

## **South Stoke Parish Council Newsletter No 47**

### **Annual Report 2012-2013**

No local elections affecting the Parish Council were held in 2012 . There were however two resignations during the course of the year. Tim Haines and Rhona Harvey both resigned due to increasing pressure of work and the Parish Council would like to thank them both for their valuable contribution to the Council.

Both vacancies were advertised in the usual fashion with both positions eventually being filled by the process of co-option. Tim's place was taken recently by Chris Winpenny and Rhona's place was taken, only last month by Patrick Dawson.

#### **Parish Councillors and their individual responsibilities**

Patrick Dawson		Midford Sweeper and liaison with Midford.
Michael Devenish	Chairman	Planning and Liaison with Midford
Sue Dustin		Village Hall Management Committee
Tom Geake		South Stoke Sweeper, Police liaison and Millenium Wood
Robert Hellard	Vice Chairman	Planning, VHMC and liaison with BPT
Jenny John		Footpaths, Allotments and Open Spaces
Chris Winpenny		Highways

Geoff Davis is Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.

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#### **Meetings**

The Parish Council met on 10 occasions during the period 2012-2013.

6 full meetings and 3 planning meetings plus the Annual Parish Meeting.

The Parish Council also responded to 4 Consultation Documents.

#### **Planning**

During the year we have considered many different planning applications for works in or near the Parish. We have always commented on purely 'Planning' grounds, using Local and National planning policies for guidance. The Introduction of the NPPF has definitely changed the emphasis in favour of development, though in theory this new 'Planning Framework' still supports the purposes of Green Belts and AONBs. We are dismayed that BANES Planning Department has still not found funds to complete the re-appraisal of South Stoke Conservation Area. We have been represented during the year at several Public Inquiries, as well as at Development Control Committee Meetings. The main issue confronting the Parish Council this year has been the Bath and North East Somerset Council's Core Strategy. This is currently suspended whilst the Council explores ways to satisfy the Government's Inspector, after his criticism last year for failing to make provision for enough housing into the future. The date for the resumption of the Examination in Public will be in July, so there is a sense of urgency now about the whole process and matters are moving very quickly.

There is a Special Public Meeting in the Village Hall on Monday 8th April to discuss this important issue.

#### **Registration of Community Assets.**

The Parish Council has successfully registered the Packhorse Inn as an 'Asset of value to the Community'. We are currently considering whether other community assets should be registered too.

#### **Snow Warden Scheme**

The Parish Council continues to participate in this BANES Pilot scheme and was called upon on at least one occasion this winter to clear the Village centre. The participation of local Residents was very helpful.

#### **Parish Sweepers**

Our sweepers, Martin Bambury for South Stoke and David Brown for Midford continue to do a fine job throughout the Parish, so a large vote of thanks is due again to both of them. This year the Parish Council has reached an agreement with Hinton Charterhouse Parish Council to extend David's work within Midford and allow him to clean up to Clearbrook Farm. This is making a noticeable difference to the Village as a whole. We were delighted that both Sweepers undertook extra work to clear litter from the Wansdyke after the recent scrub clearance.

### **Footpaths and Open Spaces**

Public footpaths are walked regularly and fallen trees and overgrowth of foliage are attended to when reported. The Parish Council continues to take pride in supervising care of the Churchyard.

### **Allotments**

Allotments are all under cultivation, but suffered some damage when cattle got into the area earlier this year. The damage was rectified by volunteers with assistance from the Council and the field gate padlocked against further intrusion.

### **Wansdyke Information boards**

In October three Wansdyke Information Boards were installed along the length of this Scheduled Ancient Monument which formed part of the northern boundary of the Parish for over a thousand years. Two are in Odd Down, and one in South Stoke parish. The latter was sponsored by the Parish Council, and the project received financial support from the Ward Councillors' Initiative Fund, and the Heritage Services department at B&NES.

### **Highways Maintenance**

The Chairman is the current liaison with BANES Highways over potholes and general repair works. The new Midford Footway was constructed this year to improve pedestrian safety through the Village. The final stage of the works to adjust the path over the Midford Brook Bridge is planned for this Summer.

A Midford community effort last September saw the new footway verges planted with some 2500 daffodil bulbs, the cost of which was met by our Ward Councillor's Initiative Fund.

With Hinton Charterhouse Parish Council we are objecting to the proposed installation of an Electronic Vehicle Management Sign Board on the A36, which could lead to traffic being diverted onto the B3110.

### **Villager Hall Management Committee**

During the course of the year the Parish Council has been able to support the ongoing maintenance and refurbishment of the Village Hall and plan to do so again next financial year.

### **Parish Council Finances**

For the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 we recorded a modest surplus over expenditure of £537 but had outstanding liabilities for Churchyard maintenance and development of the Parish Council website, so expect to record an excess expenditure of around £236 over income.

The Parish precept for 2013/14 was set at £4,680. This is a slight reduction from the previous year. We also receive a Local Council Tax Support Grant of £180. We retain a healthy reserve as a campaign fund.

### **Millenium Wood**

The Council has purchased a four seater, wooden bench that will be installed in the clearing in the middle of the wood when the weather improves.

Finally, we thank Neil Butters our Ward Councillor and current Vice Chairman of BANES for his ongoing help and support throughout the year.

### **The Annual Parish Meeting will be held in South Stoke Village Hall at 7pm on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> April.**

This is an opportunity for all residents of the Parish to attend a meeting with the Parish Council and allows us to hear from you. Please try to support the Council by attending.

Michael Devenish. Chairman, South Stoke Parish Council.

## **Amendments to BANES Draft Core Strategy.**

Following our Special Parish Meeting last Monday evening, we are distributing this newsletter to remind you that it is important for everyone to respond to the current consultation on the Amendments to BANES Draft Core Strategy and to provide a little guidance as to what might be considered “Relevant Planning Issues”.

The Government Inspector’s role is to assess the Draft Core Strategy, hear evidence from interested parties and then to decide whether the Council’s policy is “sound”. Our role therefore, is to examine the issues to which we object and to show why they make the proposed amended core strategy “unsound”. The most prominent issues to consider are:-

### **Green Belt.**

The entire area of the proposed site is within the Green Belt. There is a presumption against new development in the Green Belt unless ‘very special circumstances can be shown to exist which would outweigh the harm that such development would cause’. No such ‘very special circumstances’ have been defined in this case.

In addition one of the most important purposes of a Green Belt is to prevent coalescence between settlements. The Council’s own report on the Bristol/Bath Green Belt (a very recent study by Arup) comments that the open green belt area between Bath and South Stoke is very narrow already.

Green Belt boundaries can be altered by Local Authorities but not still comply with their principle purposes, specifically to prevent coalescence.

The amended Draft Core Strategy therefore fails this test and should be considered “unsound”.

### **AONB**

The entire site from Combe Hay Lane to South Stoke lane is in the Cotswold AONB. This has, by statute, the highest level of protection against unauthorized development.

Major development in an AONB is only allowed if it is in the “Local and National interest”. No proof of this has been provided in this proposal. Indeed elsewhere in the Draft Core Strategy there is specific mention of the great importance of the GB and AONB to the Setting of the World Heritage City of Bath.

The proposed amendments conflict with BANES own policy and so are “unsound”.

### **World Heritage Status.**

The “setting” of the city in a largely ‘Green Environment’ is an important aspect of its status as a World Heritage City. To build here and elsewhere on Greenfield sites in areas that are clearly important parts of that setting, risks damaging Bath’s important status as a World Heritage site. This would be disastrous for Bath’s tourist based economy.

BANES support for the World Heritage site on the one hand and stated intention of putting that status at risk by building on its ‘Green Buffer Zone’ must surely challenge the soundness of this plan?

### **The Wansdyke**

The Wansdyke is a very ancient important Archaeological feature, so much so that it is registered as a 'Scheduled Ancient Monument'. By definition it must be protected against inappropriate development on, or near it, that might cause actual or visual harm. This proposal would simply ruin one of the few remaining sections of the Western Wansdyke, that are accessible to the public.

BANES own study (commissioned from Arup) makes particular reference to the fact that the section of the Wansdyke immediately to the West has been overwhelmed by inappropriate development at Sulis Meadows and so it is surely "unsound" to repeat this on the Eastern Section and then to cut an access road through it opposite the Cross Keys pub.

### **Bat Foraging Area.**

A large part of this Plateau area has been recognised by European Experts in Wildlife Conservation as extremely important foraging area for the very rare Greater Horseshoe Bat. The disturbance through noise and light pollution created by the proposed development will cause very real harm to this threatened species.

### **Traffic/Access.**

BANES amendments to their Draft Core Strategy include a major access to the site from the B3110/Southstoke Lane junction opposite the Cross Keys pub. BANES Council at their meeting on March 4<sup>th</sup> 2013 passed a further amendment to their original motion approving the overall strategy, which required a significant buffer to be maintained between any new housing and the Village of South Stoke. An access road complete with pavements and street lights across this plateau will guarantee future development of the 'whole' plateau and cause immense harm to the Wansdyke, the Village and the Bat foraging area. It will also create a 'rat run' through the site and exacerbate already difficult traffic problems at the B3110/Wellsway junction.

This is surely less sustainable than the possibility of limited development at the Western end of the site, which would have easy access to the existing Park & Ride facility.

To claim that this site is the most 'sustainable' option, whilst actually creating a traffic logjam is surely unsound?

### **To comment on these Amendments to BANES' Draft Core Strategy:**

Fill out the form entitled "Core Strategy Proposed Changes Comment Form Part 1" found at [www.bathnes.gov.uk/corestrategy](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/corestrategy) and reply by email to: [core\\_strategy@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:core_strategy@bathnes.gov.uk) or write to:

Planning Policy Core Strategy Changes, B&NES Council, PO Box 5006, Bath, BA1 1JG.

**Any response must be received by B&NES by 5.0 pm on Wednesday May 8<sup>th</sup> 2013.**

### **Finally:**

Please try to stick to consideration of the 'Soundness' or otherwise of these amendments to B&NES Draft Core Strategy under headings that are based purely on Planning Issues. Please consider carefully and use your own words, as copied responses will not count. Please send copies of your responses by hand, or by email to our Clerk, Geoff Davies at Tregonhawke, South Stoke, Bath, BA2 7DW. email: [Southstokeclerk@hotmail.com](mailto:Southstokeclerk@hotmail.com), to help us to help you.

South Stoke Parish Council. April 13<sup>th</sup> 2013.