

WESTON BY WELLAND PARISH COUNCIL



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Annual Meeting of the Parish

St Mary the Virgin Church, Weston By Welland at 7.30 pm

Wednesday 25th May 2022

Attendees:

Parish Cllrs: Bob Roberts (Chair), Simon Grandidge, Nicky Garratt, Anna Cowling, Vicki Score, Dr Jonathan Baggott, Steve Emery.

NNC Cllrs: Mike Tebbutt.

Parishioners and others: 7 including Margaret White (MW) (PCC), Alison Bromwich (AB) (Community Group), Richard Hart (RH) and Graham Garratt (GG) taking notes for the minutes.

‘Preamble’: At 7.30pm and before officially opening the meeting, the Chair addressed those present and, wishing to give context to the Parish Meeting, read extracts from the Minute Book of the Parish Meeting, starting with the earliest entry from December 1894, through selected entries from 1915 and 1917 and concluded with the final entry on 19th March 1973, when the Parish Meeting was replaced by the Parish Council. RH confirmed that the Parish Meeting was superseded by the Parish Council in 1973 and that he was one of the original Parish Councillors. The Chair reflected on the history and heritage of parish service as well as the issues raised in the Minute Book and noted how many of them still resonated today.

Meeting Opened: 7.36pm.

1. Welcome to the parishioners

The Chair set out the nature and purpose of the Parish Meeting, which he was to chair as Chair of the Parish Council.

2. Chair’s Report

The Chair read his annual report to the Parish Meeting, summarising the actions of the Parish Council and related events of the last year [copy available on request/at appendices]

3. Accounting Statement 2021-22

The Chair read his Accounting Statement for the last financial year, noting an opening balance of £9,613, listing various income and expenditure items and a closing balance of £2,938.36. The Chair noted that money had been received in the previous financial year and carried forward for expenditure in the reported year, for example on items such as the speed camera and defibrillator. This partly accounted for the significant difference in the opening and closing balances. The Chair informed the meeting that Parish Council finances were on the agenda of the following Parish Council AGM if anyone wanted to know more or ask questions.

4. Reports from

a) **Parochial Church Council (PCC)**

MW was present but due to a sore throat her report was read by the Chair. The report noted this was the first time the PCC had been invited to the Parish Meeting and thanks were offered. Other items included the appointment of the new vicar (The Reverend Amanda Oliver, Priest in Charge of The Upper Welland Valley Parishes), the church closure for repairs to the ceiling and reopening in mid-March. Thanks were given for all the efforts made in the village to raise funds for the church's repair and upkeep. Finally, it was noted that tickets were still available from MW for the Jubilee Lunch.

b) **Footpath Warden**

The Chair outlined that Jill Postlethwaite was the village's footpath warden and that while Jill would not be making a formal report, she was happy to continue with this role of checking on the condition of the parish's footpaths and liaising with North Northamptonshire Council about any issues that occur; none were reported.

c) **Tree Warden**

GG reported on his appointment as the village's informal tree warden in August 2021, events since undertaken including a tree walk and tree planting and plans for future events.

- Cllr Tebbutt asked for details of the Tree Council which runs the formal tree warden system and which NNC could join for this purpose.
- Before leaving for a prior engagement, RH expressed his thanks and that of the PCC for all events and activities raising money to support the church.

d) **Litter Picking Group**

The Chair explained that Ali Carver took the lead with the litter Picking Group but was unable to make the meeting. As such, the Chair read Ali's report, detailing with gratitude, the work of the group (the 'Weston Wobbles'), in conjunction with North Northamptonshire Council, as well as the ongoing litter collection actions of the wider community.

e) **Community Group**

With Mike Southwell on holiday, AB gave the Community Group report, noting the group was set up in the 1990s to fund raise for village requirements, such as the installation of the toilet in the church. It was noted that the Community Group sought to spend money raised on a regular basis unless ring fencing funds for a specific large project. There is no intention to accrue large unallocated reserves. The Chair was recognised and thanked for his bringing together of the three main village groups (Parish Council, PCC and Community Group) to coordinate their actions for the Jubilee celebrations.

f) **Village Hall / Spitfire Fund**

Again, in Mike Southwell's absence, AB noted the history of this fund and its current existence as a Village Hall fund with three trustees (Jim Jacobs, Chris Parker and Mike Southwell). The fund is currently worth c.£700 but now faces banking charges of £5/month which, along with current inflation rates, is rapidly reducing the fund's real value. There is now a desire to see this money spent to the benefit of the village. One suggestion is to add it to the repair funds for the church, noting that the church is the nearest thing the village has or is likely to have in the form of a village hall. The issue was discussed and there was widespread support for this, although the new games area might also be a worthy recipient of the money. Failing a local use the funds could be signed over to the Spitfire Presentation Fund. The Community Group recognises that it requires the support of the majority of the village to spend the money, having previously

reported that the money needed to benefit all villagers, and will look into how it can gauge the villagers' views on the options available.

g) Speed Activated Speed Sign Update

The Chair noted that the operation of the speed camera (TVRA) was being managed by Ray Carver. In Ray's absence, the Chair read Ray's report, giving details on how the system worked, the maintenance required (battery charging), the reports it was now producing, e.g. in March there 16,000 vehicle movements recorded, in April 29,000. The benefits and restrictions of the TVRA's were discussed. The Chair thanked Ray for his work.

h) Flower Sales and Jubilee / Beacon Event Update

Cathy De Boer was unable to attend the meeting and in her absence the Chair read her report on the work she and others had been doing in preparation for the Jubilee celebrations, including details relating to the beacon lighting (timing – 9.45pm in coordination with the rest of the Commonwealth, parking, marshals etc.), opening of the World War II Observation Post, beacon tarts, bagpipes and what to bring. An offer had been received to film the beacon lighting by an amateur drone operator, but it was agreed that this should be politely declined in the interests of personal privacy and safety.

The Chair also read details of the flower sale and coffee morning, which raised over £750 for the church repair fund. The previous year's sale had raised £113, with 50% going to the church, 25% to buy sparkling wine to toast the Queen's jubilee and the balance for other village purposes. Flowers had also been planted around the village, notably at the bus stop and village signs.

5. Open Forum

The Chair opened the meeting to the floor at 8.12pm. A question was raised about tree care and protection, which GG answered and offered to pick up further outside of the meeting.

No further issues were raised but the magnificent success of recent village events and activities was noted by the attendees and thanks and congratulations offered to all those involved. The Chair received a round of applause from the meeting for all he had done in that role over that last year and in recognition of the challenges he and the village had faced.

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.22pm.

This meeting will be followed by the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council

Appendices

Weston by Welland Parish Council

Chairman's Report for Annual Parish Meeting: 25 May 2022

In the council elections in May 2021 (postponed from the previous year due to the pandemic), the council took office following a contested election with a high turnout. Following their election, two successful candidates declined to accept their office. This led to two vacancies which were filled by co-option. In the late Autumn there were three resignations. As a consequence of the required number of electors signing to request an election, the election for these three vacancies was held in April. This was again contested, and led to a high turnout. The vacancies were duly filled again, and the council is currently at full strength. The cost of this second election will have to be borne by the council itself.

There were seven council meetings during the year, partly due to the council's decision to move to six meetings per year from four. The council is grateful to local county councillors Dearing, Howes and Tebbutt for their frequent and useful presence at these meetings.

Following the election in May 2021, the council reviewed the contract and salary of the clerk. The clerk's hours were increased to come closer to the nationally recommended number and now better reflect the time required. Very largely as a consequence of this, the precept was increased substantially in the 2022-23 budget, after many years of being held to roughly the same figure.

The council established a number of working groups: for EVENTS, for the RECREATION AREA, and for ENVIRONMENT matters. Much of the discussions and decisions of the council in the past year stem from these groups.

- the RECREATION AREA group, led by Councillor Grandidge, has continued to move towards the goal of establishing a recreation area to serve all residents. A Heads of Terms agreement was reached with the local landowner, Mr Parker. Planning permission has been applied for and has recently been granted. The group will now, on behalf of the council, be working towards finalising a lease agreement with Mr Parker before embarking on fund-raising. Although made much more difficult because of the pandemic, the group took several steps to inform and consult residents and there is evidence of strong support for the project.

- the ENVIRONMENT, led by Councillor Cowling, has met several times, together with a number of volunteer residents and guests from various bodies in the area. A Path Warden and a Tree Warden have been appointed. A litter-picking group has been set up which communicates via Whatsapp messaging. A 'refill' scheme has been set up to enable residents to order environmentally-friendly products related to cleaning, to reduce plastic usage. Many thanks to Graham and Nicky Garratt for organising this. Several events have been held: a tree walk, a tree-planting event, and a heritage talk. The group recently have heard of a successful grant application to support further environmental initiatives.

- In terms of events, the council is resolved to support and work collaboratively with the P.C.C. and the local Community Group, rather than seek to establish a separate 'events' organisation. Nevertheless, there may be occasions when the council organises its own

events. Plans for the forthcoming Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend have been drawn up in liaison with those two groups.

In addition,

- the council continues to support the Welland Wanderer bus service
- the council produced a two-year VILLAGE PLAN which was distributed to residents as part of a Christmas greeting
- Plans to produce a formal Neighbourhood Plan are still being actively pursued
- a pavement survey was conducted following complaints received from residents. This survey has been accepted by the county council highways department, and work on some of the items and recommendations in it have been completed
- The defibrillator has been bought, and installed in the telephone box, with thanks to Councillors Emery and Grandige. Training sessions on the equipment are due to be arranged.
- The traffic-calming speed camera has been installed and is working. Thanks are due to Mr and Mrs Carver for offering to oversee this equipment.

Planning. The council considered five planning applications during the year. No objections were lodged to any.

Bob Roberts
Chairman
25 May 2022

WESTON BY WELLAND VILLAGE MEETING (25 MAY 2022)

Tree Warden's Annual Report

1. Appointment

I was asked in August 2021 to be the village tree warden. For people that don't know me, I am a chartered forester and have been a professional forester all my adult working life. This tends to imply I know something about trees, but I wouldn't claim to be an expert.

I had previously been the village's official tree warden many years ago, but I believe the system collapsed in Northamptonshire when the county council could no longer pay the Tree Council's annual subscription for the official Tree Warden scheme. This still appears to be the case with North Northamptonshire Council, so I have assumed the role in an unofficial capacity.¹

What the role is, is a little vague. The Tree Council state that:

*"Our Tree Wardens are local tree champions who plant, look after and stand up for the trees in their patch."*²

So, within reason, it's whatever's wanted, based around promoting trees within the parish and people's enjoyment of them.

¹ Although I've been told by a fellow tree warden that there is a funding bid in the system to address this.

² <https://treecouncil.org.uk/tree-wardens/>

2. Village Tree Walk

My first public event was a village tree walk held on 9th October 2021. We met outside the Wheel and Compass pub at 10.30am. I don't have an official attendance figure but there must have been around 25-30 people. This including many young children and Anna Cowling did a fantastic job of tasking them with all sorts of tree related learning exercises.

The walk lasted for around 2 hours, by which time I had run out of puff. During that time, we had managed to walk almost the entire length of Valley Road between the pub and church, talking about the types of trees we encountered on our journey, although I failed to do the trees in the churchyard fair justice. Refreshment was then taken at the pub.

The plan is to do a similar if slightly later autumn walk this year, either in the village or around the surrounding countryside and possibly a spring walk next year if there is interest.

3. Tree Planting

We had a mast year in 2021, that's a year when many of the various native trees produce larger than normal quantities of seed. Richard Hart very kindly allowed me to collect acorns from the beautiful mature oak (*Quercus robur*) tree in his farmyard overhanging Valley Road. I potted up about 50 of these and they germinated the following spring into seedling oak trees.

I was then enraged to lose a number of these young trees to grey squirrel attacks, which I'm embarrassed to say I naively had not expected, so I ended up growing the remainder under chicken wire in our back garden. Anyone wishing to know more about my love for grey squirrels should see me later.

We then thought about where we might plant these trees in the parish and started to think about doing this as a public tree planting event to involve local people.

After looking at various options, Richard Hart kindly agreed to us planting the oak trees along his hedgerow on the western side of the Sutton Hill road. I find this a really attractive approach into the village and the valley beyond, being lined on either side by mature trees. Unfortunately, most of these trees are ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), with what might now be expected to be limited remaining life expectancy. It is hoped that planting oak trees here will protect the setting of the village for the benefit of the people and wildlife that live here or pass through over the coming decades and centuries.

The tree planting day was set for 19th March 2022 and with the help of Ryan Cowling and Nicky Garratt, we pegged out each planting station in advance. Again, we had a great turn out on the day of around 30 people of all ages. Plants, materials and tools needed carrying to site, there was a brief demonstration and then everyone got to it. In addition to planting the trees, they needed protecting from rabbits, hares and muntjac deer and we used a combination of cut down second hand tree shelters and new biodegradable tree shelters, both supported by new hardwood stakes, which Nicky and I donated.

In the end, the morning was spent planting around 33 trees, all oak except one hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) that I had spare. The event was free, although participants were invited to make a donation towards the church repair fund and were encouraged to attend the after (tea and cake) party in the church for the same purpose.

We are hoping to repeat this tree planting event next winter, possibly with a seed collecting and potting up event in the autumn if there is much seed showing on the trees. I am also thinking about

offering tree planting sponsorship for a modest nominal fee for people wishing to at least partly offset the carbon footprint of their summer holidays – no carbon maths just a positive feeling for doing something good, all proceeds to support further tree planting.

4. Other Events

I am happy to consider any other tree related events that people think might be of interest.

GVG: 24 05 2022.

Weston By Welland Village Community Group

The Community Group was established in the 1990s

In 2006, the village community group raised funds for the installation of a toilet here in church, to enable it to be used by the community for various activities, such as the recent Bingo evening, plant sale and the many upcoming celebrations for the Platinum Jubilee.

Over the years the group has raised money for the benefit of the village community.

The group recently donated a sum of money to the church for urgently needed repairs.

Although the groups funds are reduced it is hoped with the forthcoming launch of the 100 club this should see a reasonable income for the group, along with giving residents the chance to win something as well.

The groups profits will be used within the community.

Mike and Sheila Southwell would like to step down so new members the opportunity to join but does need new members to join in.

Weston by Welland Village Hall Fund, formerly known as the Spitfire Fund

The above fund was formed during WW2 to fund the construction of Spitfire planes to help with the war effort.

There are three trustees of the fund, which was renamed some years ago as the Village Hall Fund, with the intention of it being used towards a village hall.

The trustees are Jim Jacobs, Chris Parker and Mike Southwell. They consider that there is little likelihood of a village hall being built.

Some years ago a toilet was installed in our church, and since then it has been used for various community purposes.

The fund is currently valued at approximately £700.00.

If the bank that holds this fund is acting like many other banks, then there will be a £5.00 per month charge for administering the account. The fund will thus be diminishing at a rate of £60.00 per annum.

The trustees were proposing that the fund should be used to pay towards the recent repairs to the church, but for this to happen, the views of residents must be sought.

If no agreement can be reached, it could perhaps be a possibility to transfer it to the Spitfire Preservation Society, as this would be along the lines of the original aims and objects of the fund.

It is hoped agreement is sought and made soon on how the funds are spent otherwise over the next 12 years there will no funds, and the previous fundraising efforts will have been in vain.

Report on behalf of the Litterpicking Team

May 2022

There has been regular litter picking in and around Weston for about 25 years but over the last couple of years a more formal and larger team has been established and there are currently 9 residents who have committed to picking regularly. We have a whatsapp group where we keep in touch and post pictures of the rubbish we gather, this gives us a rough idea of just how big an issue littering in our area is.

As well as keeping the verges free from litter, much of it food wrappings and drinks bottles and cans, we have reported cases of fly tipping to the council and have cleared larger items from verges and ditches. At the end of April Graham and I dragged a considerable amount of debris, including wheels, tyres, car bumpers and a large quantity of bagged garden waste from the ditches in Green Lane. This we reported to the Northamptonshire Council who came and collected the majority of it. Two piles still remain. These have been reported twice, so hopefully they will soon be removed.

Littering will continue to be a problem for many years I am sure and as such we are very grateful to the many residents who, although not officially Weston Wombles, help us in our endeavours by picking up litter while out walking. All help is very much appreciated. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the team for their hard work and dedication in keeping our small area of the county litter free.

If anyone would like to join us or has any ideas for improving things for both residents and wildlife with regards to the issue of litter, please contact me.

Ali Carver

Litterpicking Team Co-ordinator
(Weston Wombles)

A short report on the speed camera.

Since taking it over I have managed to sort the software and get some reports and have attached the main count reports for March and April this year. They show the number of vehicles passing through and average speeds, there are other reports of you would like to view some of them. I wouldnt print the report out but the first page will give you the summary.

There is still a lot to learn within the software and I will endeavour to find out all I can about it. I did ring the company for some help over a month ago but he still hasn't called back, I will insist a bit more next time I call them.

The number of vehicles seem vastly different between the two months, 16,000 plus for march and 29,000 plus for april.

The camera batteries need charging around every 3 weeks although last month they ran out of power at around two weeks so i will keep an eye on them.

I would like to see if there is a possibilty to add a fixture at the bottom of sutton road, coming into the village. I will have a look very soon to see if thats possible and contact you again.