

MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING FOR WESTONBIRT WITH LASBOROUGH

13th MAY 2015

PRESENT – Councillors: Geraldine Shepherd (GS) Chairman, Colin Baber (CB), John Hatherell (JH) and Annabella Scott (AS)
Parishioners: Graham Buchan, Natasha Dangerfield, Geoffrey Fitch, John James and Mark Winston-Davis
Westonbirt Arboretum: Simon Hough (SH)
John Shepherd (Parish Clerk)

APOLOGIES – Simon Wilson

MINUTES FOR MAY MEETING 2014. Read and approved. Proposed CB, Seconded JH.

MATTERS ARISING

GS said that she had invited Simon Hough to speak to the meeting about parking issues on behalf the Arboretum, together with any other associated matters affecting parishioners.

Parking. Simon Hough (SH) advised that the Arboretum had greatly improved the parking facilities on site and it was hoped that this would improve the situation in the neighbouring roads. In the past, it was the police who had sent traffic down into the village but this year the Arboretum are using contractors for traffic control and they would be able to ensure that this did not happen again. In addition, “Do NOT Cross” tape would be put on verges, advice on parking would be provided on their web-site and in concert-booking emails. It was also hoped in future to extend the Traffic Control Orders (TCO) to cover village roads.

There was general discussion of the problem. GS noted that she was pleased that the Arboretum were now taking the problem seriously and were now taking action to try and eliminate it.

Bridleway Closure. SH reported that the closure from 16 May 2015 of the Bridleway through the Arboretum from the end of the village street was only temporary and was for safety reasons during the construction of the tree walk. Contrary to rumour, there was absolutely no intention to seek its permanent closure and he agreed to write to the Parish Council confirming this. Mark Winston-Davis explained how difficult the closure of the Bridleway was for riders, particularly those leading young riders and asked if there was any possibility of a diversion through another part of the Arboretum.

AS suggested that there could be for a list of local riders. SH agreed to investigate. It was noted that the temporary closure of the Bridleway might have the positive benefit of reducing the incentive for visitors to park in the village street. In that respect, signage at the entrance to the Bridleway emphasising that “Free Parking” was available in the Arboretum might help.

Parking. This led to further discussion of the parking problem. Notwithstanding the efforts now being made to alleviate the parking problem, there was a consensus that the bund had been a mistake, with the drains regularly becoming blocked and causing flooding, and that the disadvantages caused by the bund greatly outweighed its benefits. The Parish Council were urged to re-approach Highways with a view to getting permission for its removal.

CHAIRMANS REPORT

GS said that, as in previous years, the main problem had been that of parking, as had been extensively discussed under Matters Arising and she had nothing further to add.

A Village Party had again been held this year’s party on the 5th July 2014 at Field Barn Farm by kind

permission of the Baber family. This had been very successful and enjoyable for those who had attended, but it had proved difficult to get enough parishioners to come. As a result, unless a significant number of tickets had been sold to those from outside the parish, the party would have had to be cancelled. As the main purpose of the party is to get Parishioners together, it had been decided that this year we would have a break and there would not be a Parish Party.

Once again there had been a very successful Village Clean-Up, with strong participation by Councillors and others, many of whom are present at this meeting.

There had been many complaints by parishioners and by those from neighbouring parishes about the extensive hedge that the owners of Park End had, without permission, had planted on the verge alongside their property. This was considered a traffic hazard, particularly at and near the junction of Whitehouse Lane with Easton Grey Road. Highways had been informed and were taking action.

The post of Parish Clerk had been advertised and John Shepherd had been selected and appointed.

GS had declared an interest and had excluded herself from the selection process.

Parishioners were urged to be vigilant as there had been a spate of burglaries in outbuildings.

John James added that June Goatley's house had also been broken into.

AOB.

No items had been notified to the Parish Clerk prior to the meeting for formal discussion. However the Chairman asked if anyone present wished to raise any other matter informally.

Natasha Dangerfield spoke about speeding cars along the Easton Grey Road and her concern in view of a recent accident at the East Lodge of Westonbirt School. She was investigating the possibility of having "School" signs either side of the entrance or other traffic calming measures.

GS pointed out that, whilst the Parish Council would support appropriate measures to improve road safety, in the accident referred to, all the cars involved had been either stationary or travelling at a slow speed and that a 30 mph speed limit would have made no difference. AS added that the Easton Grey Road was an important through route and that a 30 mph speed limit would be inappropriate.

It was noted that at a recent, on-site meeting with Gloucestershire Highways and the police, held at the request of the Parish Council, the existing 40 mph speed limit had been reviewed and no change had been deemed necessary. Geoffrey Fitch said that as far as he was aware no children came to the school on foot along the Easton Grey road: all travelled in cars. CB said that he would have no problem with "School Signs", but in the discussion that followed there was strong opposition to any form of illuminated or flashing signs. Furthermore, it was recalled that only a few years ago, the late Geoff Goatley had, in association with the Parish Council, carried out a detailed review of the excessive signage on the roads throughout the parish with a view to getting this reduced, in keeping with the rural nature of Westonbirt and its Grade 1 listed landscape.

CLOSE MEETING

(Read, Approved and Signed by Geraldine Shepherd on 4 May 2016)