



Bothenhampton & Walditch
Parish Council since 1886

ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

COUNCILLORS

During this year we have lost:

Councillor Chris Dobbs

Chris died in 2020. He had only been a short time as Councillor, having been 12 years in the post of Parish Clerk. He held the Council together through years when there were very few councillors, ensuring that all the proper forms were completed and essential duties performed even if the Council struggled to stay quorate. He worked on even after his wife was buried in the Old Churchyard, and even during his last illness. He helped Tan Cox through the basic essential tasks of Parish Clerk and we found he had a file for every occasion.

Councillor Colin Sparkes

Colin retired from the Council in 2020. He was a Councillor and Vice Chair for many years and looked after planning issues. He carefully considered each application and tried to contact householders and neighbours to ensure they were not in conflict. He also frequently contacted Dorset County Council over potholes and other road defects, not only in our parish but in others. He was also Chair of the Bridport Gardening Club and had taken a leading role in initiatives to restore wildflowers to churchyards. We suspect he will not sit quietly at home.

Councillor Ann Langridge

Ann left the Council in 2021. She joined in 2018 and replaced Colin as Vice-Chair in 2019; she chaired the Open Spaces Subcommittee for a year. She was very active in arranging and carrying out repairs and improvements in the play areas, and in promoting the Council through leafletting. She had a good grasp of the important link between our council and other councils in the Bridport area, as our representative on the Bridport Local Area Partnership. She was a very capable worker on the Parish Plan project. She has left us to carry out a demanding role in the Bridport Refugee Support Campaign, where we wish her much success.

Councillor Gill Smith

Gill left the Council in 2021. She joined in 2020, and was a keen leafletter and volunteer in Bothenhampton, and was Chair of the Open Spaces Subcommittee. She was our representative to the Bridport Youth Forum, and to the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan. Gill has left to follow other interests which are less demanding.

Welcome to:

We have been fortunate to recruit Graham Styles, who is Vice-Chair, and Chair of the Open Spaces Subcommittee, and Edward Berry, who is our representative on the Jellyfields and Bothenhampton Nature Reserve Management Committee.

CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Following the lead of Dorset Council, the Parish Council has declared a Climate Emergency. Our Parish Plan for 2022-27 is going to incorporate the actions we will take in consequence.

PLANNING

We have a statutory duty to check planning applications after they have been submitted to Dorset Council Planning Department.

Homestead Farm in Main Street, Bothenhampton, has occupied a lot of time this last year: the development has gone to Planning Committee, was rejected, then appealed to the Planning Inspector in Bristol with a hearing on 4th May 2021.

Few planning matters are as problematic as this one, but the Parish Council has invested in training so that all councillors are aware of the problems that arise when developments are planned. Sometimes we visit sites where developments are proposed in pairs so that all possible issues are covered. We also talk to neighbours about their concerns.

The Government has issued a consultation document, *Planning for the Future*, which aims to make it much easier for developers to obtain planning permission to build housing. It proposes a simplified system whereby local authorities define 'growth' land on which it is possible to build in principle. When developers propose to build, the planning process would be simplified and there would be no local consultation before building starts. We responded, expressing our concerns about local democracy.

Dorset Council has issued a consultation document, the draft *Local Plan 2023-2038*, to replace the *West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan 2016*. This focuses on where housing and commercial development should take place, and identifies many policies regarding Development, Housing, the Environment, the Economy and Community. We contributed to the response of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan (BANP) Joint Councils Committee, and also made our own responses. The Local Plan addresses many issues related to the Climate Emergency, which we included in our response. Dorset Council has included much of the work done by BANP.

TRANSPORT, TRAFFIC AND FOOTPATHS

After many years' pressure on the County Council and the Police Authority, a 30mph speed limit has been extended to include Walditch in Spring 2021.

We have asked Highways Department to reconsider the placing of the 30, 40, and 50 mph limits on Burton Road. 'Slow' signs on the road have been offered, but negotiations continue.

We have received notification from Highways Agency that roadworks on Sea Road South in the next two years will upgrade the Pasture Way crossing, in principle to include light controls. We have asked to be kept informed of the process.

We have, with the help of many local residents, asked for a 20 mph limit on Crock Lane. Highways have put in enhanced 'Slow' signs on the road and cut back hedges to improve sight lines. Crock Lane is being resurfaced from 5th to 9th May.

A community bus service has operated along Sea Road South and into South Lawns on Wednesdays and Saturdays since October 2020. We remain unhappy about this service, particularly because the low-entry buses used cannot safely negotiate Crock Lane or Chestnut Road.

The Parish Council has appointed a Voluntary Footpaths Officer, Philip Park, to keep our footpaths clear and cut back hedges. Footpaths have been heavily used this year, and some steps, bridges and stiles have been mended.

We have purchased five more dog waste bins for dog walkers to use, placed near the ends of footpaths.

OPEN SPACES / ENVIRONMENT

Dorset Council has presented its *Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy* Public Consultation, to which we responded in detail. We approved many of the initiatives presented, while arguing that Dorset Council could take a stronger lead in persuading suppliers to modify their processes, and in talking to residents.

In the last year we have funded the creation of a new Play Area in Lower Walditch, ably supported by an active group with its own Facebook pages, the Lower Walditch Play Area and Orchard. The new equipment is being enhanced by seating and picnic tables.

We have also refurbished the John Gundry Play Area in Upper Walditch, replacing rotten posts and swings. The Friends of the John Gundry Play Area worked hard to clear away undergrowth and to clean tables, benches and other equipment. At the same time, a large number of dead or diseased trees were felled.

John Holt Play Area has been partly occupied by builders working on the Main Street wall, but we have had the dry-stone wall repaired, ivy partly removed, and the trees pruned.

Jellyfields and Bothenhampton Nature Reserves are still owned by Dorset Council, but are in the process of being transferred to Bridport Town Council (BTC) with an annual contribution from the Parish Council.

We make biennial contributions to churchyard maintenance in both Walditch and Bothenhampton.

COMMUNITY

Heavy rainfall in the Parish in the winter led to water flowing downhill which flooded properties in Walditch and Crock Lane, requiring action on drain clearance and replacement, as well as sweeping roads. This has required liaison with Dorset Council Highways and Flooding Officers, and provision of sandbags from the Bridport Town Council Lengthsman. A Voluntary Flood Officer, Cllr Chris Addis, has been appointed.

The Parish Council has supported the Rural Gigabyte initiative, which will bring full fibre broadband to Upper Walditch.

The Parish Council used Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to subsidise glazing in Walditch Village Hall.

Our telephone box libraries in Walditch and on Main Street have been painted, and repairs effected.

The *Parish Plan* we are now finalising is based on responses to a questionnaire delivered to all households in the Parish in September 2020. This will outline the actions that the Parish Council should aim to deliver during the five-year period to 2027, including greater use of social media and publicity. The most important action we are considering is how we can recruit new Councillors, particularly younger people from across the Parish.



Cllr A J Basker
Chairman
Bothenhampton & Walditch Parish Council
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23rd April 2021