

ABBOTTS ANN PARISH COUNCIL

Newsletter: January 2008

TRAFFIC

What happens the second time you have been half scared to death? One of the Parish Council's major recurring headaches is the problem of scary traffic, and readers will by now be well aware of the efforts of Abbotts Ann Action on behalf of this Parish, and its neighbours, to minimise the impact of any traffic likely to be generated by the world's greatest grocer. So a delegation of Councillors has travelled to distant Longparish, where the enterprising Parish Council has set up a demonstration of those electronic signs that light up on the roadside to warn drivers that they are exceeding the speed limit. If you are unfortunate enough to have to drive to Swindon, you can see for yourself how effective these gadgets are at Collingbourne Ducis - these are solar-powered, so cost nothing to run, and they have been observed as successfully causing rapid deceleration of cars and lorries. Our friendly local police have also caught at least one speeding driver during their recent visits to Red Rice Road; that will be 3 points and a £60 fine... The people of Stockbridge, too, have recently managed to take time off from fund-raising for their ageing Guildhall's face-lift to run their own speed-checks. Apparently their fastest recorded time was 52 mph, but they were unable to take the registration number because the vehicle was a bicycle. Oh, by the way, the schoolboy's answer to the opening question is "The same as when a cat takes its ninth risk."

WILDLIFE

Planners, developers and conservationists circle each other warily, sometimes joining in uneasy alliances and sometimes behaving like stags in Autumn. As part of a laudable preservation policy, applicants for planning permission have recently had to show that they have made provision for the welfare of other local inhabitants. One does sometimes suspect that the ability of these creatures to look after themselves is under-estimated; are water-voles very upset at having to move house if their domestic peace is disturbed? Surely bats have efficient enough radar to stop them bumping into the roof of a new house; not to mention slow-worms, which can actually move pretty quickly when approached by a bull-dozer. A recent major road-scheme had to be delayed until a family of dormice woke up; in this case the developers suspected that an ingenious protester had smuggled a nest onto the site, but were thwarted when it was shown that the nest-building materials were locally sourced. Ah well, perhaps it is a matter of everything having its place, though the mild winter has seen an awful lot of rabbits and moles in very wrong places. While on the subject, the encouraging of compost-making has had an undesirable result, as compost heaps and bins provide very cosy homes for rats. Test Valley has one or two Pest Control Officers, who will deal with rats for free (though they charge for eliminating other pests, such as wasps). However, there is currently a waiting-list of some weeks.

RURAL PROTECTION

CPRE Hampshire has strengthened its defence of the countryside against devious developers, creeping concreters and ambitious architects with the launch of their on-line battlemat, showing ongoing campaigns and inviting interested surfers to warn of lurking threats. Try visiting www.cprehampshire.org.uk and clicking on 'campaigns.'

RUBBISH

For those who use the public rubbish dump (sorry, Household Waste Recycling Centre), the County Council has announced new regulations, emphasising that the Recycling Centre is actually for Household Waste. Apparently some 17% of the stuff arriving at Shepherd's Spring is trade-orientated, and should be dumped elsewhere for a fee; so refuse will be refused if it comes in commercial-type vehicles such as white vans. However, as some householders only have access to

commercial-type vehicles for their personal use, a free permit system for such folk will be introduced as from St. Valentine's Day. Permits can be obtained by phone on the Castle's new

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number Hantsdirect 0945 603 5634 or online at www.hants.gov.uk/recycling. A full communications plan has been developed (and I quote) including a suite [another bureaucratic neologism?] of leaflets giving details of alternative local disposal routes for traders, new web pages and a media plan created in partnership with the County Council's Corporate Communications Team. Consultation [surprise, surprise] has already taken place with district waste colleagues to ensure that policies are aligned. For any more information (e.g. whether your elderly Land-Rover is classed as a van, a car or scrap metal), Waste and Resource Management colleagues will be delighted to assist at waste.management@hants.gov.uk. Hatchbacks, saloons, estates, SUVs, MPVs, even MGBs and 2CVs are welcomed with open arms without a permit provided that they are not towing trailers beyond a certain length; but the chaps in yellow hard hats are looking out for local plumbers unloading bits of broken pipe and porcelain from the back of their shiny BMWs.

There is more... Soil, rubble and DIY waste is not strictly defined by law as Household Waste, but HWRCs will kindly accept small quantities (defined as the equivalent of a medium-sized car boot full, or the content of six medium-sized bags), no more than an average of once per month per household. OK? Not yet, because as from last July there is a new kind of rubbish oddly entitled WEEE, which has to be stored safely and reprocessed by specialists. As the list includes hair-dryers, fluorescent tubes, DVD players, VHS recorders, PCs, CRTs and TVs, plus fridges, cookers and dishwashers, perhaps I should explain that WEEE stands for Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment.

Did you know?

A Parish Clerk in Cambridgeshire arrived at the same time as the village's electricity supply in 1957 and started work on an annual salary of £7.10s; the lights are still working, but she has just retired, hoping at last for a quiet life after 50 years serving the Council of Yelling. Another Clerk in Lancashire is complaining that no-one comes to Council meetings except to complain about youthful misbehaviour, such as abusive language or blatant drug-taking, which stains the good name of the parish of Staining. Odd names like this bring to mind a Northampton parish which used its Power of Well-being (a catch-all phrase for almost anything that might benefit parishioners) to sponsor a memorial to their most distinguished citizen, who captained the county cricket team from 1871 to 1880, fielding, presumably, at Silly Mid-on. His name was Richard Daft.

Next Christmas a Derbyshire firm will be offering to supply Councils with solar-powered Christmas Trees which charge themselves up in the daylight and twinkle at night. Anyone who confuses them with the rechargeable speed-warning signs should certainly not be on the road.

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING: 10TH FEBRUARY 2008

The Council.

The attendance was slightly diminished because of the resignation of Joanna Holmes, for personal reasons, including the fact that she will be moving to St. Mary Bourne, whose gain is our loss.

The Shed.

TESCO's imperialist ambitions have not diminished over Christmas, as anyone who wanted to buy animal-feed or welly-boots from SCATS in the Weyhill Road has discovered. The developers are still hoping to win over the Planning Committee at the re-scheduled meeting on February 25th. Abbotts Ann Action, as a vital contributor to the resistance movement, is wide awake, and has reported that the County Council and the Highway Agency are still unwilling to remove their substantial spanner from the works.

Planning.

The owner of the plot of land on the corner of Cattle Lane and the Monxton-Red Post Bridge road has already put in two applications to build an ultra-modern eco-friendly house there. So far (for once) Test Valley planners and our Parish Council have agreed in rejecting the plans, not only because of the “sore thumb” factor, but also because it violates the long-standing policy that buildings in Little Park should be of single-storey design, which has so far, with only one that got away, been observed at least in spirit. Nothing daunted, the architect has tried again, this time replacing the curious curved metal roof with something more traditional, like tiles. However, although this roof contains attic-style accommodation, it still constitutes a third storey. So, although some Councillors felt like giving him marks for trying, the architect was politely re-directed to the drawing-board.

Many of the applications sent in are the work of sensible people who do not want to move house; so they propose relatively modest extensions, in which the Council rarely finds anything to criticise. Usually the Test Valley planners agree, though they appear determined to turn down one extension which seems to the Council to be a very reasonable rationalisation of the accommodation at Water Cottage. We are justifiably proud of the number of “listed” buildings in the village, but listing can sometimes impose frustrating limitations on what owners can do to their own houses.

Engineers working for Network Rail are going to spend several months tinkering with the viaduct across Cattle Lane, and need to take out a section of hedgerow; in reply to the Council’s expressions of concern, they have promised lovingly to re-instate the hedge and have asked for suggestions as to species of plants to go with hawthorn, blackthorn, holly and field maple. Councillors have asked for spindle trees.

Other Business

Trees. As with our houses, we are not always allowed to do what we like to trees, and few Council meetings pass by without reference to matters arboricultural. To do almost anything to almost any tree of almost any size requires permission, and special protection is applied to those within the Conservation Area and those with Tree Preservation Orders on them. Our Hon Tree Warden, Dr. John Moon, attends many of our meetings, and can be relied upon for expert advice.

Neighbourhood Watch. A major worry for villages has been the theft of lead from church roofs, and lead and copper have been stolen from an outbuilding in Cattle Lane. Someone thought it would be fun to set light to the notices in the Little Ann notice board; someone else got a kick from riding a motor-bike around the Sports Field; a car has been roaring round the circuit at Bulbery. The Council asks all sensible residents not to turn a blind eye if they see anything going on that looks remotely fishy; descriptions and details, for instance, of registration numbers are vital to any investigations. So remember 999 (or the international 112) is there for anything urgent or alarming, and if in *any* doubt you are asked at least to contact Neighbourhood Watch.

Village School. Cllr Stanton reported on the consultation meeting on 10th January, which showed everything going ahead for the new school. The Chairman made the Council’s opinions quite clear on the need for properly thought-out provision for traffic on Red Rice Road.

Litter. Christmas seems to have generated more than the usual amount of litter all over the place. It would be nice not to have to keep on thinking of new ways to describe Councillors’ expressions of dismay, despair and disgust in the Minutes.

Minutes.

If you really, really want to see the official record of these and other matters discussed, the Minutes are available in the Village Shop, on the Website, or from the Clerk.

Adrian Stokes, Clerk