

Play area - You're probably aware that two weeks into the project, work on the new multi-use games area (MUGA) was suspended after Storm Bert. We have been in protracted discussions with the contractors over what, if anything, needed to be done regarding drainage on the site. We're now at a stage where our contractors are due back on site in the middle of May to finish the job, so we expect that it will be open for use around the end of May.

Hazelbury Bryan Bytes

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Editor – Malcolm Wilson – Parish Clerk

Chairman's introduction

These are clearly turbulent political times. Fortunately, the parish council is always non-political but it can be affected by decisions made by central Government. One of the keystones underpinning the work of the council is the need for councillors and clerk to observe and comply with the Seven Principles of Public Life, known as the Nolan Principles. These guide the behaviour of anyone in public office. They are selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. There isn't space here to go into detail but you can easily find more on-line.

Councillors need to have the respect and trust of the community which elected them and observing these Principles will go a long way to ensuring this is the case. Where councillors don't observe these Principles, they face losing trust and their position.

We do currently have a [vacancy for a parish councillor](#). If you think you can meet these standards and want to help the council improve life for everyone in the village that do get in touch with me, the clerk or any councillor. We've been engaged in a number of projects in recent months, and some are on-going. More details are given in this edition

Cemetery

The cemetery in Churchfoot Lane is a much loved and valued community asset. As part of its risk assessment obligations, the council organised a safety inspection of headstones. This was undertaken by the Chief Executive of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Managers (who just happens to live locally). Headstones are pretty weighty structures and could cause injury or worse, especially to a young child or a frail adult. It's clear there are about 30 older headstones that require work to make them stable. This will need to be done by stonemasons. The headstones since 2005 seem to be ok. In recent times there has been a British Standard introduced to ensure proper ground anchors and dowelling within the structure.

Responsibility for maintaining the headstones rests with those who bought them. We hope to be able to contact the appropriate relatives and ask them to arrange appropriate repairs. In the meantime, to meet our own risk management obligations, we may need to put in place some simple but effective safety measures. The process will be complicated by the need to involve the Diocese of Salisbury and potentially obtain what is called a "Faculty" i.e. permission to undertake works. Although the cemetery is a civil burial ground, it is "consecrated ground". This won't be a speedy process, sadly!

Planning Matters

Since our Neighbourhood Plan was first “made” in 2018, and subsequently refreshed in 2024 it has proven to be hugely effective in keeping out unwelcome development. Applications for over 100 homes, including sites by the Antelope, in Military Lane and in Churchfoot Lane have been turned down by North Dorset District Council, Dorset Council and the Planning Inspectorate. The only site that slipped through the net was the paddock in the middle of Kingston. This was approved at a time when the first Plan was regarded as being out of date and before the new Plan had come fully into force.

All policies within our Plan have to be in harmony with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) rules set by central Government; and also fit within Dorset Council’s (DC) own Local Plan, which is currently under development. Changes to the NPPF were made back in December 2023; and a new set has been introduced in December 2024 – who would be a planning officer?

Dorset’s annual housing target has been increased by central Government from 1793 to 3219 homes. The new target is mandatory. DC doesn’t know if it is achievable – are there developers, social housing providers, buyers, renters, skilled workers etc to take up the increase? It hasn’t been decided how the total might be distributed amongst towns and sustainable villages. In the meantime, DC will continue to develop its new Local Plan.

At present DC has an identified 5-year housing supply. This will take DC until the end of October 2025. After this date it does not expect to be able to demonstrate that it has a 5-year housing supply. This will leave the county vulnerable to speculative and perhaps unwanted development anywhere.

The good news for us is that we have a “made” Neighbourhood Plan. One change to the NPPF of 2023, that has been retained in the 2024 version, is that where a Neighbourhood Plan has been “made”, its policies have full planning weight for 5 years, even if DC doesn’t have a 5-year housing supply. So, our N Plan and its policies retain full weight for 4 more years, until March 2029.

The bad news is that we’ll probably have to start refreshing the Plan about 18 months before the five-year period ends, so September 2027 or thereabouts.

Village hall

The village hall is owned by the parish council but day to day running of the hall and responsibility for its upkeep and maintenance are devolved to the Village Hall Management Committee under a Trust Deed of 1951. The hall is one of the key focal points of the community and Amanda Dance, as Chair, and the Committee continue to do an excellent job for the community. There are a host of rules and regulations that govern how halls must be managed and the Committee has been working tirelessly to bring these up to date and get everything in good order. There are also plans in place to upgrade the facilities within the hall, especially in the kitchen area.

There has been an issue with the area to the rear of the hall, where the land falls away steeply toward the adjacent field. There were also the untidy areas left following the removal of the oil tank and the destruction of the old metal shed in one of the winter storms. It is clear the area needed to be stabilised as a matter of urgency and quotes were received from contractors, and the final cost is just under £12k. The work is now complete and looks terrific.

The hall does have the funds available, but using these would mean that the planned improvements to the inside of the hall would have to be delayed for several years. A very generous donation of £2,000 towards the cost has also been received from a donor who wishes to remain anonymous.....but thank you, you know who you are. And if anyone else would like to follow suit, feel free!

The parish council has therefore agreed that it will take on financial responsibility for the work. One advantage of this is that the parish council can re-claim the VAT element of the cost, so effectively saving 20%. The parish council is able to borrow funds from the Government via the Public Works Loan Board at preferential fixed rates. It agreed at its meeting in March to draw down a loan to cover the cost of the work. A formal resolution was agreed at April’s meeting to apply for a PWLB loan of £10,000 repayable over 10 years. The loan process will take a few weeks and existing reserves earmarked for other purposes will be used to pay the contractor in the short term. It is not anticipated that an increase in the council tax precept will be necessary. Normally some form of consultation seeking community support would be sought in advance for a loan and associated expenditure but the urgent nature of the groundworks meant this was not feasible in this case. The subject has been covered at length in recent parish council and village hall meetings.

Community Resilience

The parish council has established a small working group to look at how we can protect the village and its community in the event of a major incident or extreme weather conditions etc. The work is at the very early stage, and we would welcome any volunteers who may have an interest, experience or expertise in this area. If you think you might be interested then do get in touch with the parish clerk who can provide more information about what is involved.