

CHAIRMANS ANNUAL REVIEW: APRIL 2011

Introduction

Thank you again to everyone for coming to the APM.

This is, in fact, the last gathering of the current Parish Council, with the first meeting of the new one being after the Local Elections on 5th May. I hope everyone has seen Andrea's article in this month's village newsletter.

Three themes have dominated your Parish Council's activities in the last year - planning, transport and activities related to the Valley Parishes Alliance. A fourth was added more recently when we agreed to create a Parish Council website.

Turning first to planning activities

Planning Activities

Throughout the year we made representations on a number of planning and listed building applications. We also agreed Terms of Reference for the Planning Committee and if anyone is interested in getting a copy please feel free to contact any member of the Planning Committee or Andrea.

On a wider front, we made a number of representations on the B&NES Draft Core Strategy, this being the document which provides the strategic planning framework for change and development in B&NES over the next 20 years and beyond. Our representations addressed cross-county boundary traffic, protection of the City of Bath WHS landscape setting, plans for a Park & Ride on Bathampton Meadows and reference to studies of an A36/A46 link road. A representation on the Kennet & Avon Canal was made jointly with Bathampton Parish Council.

Turning now to transport activities

Transport Activities

We succeeded in getting our A36 speed limit campaign in front of the West of England Joint Transport Executive Committee and we gained the support of all four member councils (B&NES, North Somerset, Bristol and North Somerset). However, due to the HA's prioritisation of the scheme, they will not consider funding it before 2012/2013, at the earliest. We are not satisfied by their response and will continue to pursue the matter.

You will have noticed that the HA recently installed (*now removed*) a temporary Vehicle Activated Sign on the A36 - this was to encourage drivers not to drive above the legal limit of 60mph.

The Parish Council is very conscious of the difficulties which arose from the extreme winter weather conditions. So that we are better prepared in future, we have registered our interest in B&NES proposals to provide a bagged salt delivery service (during the summer months) and to source spreading equipment for Parish Councils. We will also be requesting that Claverton Hill be included in the road salting network. B&NES has also produced a self help 'Winter Weather' leaflet. I have brought some copies - hope we don't need them for a while!

Following a determined effort by the Transport Committee, B&NES has now replaced the waste bins (and is now emptying them on a regular basis) and the HA has cut back and cleared the trees and overgrowth, in the A36 lay-by at the northern end of the village - it now looks considerably better, I am sure you will agree!

We have established closer links with the Police who are now paying much more attention to parking problems on Ferry lane, Claverton Hill and The Avenue. Similarly, in a joint effort between the Parish Council and the University of Bath, a notice is now being posted on staff and student websites, at the beginning of each new semester, to remind people about not speeding and parking illegally on Claverton Hill.

Most of us will have enjoyed a stroll in the field along the River Avon, next to Claverton Weir and pumping station. However, the wider popularity of this area has brought with it increasing problems, such as litter, unpermitted camping and lighting of fires. We have, therefore, designed and agreed (with Bathford PC, Natural England, Avon & Somerset Constabulary and the farmer) a new sign for the field entrance gate to try and improve the situation. It will be installed within the next few weeks.

VeracityBath Ltd, which is supported by the Parish Council, brought judicial review proceedings against B&NES and the DfT in the High Court regarding plans to build a P&R on Bathampton Meadows. Although it was not granted permission to bring full proceedings, the reasons given in the B&NES Court Order are a confirmation that the scheme can only be developed as part of the Bath Transportation Package, and not independently, which was the basis of the VCB claim.

B&NES is proposing an experimental 18 month vehicle weight restriction on the Cleveland Bridge, to reduce the impact of through-HGVs on the city. The ban, which your Parish Council and other people have been pressing for over many years, is also extremely good news for Claverton as it should significantly reduce the number of HGVs passing through the village on the A36 - it should not only be safer but also quieter.

Valley Parishes Alliance

Since the VPA was launched in June last year, activities have focused on firmly establishing its profile. We have played a leading role in this by drafting the VPA's representation on the West of England JLTP to 2026. There are two particularly important issues for Claverton in the JLTP - one is the absence of an A36 Park and Ride and the other is the reference to studies of an A36/A46 link road.

We also prepared the VPA's representation on the Bath World Heritage Site Management Plan, highlighting the need to protect both the World Heritage Site and its high quality landscape setting, in which Claverton Parish lies.

A lot of time has been devoted to the Kennet & Avon Canal which runs through the entire length of our parish. Together with Bathampton PC, we have played an influential role as VPA representatives on a BW steering group, developing a strategy for boat moorings and protection of the canal towpath between Widcombe and Devizes.

We drafted the, subsequently agreed, steering group Vision for the canal and were part of the team which reviewed the moorings and towpath between Widcombe and Dundas Aqueduct.

The latest news, and you may already have seen mention of it in the local press, is that the VPA has secured a position on the newly created Bath Transport Commission. This group, which will be chaired by Transport for London Commissioner Peter Hendy (a resident of Bath), will develop an overall transport strategy for Bath and, amongst other things, provide specific advice to B&NES on future major transport schemes.

Communication plays an increasingly important role in what the PC does, so I would like to say a few words about the Parish Council website.

Parish Council Website

We have recently agreed the outline format of a Parish Council website (*clavertonpc.org*) and selected a web designer. The website is intended to provide easy access to information about Parish Council activities, local services, amenities and organisations, with direct links to useful external websites.

It will *not* include any information on village social activities or events and there will be no link to the monthly village newsletter. However, *if*, at some point, there is consensus in the Parish for the website to be expanded and developed to include community issues, we would obviously keep an open mind about that.

We are very excited by the project. We hope that you will be pleased with the result when it is launched later in the year and welcome any feedback.

If anybody is interested in being involved in either the development or management of the website, please get in touch with any members of the working party which is chaired by Anna Beria, and includes Rodger Sykes, Mark Mackintosh and me.

This leads me to the issue of Broadband.

Broadband

For those in the Parish who have internet connections, poor broadband service continues to be a great frustration. We have, therefore, written to B&NES to express our interest in participating in its plans to bid for government funding to improve broadband in poorly served rural communities where improvements would probably be uneconomic, e.g. Claverton.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, with the caveat that the new Parish Council still has to be put in place, I would like to recommend that it should focus on the following areas in the coming year -

- Continue campaigning for A36 speed limit - need to recognise HA funding constraints.
- K&A Canal - continued representation on BW steering group & other initiatives
- Develop our winter contingency plans for the village and Claverton Hill
- Attend to 'everyday' issues, e.g. keep things tidy and clean, Ferry lane yellow lines

- Respond to B&NES consultations on issues which could impact on Claverton,
- Continue our active role in the Valley Parishes Alliance, e.g. Bath Transport Commission
- Representation at ALCA, Parish Liaison, Parish Cluster and PACT meetings
- Develop and launch the Parish Council website - ensure parish involvement in evolution.
- Maintain dialogue with B&NES regarding Broadband improvement and review other options, e.g. via the VPA - seeing if Wiltshire is a better bet.

So, we feel we are making progress; and I have enjoyed the privilege of being Chairman of the PC.

I would, therefore, like to say thank you to my fellow P Cllrs and Andrea for their support and hard work. Andrea has become something of a 'superclerk', now being clerk to Claverton, Limpley Stoke and Freshford PCs and secretary to the VPA. I would also like to thank Bill Howe for continuing to be our Independent Auditor

It is Local Elections time and that means change. One that we already know about is that Chris Jump has decided not to re-stand for the Parish Council, having been both a P Cllr and Chairman for a number of years.

I would, therefore, like to take this opportunity to thank him, on behalf of the whole parish community, for his enthusiasm, commitment and hard work. His presence on the Parish Council will be greatly missed. However, it is difficult to imagine Chris not being involved in village life, in one way or another. I think we can all be sure that he will continue to support the Claverton community generally, and the Parish Council, in the years to come.

In conclusion, I would just like to say that your Parish Council exists *solely* to represent the interests of the Claverton community and to do that, the most important aspect of our work is to listen to everyone's concerns and aspirations and to communicate effectively.

If we can get this right we will be in much better position to speak on behalf of Claverton, especially in discussions with B&NES, MPs, service organisations and neighbouring parish councils.

The Parish Council, therefore, very much values parishioners coming to our bi-monthly meetings and I would especially like to thank Rosemary Wells and David Naylor for regularly attending to help with discussions on matters affecting the eastern side of the Parish. For her part in communicating PC news I would also like to thank Marian Mackintosh for all her hard work in publishing the village newsletter.

There is no doubt that Claverton is a special place and, being one of the smallest parishes in B&NES or indeed the West of England, we may feel relatively removed from any major threats. However, the parish is not isolated - it lies on the busy A36 trunk road and is also very close to the expanding University of Bath. In addition, B&NES is on the threshold of embarking on major regeneration and development in the Bath and wider B&NES area, with associated step-changes in employment, housing growth and requirements for improved transport infrastructure.

What this signals is that conservation and enhancement of rural parishes, such as Claverton, will be an ever increasing challenge and, hence, the need to get involved in the wider community has never been greater. In this regard, we have already developed excellent working relationships with neighbouring parish councils and the recent formation of the VPA has now provided us with another opportunity to extend our 'circle of influence'

We may find it difficult to achieve all our aims but the fact that we live in such a beautiful parish is incentive enough to continue to make the maximum effort to preserve and enhance it.

Thank you.

David Batho

Date: 7th April 2011