

Chairman's Annual Report 2015

Welcome & introductions: This year we welcome George Sartan supported by Tara Hansford, who will give us the latest news on cyclepath, footpaths and trailways, and Cllr Baker will lead us through the main developments happening under the direction of the CLT. Unfortunately our County Councillor Rebecca Knox and District Councillor Jill Haynes cannot be with us tonight, but they have sent through their short reports. We are grateful that Jill and Rebecca take the trouble to fit some of our PC meetings into their busy schedules. We congratulate Jill on being re-elected to her respected position.

And before I forget a special thanks to my wife, Jane, for preparing and serving the refreshments.

The activities of the PC over the past 12 months began with our May AGM. At that meeting it was agreed that Cllr Davies was to represent TPPC at the Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils. Cllr Judy Miller was elected Vice Chair and was to be our representative on the Village Hall Committee. Cllr Janet Knowles agreed to stay as our Rights of Way Officer. The parish emergency contacts were to be Mr Paul Comer, and Mr James Billen who replaced David Wallbridge who retired from the position last year. James willingly came forward, highly recommended by his mother, of course! We are grateful to these gentlemen for their care and concern over the past year.

Meanwhile, referring back to the AGM: we usually award certain grants to village groups, but this was deferred until the November finance meeting: the grants were then confirmed as: Churchyard £300, Recreation Field Association £125, and, as we started last year: £125 to our Post Office Shop, and £100 to Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance.

Planning: Much of our discussions have centred on the Post Office and affordable homes development, and Cllr Colin Baker will provide us with a summary of what has happened this year, everything from slowworms to road closures!

Last year I reported that there was a planning application for Rampisham's Solar Park and since then there has been an amended plan, but this situation is on-going. Our position, as a Parish Council, has always been to support the application, providing the plan includes appropriate screening and hedging. However, there have been objections, the main one coming from English nature. Our District Councillor, Jill Haynes has been heavily involved in trying to get the application approved, and to this end she and two of our Parish Councillors, Judy Miller and Pat Rutherford attended a meeting in January. Cllr Miller read out a statement on behalf of the Parish Council stating our support for its inception based on the facts that this was a brown field site with limited agricultural use; the solar panels would have less impact than the pylons, it would aid the called 'Energy Crisis' and that the panels would have a negligible effect on flora and fauna – the latter being English Nature's primary objection. At the meeting the application was approved unanimously by Councillors but English Nature then referred the matter to the Secretary of State for the Environment. We still await a decision.

The Parish Council have also supported applications for an extension to a shed at Thunderbolt Farm, a garage for a house in Church Mead, a Utility Room at Woolacombe Farm and we were asked to look into a query made at the height of a fence at 29 High Street, which after consultation, was deemed to be of the correct dimensions.

Highways - once again the Parish Council has been busy trying to get the Highways Dept to improve our roads. I would like to thank Cllr

Peter Davies and his dog Daisy for, what is sadly the last time – Peter has decided to stand down from the Council for what we hope will be only a temporary measure, their continual monitoring of ditches, drains and pot holes, and reporting these defects to highways has been invaluable. I think you will agree that our village roads are in a reasonable state of repair.

Peter is in the process of overseeing repairs to fingerposts that he removed from Kingcombe and he has applied to Dorset AONB-Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for funding to cover the repairs. The broken posts are currently with Robin Masters, and Peter has agreed to see through this project.

A site meeting was organized to discuss the fatal accident at the top of Toller Hill junction with the A356. As a consequence the SLOW signs have been re-marked and new junction warning signs have been installed. There is concern that the memorial that remains is a distraction to drivers, and this has been referred back to the family liaison police officer.

An initiative we started with the Railway Property Board in January 2013 to have the bridge re-painted gathered great pace during 2014 when after much pressure from our continual pestering and persistence (mainly through our Clerk), involving emails, photographs of the corrosion, 2 site meetings with Sandblasters, estimates of costs including an environmental impact report, the Highway Agency – who took over responsibility of the bridge from the RPB suddenly decided to do the job themselves. You have seen the final result, and despite the haunching not being finished as well as we would like – we hope residents are very pleased that we changed an eyesore into something very presentable and in keeping with our village.

With David Wallbridge retiring as one of our flood wardens, it was necessary to find another place to store the sandbags which he had kindly accommodated for years. The Village Hall Committee agreed to having a small shed erected behind the hall, and this is now the village's sandbag store. Thanks are due to Mr Keith Miller for erecting and felting the shed. If you have seen it – a very professional job!

Cllr Janet Knowles has chased up various repairs to stiles and steps on footpaths. We have had repairs to the BOAT carried out and a grit bin installed on School Lane. Latterly we received complaints about the sign one can't help seeing on entering the village from Lower Road. We decided that the owner of the property would be written to requesting the sign's removal, but our request has been ignored. Highways say the sign is not illegal as it is on private property, but we will be discussing the possibility of having a proper Slow down sign purchased and erected.

In September we began work on compiling a Community Emergency Plan. This is not obligatory, but considered good practice, and after discussions and amendments, the plan has been published and advertised in the Post Office and Bus Stop. Full details are on the village website. However, we have to concede that we do not know the whereabouts of our snowplough, and if anyone has any information on this, please come forward!

A group of ladies, 2 of which were Councillors thought it would be a good idea to start a village newsletter, and within a few weeks the Toller Times was launched. This is not a formal Parish Council initiative but we wanted to support its monthly publication by funding the printing costs believing that this is a useful initiative for all residents.

I would like to emphasise again the value of the TP Website and to thank Cllr Peter Davies for running the website www.tollerporcorum.org And you will be pleased to know that you can catch up on all the PC minutes (and even the Chairman's reports!), but the information it holds is of interest to the historian as well as resident.

Superfast broadband has entered into discussions from time to time. It was our intention to have a representative from Superfast@dorsetcc.co.uk here tonight to outline their plans. Instead we received this email,

As you know, Toller Porcorum was originally in our plans to be provided with a fibre service at the same time as Maiden Newton. It was delayed until later this year because of the additional challenges of getting fibre from the exchange into the village.

Unfortunately May is still a little early for us to give definitive advice on our plans for the village so I don't think it would be particularly helpful for us to come at that time.

We will of course keep in touch with you and let you know as soon as fibre is there. Please continue to encourage people to sign up for the e-newsletter and our availability email through the [dorsetforyou](http://dorsetforyou.com) website.

Before finishing, I would like to thank all the Parish Councillors – those that have served over the last 4 years, and those who have stood for election this year. They give freely of their time, and to our hard working Clerk, Michele Harding.

I am saddened that various people are leaving us this year. We were expecting there to be Parish Council elections this year, but fewer than 7 people stood for election; 2 of our Councillors decided to retire. As Chairman, I am very grateful to these 2 people who have contributed enormously at meetings through their own efforts and wise council: Pat Rutherford has decided to take life at an easier pace. Pat has been our Telephone Box liaison officer a rather thankless task

but one that has kept her engaged!! Pat has been our village doctor in a way – always keeping her finger on the pulse. She was also behind the naming of the Brook to which we had an official ceremony when the river was named Oliver Letwin MP. The brook is now officially printed on Ordnance Survey maps.

Peter is also standing down, as I said earlier, we hope that this is just for a one term. Peter started the village website in its present form, and has agreed to carry on overseeing it fortunately. He has reported potholes, blocked drains and gullies for the last 8 years, and not only that he has followed up on matters when action from Highways has not happened, or when a repair has been sub-standard. Peter has been our planning supremo: he goes on line and studies them thoroughly and month by month has made recommendations to the council regarding our comments and or problems with the applications. He leaves us with quite a large hole (pot hole?!) to be filled. Pat and Peter, thank you from us all, we are truly grateful for all your contributions to the village as Councillors.

You will shortly see an advertisement stating a vacancy for Parish Clerk. It is most regrettable that Mrs Michele Harding has decided to reduce her work load on medical advice, following a recent operation. With respect to all past Clerks, if there was a premier league for Parish Clerks, Michele would be at the top of it! She has taken much work off my shoulders since her appointment 3 years ago, she has been ultra efficient with all administration as well as setting the budget and accounting. She has attended DAPTC training sessions and seminars to stay fully briefed with all that is going on in local administration, and always has information to hand at the touch of her mouse! We will miss you greatly, Michele. Fortunately, there is a chance that Michele may stay on as our Registered Financial Officer, should her replacement not want that responsibility. Michele, we are

all extremely grateful to you, and thank you from the bottom of our agendas!

Our Parish Council currently has six members, we welcome to the council Mr Alex Carstairs. We have one vacancy, and the Parish Council are considering appointing a co-opted member at our meeting later this evening.

Thank you to everyone for coming tonight, and should anyone have any concerns or issues through the forthcoming year please don't hesitate to approach one of us or attend one of our meetings which are, of course, open to members of the public and you can share your concerns or ideas during the public forum sections.

David Ennals. May 2015.