

Grafton Parish Council Annual Chairman's Report 2021-22:

New councillors and their roles

In May 2021 new councillors joined the team. Mr Richard Pash from Martin, Mr Edward Nelson from Wexcombe and Mr Rupert Bentley from Wilton. The Parish Council team continues to work hard and thanks are due to the entire team for all their efforts over the year.

Setting up Neighbourhood Planning Group

Grafton parish council decided to pursue Neighbourhood Planning (NP). Grafton Parish Neighbourhood Plan will give us opportunity to be in charge of the future development planning in our parish. The subcommittee is set up with Mr Pash as a chair, Mr Nelson as a Vice-Chair and with standing members, Mr Hatherell, Mr Hosier and Ms Vonsova(Clerk). Mrs Pellegram agreed to act as a consultant in the process of creating NP. The Vision meeting on 25 April took place headed by Mrs Andrea Pellegram. Over 40 local residents attended the meeting which was followed by further requests from members of the parish to join the NP Committee .

Web-site enhancements

The Parish Council also decided to refresh the website and Mr Pash undertook this task. We hope by giving it a facelift it will attract a wider public and younger audience .

Setting up a community calendar

One of the responsibilities of Mr Nelson is keeping us updated with upcoming events in this and surrounding parishes by setting a community calendar.

2022 June -plans for community event

Preparation for the Queens Platinum Jubilee Event on 5 June are firmly in place thanks to Mrs Witcher and Mr Burke, the main organisers. With an exciting program ranging from a Parish Quiz to test your knowledge of this parish, a picnic lunch on the Green to fancy dress photos with the Queen, there will be a lot to do! The Jubilee Beacon will be lit on 2 June at 9:45 on Wexcombe Down. We are proud of this small parish taking the part in this Nation and Commonwealth event and I would like to thank you to Mr Hosier for his contribution to this event.

Traffic Safety

Mr Andrew Paine, and Mrs Sarah Webb who kindly took over the SpeedWatch group in middle of 2019 are no longer able to carry on beyond July 2022. I would like to personally thank them for all the efforts in the challenging times. Maintaining a SpeedWatch group in the middle of the pandemic, topped up with our busy lives, was not easy.

Data from SID East Grafton shows clearly the level of speeding through East Grafton. 85% passing traffic is travelling over 37 mph, 20% over 35mph. The highest speed was recorded at 65mph. Speeding is an ongoing problem and we doing everything what we can to lessen this. The Parish Council has requested police involvement in the SpeedWatch. Police carried out their own speed watch from the village green but the police car was clearly visible sothey recorded very low speeds.

For speed watch to succeed we will need more volunteers to step up, get trained and use the equipment we share with Easton Royal. If you think that you can contribute please volunteer. The training is done online in the comfort of your home.

The state of the roads is beyond our control. This issue is common throughout Wiltshire as Mr Wheeler's report indicates. Public should log any complaints regarding potholes on www.wiltshire.gov.uk/mywilts-online-reporting. We believe that group pressure is essential to create a response from the Wiltshire County Council to repair the roads.

Defibrillators

All defibrillators in this parish have been registered on the The National Defibrillator Network which connects to the NHS ambulance service.

Playing Fields

The ash trees which are deem to be a high risk to the public are in process of being removed. The skate ramp has been repaired. With a regular grass cutting and sporting facilities the Playing Field is ready to be used for wider public.

Christmas – Father Christmas and carols by the candle light

Carols by the Candle Light, organised by Mrs Witcher, was a great success. The event was well attended and we got lots of positive responses. The traditional Father Christmas round is provided all the traditional excitement on Christmas Eve – thank you Father Christmas and your trusty elf for entertaining the children.

Wiltshire Council 2022

Report from Cllr. Stuart Wheeler

This is my short report on specific issues affecting residents of Grafton Parish Council dealt with by Wiltshire Council.

I am expecting, and will press for, the full formal report on all Wiltshire Council activities and when I receive this will pass it to the parish Clerk to be circulated to all those interested. The following comments represent my personal opinion on these issues.

Planning. In my view we still have a way to go to ensure that the planning process better reflects the needs and wishes of local residents. In my view planning decisions can be overly prescriptive and more flexibility needs to be shown. In particular we have difficulties with reasonable proposals affecting listed buildings and reluctance to be flexible with development within small villages.

As you may know Wiltshire Council is preparing a new Local plan for adoption and I hope this will allow us to deal better with some of the issues I raise above.

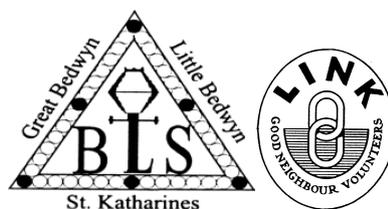
Road. I am well aware that our record on road maintenance is subject to criticism. In my view the highways department are doing their best with a limited budget. We have a new highways engineer responsible for our area who will I think make a real difference. Please carry on keeping me informed, especially where items that have been reported to and logged by the Council do not seem to be being dealt with.

This will be the second summer where the new procedure on restricting the number of cuts on verges will be used. This procedure is used by some of our neighbouring authorities, in particular Dorset and West Berkshire and is intended to eventually increase the variety of species growing on the road margins. My personal experience based on the minor rural route where I live is that it also has a very beneficial effect of reducing traffic speeds.

Covid and Ukraine. In my view the Council has done a very good job in dealing with the Covid emergency over the last year. The effort must now be to ensure that face to face working and easy access to Council staff is restored.

The Council is now heavily involved in helping with the accommodation of Ukrainian refugees including the provision of education resources, benefits and in general assisting all those individuals who have volunteered to help. The Council itself has no direct responsibility for the rehousing of refugees.

On a personal note I would like to thank you for welcoming me to your parish council meetings over the year. I have to apologise if I have not been able to attend on occasions but, as you may be aware, I was very pleased to be appointed Chairman of the Council for the year 2021/22 and hope to continue in office until 2023. This has meant that I have sometimes not been as available for meetings as I would normally expect.



THE BEDWYNS' LINK Registered Charity 1052579

Summary for year ending Dec 2021

Bedwyns Link is a very important service for our local community and relies entirely on local support and 44 volunteers. In 2021 it provided transport for people without cars or who cannot drive, mobility and friendship activities for people over 70 and a temporary food bank. It is one of 42 link schemes in Wiltshire where in 2021 volunteers contributed over £1,011,000 and 81,000 hours to patient transport and neighbourhood support.

In 2021, Bedwyns' Link scheme:

- Was less busy than in normal non-pandemic years and providing between 10-15 trips month (this is now increasing to the usual 50 trips/month).
- Had 200+ clients from the Bedwyns, St Katharines, the Graftons and Marten, Wexcombe and Wilton. Also people from Vernham Dean and Shalbourne who are registered with the GP practice in Great Bedwyn.
- Involved 44 volunteers (including 8 telephone coordinators) who helped clients with 252 different trips which covered 5,837 miles. (average 23 miles/trip). This was 4% of the total Link miles for Wiltshire - a higher than average mileage as we are a very rural area.
- Bedwyns Link volunteers contributed the equivalent of £18,400 and 1470 hrs to the Wiltshire economy by providing patient transport and other support.

In addition, Bedwyn's Link provided a temporary food bank for families in need (Nov 2020 – June 2021). Also when Covid allowed, we restarted Friendship and Mobility providing 2 sessions/week for about 30-35 people between 70-90. Participants found this great fun and very beneficial.

Income and expenditure summary for Bedwyn's Link 1 Jan - 31 Dec 2021

Client and volunteer donations	£2,569.26
Little Bedwyn PC support	£200
Total income	£2,769.26
Total Expenditure	£2,911.48
Balance	-£142.22

Despite the small loss, the charity still ended 2021 in a healthy financial position despite not asking for support from Parish Councils as we had enough money in our reserves. However, we are most grateful to Little Bedwyn PC who still generously gave us £200.

During 2021, our new Treasurer restarted a monthly drop-in so volunteers can bring donations, collect expenses and meet others involved in Link. This is usually held in the 3 Tuns, in Great Bedwyn, and is advertised in the Bedwyn Parish News

We are still looking for a Secretary and an Assistant Treasurer – please contact us if you are interested in either of these roles.

The Coronation Hall Annual Report 2022

In the past year the Hall has been able to return to normal operations. Coming out of the Pandemic a couple of classes were lost, but they have been replaced with new hirers and new classes. The Hall has a virtually full weekday programme, and income from hire is also back to its pre-pandemic level.

In terms of expenditure during the past year, all the light fittings in the main hall area as well as the ancillary areas have been converted to take LED lamps. All 21 emergency lights have been replaced again with LED lamps and a regular maintenance check and routine is in place. The air source heat pump was replaced, not without some teething problems which appear to now be corrected. In spite of these significant outlays the Hall reserves are still healthy and are at the same level as they were in April 2019.

No major expenditure is planned for the coming year. Repainting is expected to be the next big item of cost, but it is considered to be in good enough condition for at least another year. Overall, the Hall is equally well placed to deal with any unexpected costs.

In anticipation of a rise in energy costs that will hit the Hall later this year when the current contract expires, a decision was made to modestly increase the fees from September. The viability of using solar energy continues to be discussed.

The Hall committee is keen to play its role in supporting community events. Despite cancelling the last Community Market and Brunch, the Christmas market is very much on the agenda but focussing more on a community get together. Thoughts such as a regular Village Cafe (where we could have games, cards, book swaps) on a Friday or a Community Brunch on Saturday morning are being explored. The committee would like to engage with the Parish Council and consider ideas to promote community cohesion for 2023, e.g. Burns Night, St George's Day and Halloween etc

The Hall is providing input into the Grafton Parish website, so that the hall is well represented, and any revisions meet the needs of the Hall booking processes.

Maria has stepped down as the hall cleaner and has been replaced by James, although Maria continues in her role as caretaker. As a committee we would like to thank them both for continuing to keep the Hall as smart as it does. Thanks also to Fran Barclay for continuing to plant and care for the hall's tubs and baskets.

2021 – 2022 Youth Activities Report The Youth Group is dormant at the moment.

During the 2 years of Pandemic and Lockdown the regular members of the Youth Group have either outgrown it or found different interests to pursue. In addition, the helpers from pre Covid times reluctant to participate to the same level as their families are no longer involved.

On 27 July an invitation was made to young people in the Parish to help determine a way forward for the youth group, sadly the turnout was disappointing, and we didn't make significant progress.

Despite the initial slow start a number of activities still took place in the latter part of 2021.

24 September - Making Paracord Bracelets

25 October – Go Karting at Thruxton

19 November – Devizes Ghost Walk and Fish and Chips.

On **19 December** several young people helped to prepare sausage rolls and mulled wine for the Parish Carols on the Green.

During 2022 the energy has been a bit lacking, hopefully with the start of a new school year in September there will be renewed interest and enthusiasm.

Grafton Community Speedwatch

Yes, I currently help coordinate Grafton Community Speedwatch along with Sarah Webb but please note that we agreed to take this on in mid-2019 on a temporary basis until someone on the Parish Council could take over the role and, while we can still volunteer, we are unable to continue to coordinate the team beyond July.

Herewith our annual report:

- * We currently have 8 trained volunteers in the team, with the most recent joining us last June.
- * We have 3 sites on the A338 approved by Wiltshire Police: the end of Grafton Place at the west end of East Grafton, Granary Close to the east and near the bus stop on the green. Based on continuing evidence of speeding from the SIDs we have focussed on the west end of the village.
- * We share a Speedwatch camera with Easton Royal with access to it two weeks out of four.
- * Over the past 12 months it has proved very challenging to find times when the requisite 2 volunteers can meet to use the camera and we have managed to muster a pair of volunteers on just 3 occasions, observing 568 vehicles and reporting 20 at excessive speed (36 mph or higher) to Wiltshire Police.
- * As mentioned above, Dr Webb and I agreed to temporarily coordinate SpeedWatch activities in 2019 until a member of the Parish Council could take it on but be advised that, while we can still volunteer, we are not able to coordinate the team beyond July due to other commitments.

Dr Andrew Paine

REPORT OF THE GRAFTON AND DISTRICT HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY 2021/2022

We held our first meeting after the end of the Covid restrictions on 21 July 2021 with an evening visit to Peacock Cottage in Canton followed by drinks and canapés in the Coronation Hall. It was great to meet up again since our Christmas party in December 2019.

This garden visit was followed by 2 more afternoon garden visits, 2 evening lectures and our Christmas party. All were a great success in part thanks to the beautiful weather for the garden visits.

We had some problems with our Hall bookings but after many emails and discussions with the Hall Committee I am pleased to say that all our meetings will be held in the Hall which have done for at least 25 years.

We have moved with the times and are now a "card only Payment" club. This was first tried out at our meeting in March when our members renew their membership and all went well. It will save our treasurer hours queuing to deposit cash at the post office!!

I am very pleased to report that so far 7 new members have joined us this year and hope that they will enjoy the 5 garden visits (with pub lunch beforehand!) and the 4 lectures and our Christmas party planned for 2022.

Marijke Craig, Chair