

Residents of Toller Porcorum and those that drive through our village will have noticed that work has begun to repair and paint the unsightly railway bridge. This has been a very long process, starting in 2012 when the PC contacted the Railway Property Board (RPB). The RPB were willing to give us the paint for volunteers to apply, but were unwilling to cover the cost of sandblasting. This led to a site meeting with a sandblasting company, and a quote arising that was way beyond the budget of the PC. Clerk to the PC, Mrs Michele Harding found a community chest that the PC could apply to in order to cover the cost: We were successful at the second attempt, however, approximately 18 months later the RPB no longer existed and the care and maintenance of the bridge was now the responsibility of the Highway Agency (HA). Once we had appraised them of our intentions, they stipulated so many Health and Safety 'barriers' that the sandblasting company withdrew on the basis that to meet all the H&S requirements the costs would be way beyond our budget.

Mrs Harding found another sandblasting company, Moorland Blast Cleaning Ltd (MBC), based in Devon. This led to another site meeting, paint samples being sent away for analysis to discover the level of toxins such as lead that may escape into the environment once sandblasting started. Gary Cooper of MBC was astonished at the state of the bridge stating it was a dangerous hazard to pedestrians, and questioned whether the sides were structurally sound. MBC reported this back to the HA with photographs; Mrs Harding worked hard at liaising between the two, and then only a few weeks ago the HA 'conceded' that they had to act to fulfil their obligations to keep the bridge in a satisfactory state of repair. We understand they have appointed a company from South Wales to carry out the work, which includes the repair and painting all 4 sides of the bridge. The PC is very grateful to Moorland Blast Cleaning Ltd who have come out of this with no work at all

and to Mrs Harding who has been like a terrier in chasing up the various bodies involved.

As work proceeds traffic lights may be used and we hope that any inconvenience will be minimal.

David Ennals

(Chairman of Toller Porcorum Parish Council)