



## Chairman's Report – Annual Parish Meeting 7<sup>th</sup> May 2013

### Introduction

The current financial climate and recent legislation continue to influence our discussions. The Localism Bill has yet to have an impact on our parish. However, planning reforms are being introduced and we are seeking to understand how they will affect us.

### Website

The current website has been operating successfully for just under a year. We are grateful for the help and support of Ian Malpas, a local resident with some experience in website design. It was decided to proceed with In Touch With Communities, a subsidiary of a Customer Relationship Management software company based in Weston-Super-Mare. We adapted one of their template designs and the website and associated webmail is hosted by them.

### Planning

The core work of the Parish Council continues to revolve around Planning & Development and we seek to influence the decisions of the North Area Planning Committee of North Somerset Council (NSC) with our recommendations.

Planning Applications. The Parish Council considered 49 Planning Applications in the past year - a 15% increase. It recommended approval on 41 and refusal on 9; NSC agreed with over 90% of recommendations – better than last year (80%). There were 11 applications regarding trees which had preservation orders upon them and 8 Listed Building Applications. The following relates to appeals:

Bowden Way, Failand (Gated Community)	Dismissed
23 Hill Drive, Failand	Dismissed
The Glen, Tower House Lane, Wraxall	Allowed
2 Moat Cottages, Wraxall	1 Dismissed, 1 Ongoing
Gowan Croft, Lower Failand.	Ongoing

There have been issues whereby neighbours have not been informed by NSC. The Parish Council has taken this up with North Somerset Council.

Following the approval of the NSC Core Strategy, NSC has published a draft Sites & Policies Plan, one of the key supporting documents. The Parish Council has reviewed and submitted comments on this.

### Pylons

Councillors Chris Ambrose and Dr Hugh Pratt have continued to represent this Parish, and other groups which include Nailsea Action Against Pylons & Save Our Valley, in challenging the options

proposed by National Grid for routing 400kV Transmission lines, advocating undergrounding and High Voltage Direct Current Gas Insulated Line technology. The current situation is at an Annex to this report.

It is considered likely that the campaign with National Grid and Ofgen will need to continue for some considerable time.

### **Footpaths & Public Rights of Ways**

Objectives. Over the years, the Parish Council has sought to improve the network of footpaths across the parish. This aim is supported by the Parish Plan, which recognises that they are a major recreational facility. Objectives established by the Footpath Working Group are to create/improve footpath access to:

- Tyntesfield from Nailsea, the Elms and Wraxall village
- the North Somerset Show Ground
- Wraxall Primary School from the Elms and the Grove
- the new Sustrans cycle route
- Flax Bourton, with a river walk

Applications for Diversions. There were 7 applications for diversions to Public Rights of Ways. NSC has approved 3 (Fir Trees on Stoney Steep, Gable Farm and 50 Charlton Drive - all in Wraxall); the others have yet to be determined. Two of these (The Paddocks & Riverside Walk) are being considered by the Planning Inspectorate.

### **Queen's Diamond Jubilee**

Councillors agreed to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee with lasting memorials. An oak tree was planted in the grounds of Failand Village Hall with an engraved stone marker and there was a contribution to the water feature installed in Wraxall churchyard. It is hoped that if the Riverside Walk comes to fruition, then this can be named as the Jubilee Walk and signed with suitable markers.

### **Road Safety & Highway Maintenance**

Our roads have suffered from potholes as a result of the bad weather over the winter. Many have been filled but there are still some about. I would encourage you to report them directly to NSC via the link on our website. Councillors take an active interest with NSC Area Officers; important issues are reported by the Clerk. Last year for the time taken to replace damaged signage and to maintain highway drains was poor – this has improved significantly. At the beginning of April 2013 Horse Race Lane was re-surfaced and some of the verges repaired – this has been a significant improvement.

### **Finance**

Councillors were again mindful of the current financial climate. There are fewer Band D properties this year (Band D is the Band from which all other Bands are calculated). Hence, in order to keep the Parish Council portion of the Council Tax at the same figure as last year, there was a 3.7% reduction

to the Precept. There were fewer discretionary grants awarded this year. The reserves to respond to National Grid's proposed route for Pylons remain largely intact.

The Clerk has agreed that her salary should continue to be capped, despite additional hours worked voluntarily; residents continue to benefit from this element of the Precept being significantly less than it could be.

### **Appreciation**

I wish to recognise the dedication and support of:

- our Clerk, Freda Shattock, supported by her husband, David, who delivers working papers to Councillors and notice-boards at his own expense
- our Councillors, in their support to the community
- our District Councillors, Bob Cook and Charles Cave – in representing our interests , particularly for planning and PRoW, lobbying and liaising with NSC officers
- our NSC Liaison Officer, Richard Blows
- our Neighbourhood Beat Officer, PC Adam Clarke, and Police Community Support Officers, Charlotte Thompson and Gary Lewis
- the Open Spaces Society Local representative, John Ives
- those residents who attend and contribute to the work of our Parish Council, particularly Ian Malpas and John Chapman

David Robinson  
Chairman

### Recent responses from W&FPC to official requests

-Our reply to NG's consultation (*as on PC Web site*)

### Present Situation

-Consultation out on environmental impact of NG proposals. (*Given 28 days to respond to 745 Pages plus appendices*)

-Consultation due on Planning Application - 3 September 2013 to 15 October 2013. (*only 6 weeks to respond*)

-W&FPC report from Prof Claus Neumann due shortly. (*M5 Route potential*)

-Uncertainty of Hinkley Nuclear generation will not prevent the requirement for the connection.

-As Atlantic Array and yet unspecified renewable generation from the Bristol Channel will still require the connection.

-Exeter University has funding from Norway, Denmark and Germany to research public attitudes to Overhead Lines. Have sent all our reports and attempting to convene a meeting.

-Community Forums will recommence shortly.

-Tim Yeo MP, Chair of energy and climate change Select committee, sponsored a meeting of ----MPs to review the matter in March. (*No official response yet*)

-W&FPC as part of SAAP have formed an Incorporated Community Interest Company. They have issued a legal challenge to NG. Funds may be needed for legal action?

-Nailsea Public Meeting held in November 2012, attended by NG, 300 people and our MPs LF-JP-TM.

-Prof Dieter Helm, Oxford University, Economist, specialising in utilities infrastructure, regulation and environment, Chair of DEFRA Natural Capital Committee, member Economics --Advisory Group to SoS for Energy and Climate Change has valued the wellbeing of the countryside at a £1M per acre and a tree at £360. He presented at the recent MPs meeting.

-This could change the economics of the NG proposals.

-NG, we believe have been asked to quantify the socio economic costs of their proposals. It is not presently a legal requirement.

-Community Benefit. As a way of overcoming the protests and legal challenges from many parts of the country, Suffolk, Mid Wales and North Wales and Somerset the Government are proposing a financial Community Benefit. This is a form of bribery for Local Authorities. It is divisive and it is tax-payers money.

-Finally everything NG does seems to be Local but it is far from Local it is part of a proposed EU-wide Grid to pick up renewable energy from Ireland's off-shore wind farms and those around our coast.

The solution should be sub-sea ring main and not an overland overhead line solution.

CPRE locally and nationally are very supportive of W&F PC's work on this issue and are themselves active nationally and at Government level to make change happen.

CA 2 May 2013