

Parish Council update report: August 2022

Thanks are passed to everyone who helped with the events to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June – particularly to Lee and Denise Lloyd for all the organisation and enthusiasm. The whole weekend was very successful, with fun for everyone and (following the challenges of Covid) a sign of a healthy and vibrant community.

Similarly, thanks are also due to everyone involved in arranging the Village Show in August with its timely focus on village initiatives which are helping to look after nature and care for our climate.

At the time of writing there is a big risk of wild fires in the parish because all the farmland and woodlands around our homes are tinder dry. It is good that most people are vigilant and refrain from having bonfires, take care after having BBQs and don't discard cigarettes carelessly. It would not take much to start a fire which could then be very difficult to contain.

People have also been urged to be wise with water this summer as we experience one of the driest years on record. In this particular parish there's always a risk that supplies to outlying properties can be affected by water shortages – so it's good to always think about others.

Since the last update Parish Councillors have spent significant amounts of time responding to potential changes to bus services and to a range of planning issues, including construction arrangements for the new houses on Greenway Lane and how to apply for any of the rental homes. As usual, details are available elsewhere on the community website.

Another big project for the Parish Council has been replacing all the windows, doors, cladding and soffits at the village hall. The hall had been built almost exactly 25 years ago and for most of that time had been run as a charity by village volunteers. When the volunteers wound up the charity in 2016 the responsibilities passed to the Parish Council. Councillors found a number of sources of external funding for the recent work and it is hoped that more grants can be obtained in the future so that other energy-efficiency measures and solar panels can be considered, with the possibility of providing Electric Vehicle charging points. At present there are no plans to make changes to the Changing Rooms building until a potential use is identified.

We were honoured to be selected to host a delegation of senior Government Planning Officials from Oman in June. Buriton was chosen because of its range of experience and good practices. The visitors were particularly interested in the Village Design Statement, traffic calming measures and Dark Night Skies work. But they also noted recent initiatives to help nature and to address climate change as well as work assisting Dominase in Ghana.

The Parish Council's work to help wildlife is to receive more help from experts – including a grant from the National Park Authority to help establish wildflowers in the edges of the recreation ground. Next steps this year are likely to include a cut of all the long grass at the beginning of September followed by the popular community raking Hay Day. Later in the year the areas will be scarified and Yellow Rattle seeds sown. Yellow Rattle is often described as the 'meadow maker' due to its ability to weaken vigorous grasses and allow other wildflowers to flourish.

The County Council is also interested in working with the community as part of its 'Community Forest' initiative: aiming to plant a tree for every resident in Hampshire (1.3 million) as well as bringing woodlands back into use for both people and nature.

But allowing long grass to grow on any of the Public Footpaths and Rights of Way in the parish is not part of any of the nature-friendly initiatives: the lack of cutting by the County Council is simply due to a lack of resources and volunteers. Everyone is very grateful to those local residents who make time to trim some of these important paths.

With winter months approaching and heating costs due to rise again, more people are signing up to have simple Thermal Imaging Camera surveys of their homes. The Parish Council bought this handy piece of equipment earlier in the year and surveys carried out in the spring were well received: showing where homes were losing heat through gaps in doors and windows etc. The surveys can only be done when it is cold outside and there is a small charge of £15 to pay for replacement batteries etc. Anyone interested in being added to the list for a survey should contact parish clerk Petra Norris on 0794353605 or email buritonparishcouncil@hotmail.co.uk The Council is also pressing Housing Associations to provide heating and insulation benefits for their properties in the parish.

Finally, I would like to pass on my sincere thanks and best wishes to our parish priest, Judith Bee, as she approaches the end of her term in Buriton. Judith has always been an integral part of the community: a very kind, warm-hearted and approachable person who has always had time for everyone: sharing their joys and sorrows. During the most challenging times of the Covid pandemic we both felt the responsibilities of our roles – but it was always valuable to be able to chat with Judith (socially distanced!) and to share problems and ideas. Judith will be a hard act to follow ...

Doug Jones