

Neroche Annual Parish Meeting

2023

Chairman's Report

Introduction

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, welcome and thank you all for coming this evening. I was a little worried yesterday that the snow would force a cancellation of this meeting so I am very pleased to welcome to you all.

This evening's guest speaker is James Gischeff from Natural England whom I'm assured is a very good speaker (unlike myself). I would also like to welcome Councillor Ross Henly our District Councillor and finally Keith Read from West Hatch Parish Council.

Parish Council

First let me bring you up to date with some arrivals and departures. You may recall that at the last annual parish meeting we were seeking a replacement councillor following the resignation of Caroline Parsons. I am pleased to say we have co-opted to fill this and other vacant seats and we welcome new Councillors: Jane Hole, Sue Hayman, Dave Knight, Fiona Gledhill and Malcolm Prosser to the Parish Council leaving us with one seat to fill. We have had a number of parishioners come forward to offer their services to the parish council.

We also have a new county councillor following the elections last May and are pleased to welcome Sarah Wakefield as our new Blackdowns and Neroche representative on the county council alongside Ross Henly.

The anomalies in the use of land in Curland has been noted by the parish council and has been reported to West Somerset & Taunton Deane planning department who have spoken to the land owner.

We are in communications with the Planning Enforcement Officer who is looking at this case but understandably there is a limit to the level of detail that he can provide due to data protection laws.

Enquiries to Land Registry reports that Curland Green is an unregistered parcel of land. The Parish Council intend to investigate that the area be cultivated and sown with wildflowers as a rewilding project.

Fibre broadband

At last we have seen some positive action on the superfast broadband front. You may have seen the coils of cable taped to some telegraph poles in the area and I have recently received this update from Airband to say that they have so far cabled 18% of the contracted area and installed 30% of the Cabinets. They are currently waiting for the power and the main connecting cable known as the backhaul to be installed to the cabinet, which I believe is scheduled for July. The cabinet is already in place. Completion date is still estimated as being Oct. There are, currently no major concerns to plan. Planning are working through job packs.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform those who do not know and remind others that the analogue copper phone services is due to be withdrawn in December 2025, this means that any vulnerable people with telecare equipment connected to this old analogue system will need to have it converted over to the new system or risk losing the service. However this conversion should be carried out by the service provider.

Local Community Network

The New Somerset Council Unitary Council comes into being next month and with this change they have proposed that parish and town councils are to be grouped together to form a local community network or LCN with the view that these groups of local councils would take control of services that they consider could be better carried out and to a higher standard locally but with the support of the Unitary Council. This will be on a voluntary basis however support both financial and physical would be provided. Representatives from the parish council are meeting with other local parishes to thrash out some common boundaries. We believe we are not limited to our own LCN but should the need arise we can join with parishes in neighbouring LCNs for a common cause.

Precept

The Parish Council's precept makes up a very small proportion of the council tax bill, in the region of 1%. It is considered each year by a finance advisory group, who meet in December and review the Council's expenditure in the last year and expected financial liabilities in the coming year. Using this information they decide what level of precept to advise the Parish Council to set at our January meeting.

We cannot for see what services the new unitary council will fund or remove and with this in mind and the need to have sufficient funds to carry out our work we have requested an increase of 49%

This equates to a rise on a band D property of £1.20 per month or £14.45 for the year. One of the reasons for this action is to enable the parish council to tackle some of the recommendations that will come out of the Community Review, along with projects which have been in discussion for some time such as the Village Gateway project and installation of a number of new Grit bins.

Community Review

I'll not dwell on this subject as it is on this evening's agenda, only to say that Jane Hole and team have been working very hard to complete this review which has a very tight deadline and we were slightly late to the party so to speak at the start.

If you have not already done so I would strongly encourage you all to take part in the survey. The survey is for all parishioners and is not restricted to one survey per household.

I'll let Jane flesh out this subject later this evening.

National Highways A358

DCO delayed due to new environmental study

Road Investment Scrutiny Panel

Village gateway

A village gateway has been on the parish council agenda for a number of years and is finally beginning to take shape. The village gateway will take the form of prominent signs (as displayed behind you) with an indication to drivers they are passing through Staple Fitzpaine with the speed limit through the village.

We are working to have the speed limit through Staple Fitzpaine reduced to 30 mph from the current 40mph as a study has shown that the meridian is 34.5 mph. This will require the speed limit signs and road markings to be changed to reflect the new limit.

This will have to be funded locally and is estimated to cost in the region of £5000, which includes all the legislative work in the back ground right through to installation and amendments to road marking.

In conclusion

Finally there are a number of people whose help and support have been essential in organising this meeting. I must thank Councillors Jane Hole, and our Clerk Emily York for their help in designing the agenda, contacting speakers, these and other councillors for setting up for this evening. I must also thank our speakers this evening, both from within the parish and our guest speaker, for being with us tonight. We look forward to their presentations which I am sure will inform us on topics which are all of relevance to our community. I thank our County Councillors for their attendance

Mark Palmer