



Wickham Bishops Parish Council

ANNUAL REPORT

1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015

YOUR COUNCILLORS	AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY
Cllr. Iain MacGregor Chairman	Amenities and BHSA Trustee Environment
Cllr. Mandy Mickelsen Vice-Chairman	Finance and Planning Committees Public Rights of Way
Cllr. Henry Bass District Councillor	District Council Liaison Environment
Cllr. Peter Bates	Website Manager Publicity
Cllr. Ruth Johnson	Finance and Planning Committees Transport
Cllr. Stephen Nicholas	Highways
Cllr. Tilly Pink CBE	Essex Assoc. of Local Councils Liaison Emergency Planning
Cllr. Barry Sayers	Planning Committee Chairman
Cllr. Ian Wardrop	Finance Committee Speedwatch and Traffic Calming
NON-COUNCILLORS	AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY
Mrs. Liane Rowland	Parish Clerk & RFO
Mrs. Elaine Jones	Internal Auditor



MEETING SCHEDULE

Wickham Bishops Parish Council meets on the first Tuesday of each month, except August, in the Village Hall Boardroom at 7.30pm. The Planning Committee meets if required, on the second Friday of each month in the Boardroom at 11.30am. Members of the public are welcome to attend these meetings.

Agendas are displayed on the Parish noticeboard by One Stop and on the website at www.wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org, where the minutes may also be found.

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR PARISH COUNCIL

All correspondence should be addressed to the Parish Clerk.
Write c/o the Village Hall, Church Road, Wickham Bishops, CM8 3JZ
Email to info@wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org or call or text on 07542 190176



RESIDENTS' NEWS

In the last year two Wickham Bishops residents have reached the milestone age of 100. Congratulations to our new Centenarians, one of whom also had a starring role on Gardeners' World in the same month!

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

In July 2014 the Parish Council co-opted Stephen Nicholas as Councillor, returning the Parish Council to its full complement of nine.

The website continues to be an important link between Council and residents, as it provides details of past and forthcoming Council meetings, information about events in and around the village and matters of general local interest. Details of each Councillor are provided including an individual email address. Soon to be included are various statutory documents as required by recent legislation.

The Council's Statutory Annual Return has been completed and audited. This can be viewed by contacting the Clerk, the Parish's Responsible Financial Officer.

A report from the Council is included in every issue of the Parish Magazine, which highlights a few matters of interest or concern each month, and also gives the dates of forthcoming Parish Council meetings and contact details.

The Parish Councillors' surgery is held one Saturday morning per month in the Village Hall where two Parish Councillors and one District Councillor will be available to listen to problems and suggestions. The dates of these meetings are available on the noticeboards and on the minutes of the monthly meetings.

Congratulations are due to District Councillor Henry Bass, who in recognition of his long commitment to public service was invited to and will be attending a garden party at Buckingham Palace, in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen.

AMENITIES REPORT

The Parish Council was pleased to cooperate with, and provide some financial assistance to, the Beacon Hill Sports Association in the provision of a public-use defibrillator, and repair of the playground equipment, both at the village hall.

Essex County Council (ECC) has agreed that the WW2 air raid shelter in the grounds of the library can be leased to the Parish for renovation and display as a war relic and for storage of road salt. Funds for the legal work have been obtained via a grant and a working party is being set up.

The Parish Council contacted ECC regarding the exterior lights at the library. After concerns raised by parishioners over the unsympathetic design and intrusive lighting durations, a joint project between ECC, the lighting contractor and all interested parties has been established to replace the lights and modify the lighting schedule.

The renovation of the library triangle was completed this year with the help of the Horticultural Club, which planted a tree and spring bulbs purchased by the Parish Council. Thank you to all those involved.

VILLAGE PICNIC

Please come to the biennial village picnic, to be held at Rainbow Field on Bank Holiday Monday, August 31st, where you will be able to take home your own portrait drawn by the renowned caricaturist, Mr. Steve Hearn.

PLANNING

The Parish Council and its Planning Committee have considered over fifty applications in the last year. Perhaps the most controversial has been the Snows Corner development, which had opposition and support for both the "Village Homes for Village People" and the open-market properties. The proposal will fulfil the affordable housing need in Wickham Bishops identified previously by the Parish Council, during the creation of the Village Design Statement and Parish Plan. These documents, prepared in full consultation with village residents, were established to help drive local development to be appropriate and proportionate. Once the need was identified the Parish Council became purely a consultee in the process of developing a suitable proposal and is extremely grateful to Maldon District Council [MDC], the Rural Community Council for Essex and the English Rural Housing Association for their guidance and professionalism. This application went on to be approved unanimously by MDC with some very favourable comments from the District Councillors. In March 2015 MDC confirmed the outstanding elements of the Snows Corner proposal and work is due to start on site by the end of this year.

This year has seen a considerable rise in applications for new dwellings, in quantities of one to thirty-seven, on greenfield sites. The weight of objections to these and the Snows Corner fulfilment of the affordable housing need has enabled the Parish Council to put forward reasoned arguments to MDC against all these proposals.

Further afield, the Parish Council is maintaining a full interest in the planned North Heybridge Garden Suburb by attending all public meetings and consulting with the project leaders and main developer, to protect as far as possible the interests of the village. A Parish Council-organised public presentation to villagers from the developer was held in November 2014.

HIGHWAYS REPORT

Road defects, such as potholes and damaged signs, may be reported to the Parish Clerk or directly to ECC on 0845 603 7631 or via their "Report a Highway Problem" website at <http://www.essexhighways.org/Report-a-problem.aspx>

In October 2014 the Parish Council took delivery of a pallet of bagged road salt, which was distributed to local volunteers to maintain pavements and roads not treated by ECC during wintry weather. Due to the mild winter much of the road salt has been saved, and so further stocks will not be ordered in the coming year.

Also likely due to the winter weather, the Parish Council received fewer notifications of potholes over the year. There have however been some serious drainage and flooding problems, which have been appropriately reported and in the main already received the necessary attention. It is hoped that the outstanding drainage problems in Wellands, Witham Road, Church Road and Station Road will be soon resolved. Thanks are due to District Councillor Henry Bass and County Councillor Rodney Bass for their considerable assistance in resolving the flooding in Mope Lane, Wickham Hall Lane and Kelvedon Road.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The half-hourly #90 bus service to Witham and Maldon is set to continue, with its extension through to March 2016 recently announced. Complaints regarding the lack of shelter, poor surface and road obstruction at the Maldon-bound bus stop at Snows Corner have been escalated to ECC.

TRAFFIC CALMING

Your Councillors have continued to press ECC Highways for additional traffic calming measures:

- The March meeting of the Local Highways Panel [LHP] confirmed the extension of the 30 mph limit in Church Road, to its junction with Mope Lane and Station Road, and validation is now under way. This will improve safety for church-goers and visitors to the graveyard, particularly given that there is no footway;
- Agreement has been reached for Speed Indicator Devices in Witham Road, Maypole Road, Kelvedon Road and The Street. Implementation is now being scheduled;
- The request for white gates at village entrances is awaiting validation.

At the LHP's March meeting a further request was submitted — this is for road narrowing at key points and a coloured road surface at the junction of The Street and Blacksmiths Lane.

SPEEDWATCH

The Speedwatch team continued to be active throughout the last year; many thanks to the volunteers involved. A total of 82 checks at the six authorised sites were held in the year and 970 vehicles were reported to the police for exceeding the speed limit. A monthly summary of Speedwatch activity is displayed on the Parish noticeboard. Witham Road in particular continues to be a problem and arising from Speedwatch data, the police undertook three checks there in March. As a consequence, 74 drivers are now subject to police action.

POLICING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

The Parish Council is in regular contact with your local District Commander and Police Constable on all local policing-related matters. Crime levels locally have been low but insecure out-buildings continue to be targeted.

Wickham Bishops has a strong Neighbourhood Watch [NHW] Scheme with every property in the village covered by a street coordinator. Regrettably NHW is losing the overall coordinator, Mr. Chris Hudson, who will be moving out of the village. The Parish Council would like to thank Chris for his efforts over the last few years and wish him well for the future. If you would like to volunteer your services for this role, or to be added to the circulation list detailing recent crimes and scams in the village please contact NHW_WB@outlook.com or the Parish Clerk.



DID YOU KNOW?

You can view the last wooden railway viaduct in the country, right here in Wickham Bishops. Follow Footpath 5 north-east from Station Road or visit www.essexhighways.org and select *Getting Around*.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

Two new information boards have been installed by the wooden trestle viaduct off Station Road. One describes the trestle bridge and the railway it was built to serve – the other includes information on Wickham Bishops and local sites of interest and village walks. Designed by Councillor Mickelsen and Mrs. Nina Mooney, the boards were produced with the help of ECC Country Parks Rangers who also built the wooden stands and installed them.

Work has been done along Handleys Lane (BW10) to alleviate the flooding there. Many thanks to those involved.

Please be aware that the recently re-opened FP17 from Grange Road to Langford Road has also been designated by the land owners as a ride for the East Anglian Farm Rides, so be prepared to meet horses along it! Horses should be giving way to pedestrians and the Parish Council will monitor the state of the surface to make sure it doesn't get too churned up by hooves.

Two proposed PRoW amendments were considered by the Council. One was for a small deviation to FP15's route through the old Fontenay orchards off Wickham Hall Lane which was thought to be acceptable. The second was for a re-routing of FP13 (the cross-field path by Ballards that runs from Grange Road towards Station Road). The Council was not satisfied with the original proposal but finally agreed a compromise whereby the path would be re-routed around the field edge. Suitable surfacing particularly to the areas known to be liable to waterlogging is expected.

A request has been submitted to ECC for remedial work to FP3, a path that leads downhill off Station Road. New steps and a handrail, and a boardwalk over the waterlogged area are proposed.

Please continue to report any problems you encounter on our footpaths to the Parish Clerk, or directly to ECC Highways via their website.

ENVIRONMENT

The village litter-pick day was held in early April 2015. Thank you to the villagers who assisted the Parish Councillors on a wet and cold morning. Generally the village is well-kept but there is a continuing problem of dog fouling. **Please** dog owners eliminate this situation; there are ample dog bins in the village.

At this time of the year hedges grow rapidly. Your Councillors were called five times over the year to ask residents to trim back hedges that were encroaching on pavements. Please check your boundaries and consider if the infirm, wheelchair-bound and partially-sighted will be able to pass safely. This will also help the village's entry in the annual Best Kept Village competition, in which Wickham Bishops has enjoyed some success in the past.



VOLUNTEERS WANTED

If you have a few hours to spare why not enquire about helping with the Air Raid2 Shelter renovation works? Perhaps you could be a Good Neighbour in the Vulnerable Persons scheme, or you could help coordinate the NHW?

YOUTH

The Parish Council made a further donation towards the running costs of the existing youth club, which is under new management and now expanding with plans to run on a weekly basis.

In November 2014 the Parish Council was pleased to work with Great Totham Primary School on the display to commemorate WW1. Councillors were moved by the excellent work by staff and children, who worked so hard to understand and mark the sacrifices shown by everyone during the war.

WELFARE

The Council has a new initiative to create and maintain a Vulnerable Persons register as part of reviewing the village's Emergency Response Plans. In times of crisis the hope is that Councillors and local volunteers would be able to check on and help those unable to help themselves, whether that be an extended power cut, flooding or other disaster. If you would like to help in this very worthwhile cause please contact a Councillor or the Clerk.

Wickham Bishops' telephone exchange was upgraded in 2015 with fibre broadband capability as part of the Superfast Essex programme: www.superfastessex.org Unfortunately OpenReach has only upgraded the street cabinet outside the Village Hall, meaning that speeds of 24Mbps and above are only available to half the residents of the village; a Parish Councillor attended their recent presentation to press the case for upgrading the remaining half.

There are concerns that the surface of the car-park outside The Mitre Public House is again deteriorating and a letter has been sent by the Parish Council bringing this to the attention of the owners.

Finally, your thoughts and wishes regarding any further facilities or services in the village are actively sought and welcomed.

*Best regards,
The Parish Council*

USEFUL NUMBERS

- The Parish Clerk: Liane Rowland 07542 190176
- The Village Hall: Bookings Clerk 07543 033783
- Maldon District Council: 01621 854477
- Loss of electricity supply: UK Power Networks 0800 783 8838