

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SHEPTON MONTAGUE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON  
MONDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2021 AT 7.30pm in the VILLAGE HALL**

*Draft minutes for approval at the next meeting*

**Present:** Paul Williams (Chair), Julia Hunter (JH), Oliver Dowding (OD), John Sykes (JS), Margaret Bowden (Clerk), Robin Bastable (District Councillor), Anna Groskop (County Councillor).

Also present were Paul Rawson (PR)(Emily Estates), and 2 members of the Parish (Applicants re agenda item 5).

1. **Apologies for absence:** were received from P.C.S.O. Tim Russell.
2. **Declarations of Interest:** None
3. **Approve the minutes of the last meeting:** The minutes of the last Parish Council meeting held on 29.6.2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
4. **Matters Arising:**
  - **Horns Lane:** is still in a very poor state. Clerk to follow up with Highways.
  - **Cheque signatories:** This issue has been resolved and PW and OD are now signatories on the Parish Council bank account. A compensation payment had been received from Lloyds Bank for their incompetence and the clerk's expenses had been met.
  - **Village fete:** Once again this had proved a huge success. PW expressed thanks on behalf of Council to all those involved, with special thanks to JS who had done a terrific job of organising it.
  - **Pothole:** JS reported there is still a large pothole at the junction of Cattle Lane with A371, on the left hand splay. Clerk to report to Highways.
5. **Planning Application: 21/03132/FUL Knowle Rock, Stoney Stoke. Change of use of redundant farm building to create a single domestic dwelling.**  
Council resolved to support this application and to return the following comment to Planning:-

*Shepton Montague Parish Council supports this application assuming it respects the listed status of the building and subject to the condition that the development remains ancillary to the main dwelling.*
6. **Fingerpost Restoration Project:** PW reported that the restoration of all thirteen fingerposts in the Parish which was begun in 2018, has now been completed. Many thanks go to all those involved in the hard work. Thanks were also expressed for the grant from SSDC and parishioner donations towards the cost of the project, most recently a generous donation from Siobhan and Neil Micklethwaite. (Further information about the Fingerpost Project has recently been posted on the village website.)  
It was noted that one fingerpost which has been hit by a vehicle, is currently pointing the wrong way. PW offered to sort this out.
7. **Parish Footpaths:** OD gave a report on the Parish footpaths and the work he has done so far:-

## Parish Footpaths

### Report about the paths

Over the past year they have received scant attention.

In 2020, I managed to devote more time (thanks in part to Lockdown 1 and favourable weather) and cleared back many stiles in and around Shepton Montague – but not all. They were all on land which I farm but most of which I don't own.

In 2021 my time has been gobbled up by work and more. Time for footpaths just hasn't been available. Winter 2021/2 may offer some more time.

There have been offers of help from a couple of people, which would still be there when ready to call on them. More volunteers are always welcome. To ensure we have a better maintained network for the years ahead we need volunteers to assist, particularly from the people who enjoy using the footpath network.

The footpaths team at S.C.C., after I asked about availability, delivered 2 footpath gates which need installing. These are the same as the one at the bottom of the village opposite The Forge. Locations need consideration, but preference is for the openings onto the road at the foot of Press Hill, and opposite Southdown Cottage. The latter also needs a series of steps cutting into the bank. Neither installation is a quick operation! It is unlikely they will be able to offer more such gates.

To tackle all the paths needs a lot of time to bring them up to standard, and a reasonable amount to maintain them annually. It will also need quite a lot of (top quality) timber to repair some of the stiles. There is one opposite Manor Farm where someone repaired it (mostly replaced) although I don't know who. This is the standard we need to achieve, although the timber they used wasn't particularly special. As we all know, the cost of timber has approximately doubled over the past 18 months and is thus a major expenditure for all repairs/replacement.

### Landowner obligations

It is a big obligation to expect the landowners to undertake all the work involved. Some are more willing than others. All need to be involved in a conversation about what they can assist with.

Generally the farmer of the land, be they landowner or tenant, is responsible for maintaining the surface in a "walkable" condition, notwithstanding the impact of the weather which is outside everyone's control. Stiles and access points are referred to as "the responsibility of the landowner".

A footpath is defined as being 1.5 metres wide. They have defined routes which are waymarked by signs.

### Dogs and access

I propose putting up signs this winter to

- a) To waymark all routes.
- b) Put up notices to advise of the risks from neospora infecting livestock, and which is often spread through dog faeces.
- c) Advise where there is not a footpath. There are several routes which people have been using over the past few years which are not footpaths. People will see signs at the points where they have habitually been accessing them to advise of the correct routes.
- d) That people's dogs should be kept under "close control" at all times. Sadly I have heard too often of people walking the paths, often involving children, being alarmed when (usually bigger) dogs race up to them. These dogs may be deemed "safe", or maybe just "friendly", by those walking them, but the child or adult who sees the dog racing toward them, maybe with the person in charge of the dog calling out, doesn't know this, and there can, at the least, long-lasting trauma.

Oliver Dowding, Footpaths Co-ordinator

OD will seek advice and information from a contact in North Cadbury who has been instrumental in bringing their local footpaths up to standard.

It was agreed that a working party would be needed to take the project forward. Anna Groskop suggested a costed programme be drawn up as there is funding available whereby half the costs can be met if the Parish Council fund the other half.

A discussion followed regarding dogs and the risks from neospora infecting livestock, which can be spread through dog faeces. Signs warning dog owners to keep their pets under control may be available from NFU or P.C.S.O. Tim Russell. Clerk to establish where these can be obtained. OD said he also had some waymarker arrows.

OD also reported a recent dog attack on a runner in Shepton Montague. The person was attacked by a lurcher and had sustained nasty bite wounds. Clerk to make sure P.C.S.O. Tim Russell is aware.

- 8 **Queen's Platinum Jubilee:** Information concerning the national response to the Jubilee had already been circulated. The clerk advised that the Parochial Church Council had already had an informal meeting where it had been suggested that a village hog roast or similar would be a good idea on the Sunday lunchtime, 5<sup>th</sup> June with a beacon or bonfire in the evening of Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> June, perhaps on Press Hill, which could be reached via footpath WN24/1. It had also been suggested that we apply to close the road outside the pub for a street party/Jubilee lunch. It was agreed the celebrations should be a village collaboration. Action: Clerk to convey the support of the Council to the PCC.

**Queen's Green Canopy:** Free trees are available from the Woodland Trust for planting to mark the Jubilee. Clerk to send this information to be posted on village website.

OD pointed out the need to look after any trees planted, however there is no public open space in the parish except the village hall garden. The clerk mentioned that the Village Hall Committee had recently begun the process of 'reclaiming' the garden from its overgrown state so it could be used by the community. Council had received a Community Infrastructure Levy payment of £1356 in January 2020 (related to a development at Welham Farm), which had to spent on a community project within five years or else would be reclaimed. Members agreed the Village Hall Garden project would meet the criteria and could perhaps be tied in with the Jubilee. Clerk to raise with Village Hall Committee to come back to Council with further details. RB advised that wild flower seeds were also available and information is on SSDC website.

## 9 Correspondence:

- **Area East thermal imaging trial:** Members felt this could be usefully deployed in the village. Clerk to respond to SSDC expressing interest.
- **Opening up Safely and Reconnecting Communities Fund** – the bid for a grant to buy a projector for the village hall had been successful. Clerk to send a £608 cheque to the Village Hall Committee.

## 10 Aob: Paul Rawson (PR) was thanked for attending the meeting and gave an update on developments at The Newt and Emily Estates:

- The recent Fire Night, with 1300 guests (friends, neighbours, employees etc.) had been a big success. Christmas will be low key.
- The Newt will be opening from 9am to 4.30pm throughout the winter.
- A New Year's event is planned but this will not involve fireworks.
- A programme of events for 2022 can be found on the website.
- Planning permission for Vernigore cottage had been granted and work was now underway.
- The expansion of The Newt carpark was now completed.
- The application for a buggy shelter had been approved.

- Planning applications were pending for Yarlinton Lodge (holiday accommodation).
- Application for an extension to Avalon Farm buildings had been approved.
- Planning applications had been submitted for Manor Farm, Castle Cary to replace the existing farmyard dairy buildings with modern livestock facilities, and a linked application for an overbridge between Avalon Farm and Manor Farm. This is proposed at the highest point of Galhampton hill, near Marlpitt Copse. A steel structure is planned with landscaping to soften the visual impact.
- Plans have been submitted re: Avalon Farm, for change of use of buildings to food production, retail and restaurant and home delivery sales.

PR was asked about the developments at Castle Cary station. He advised that the former milk factory, now The Creamery, is currently being renovated and will be used for cheese-making, café/garden, communal work space for rental. This will be opening early next year. They are working closely with GWR to get a lift at the station and are funding a ramp from the lower carpark. This will become the Gateway to The Newt in Somerset.

PR was asked about the plans for Lily Farm and said there were none.

PR was asked about the Roman Villa. He advised the buildings were complete but the museum is still being curated. It is to open at Easter. He confirmed that access would still be from the main Newt entrance carpark and there is no intention to bring private cars along Cattle Hill. He said the opening of the Roman Villa would not bring about an increase in entrance fee.

**Noticeboard in village:** This is in a very poor state. John Hill to be asked to carry out emergency repairs e.g new perspex.

## 11 Open discussion

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.55pm.

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_