural training events over the year including hedgelaying courses and orchard management, as well as help towards the re-establishment of some derelict orchards and hedgerows.

With a variety of volunteer individuals and groups we continue to carry out a range of practical tasks such as the swaling (burning) of the heathland during the winter months, woodland and grassland management at Cothelstone Hill and maintenance of the path network across the Hills. This winter we have experimented by cutting by machine two areas on the Hills where swaling wasn't suitable and the material has been spread over bare patches of soil to hopefully provide a source of seed.

We also work closely in partnership with other organisations such as the Forestry Commission and National Trust, as well as a large number of landowners - this enables us to share resources and knowledge.

In April the Somerset stretch of the England Coast Path was opened at Doniford Farm.

Although only a small section passes through the AONB it provides a vital link to previously inaccessible coastline and to other long distance paths in the area such as the Coleridge Way and River Parrett Trail.

Our wildlife species monitoring carries on at various times of the year with annual surveys of bats, adders, butterflies, dormice and birds.

Unfortunately we have noticed a spike in numbers of burnt out cars at various locations before Christmas and a huge increase in flytipping both large and small amounts. Again we work closely with the local police and PCSOs to patrol at different times of the day and week. In most cases the local District Council teams are quick to collect any rubbish.