

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - 20th MAY 2024

Good evening, everyone and welcome to the Cheselbourne Annual Parish Meeting.

Please let me welcome our guest speaker this evening, Mr Ian Colley from Wessex Water who will be talking to us about the formation and ecology of chalk streams.

Before we get to Ian's talk, I would like to mention that all parish councillors came up for re-election on 2nd May. In Cheselbourne, we had seven vacancies but only five nominations and so all five nominees were elected unopposed. They are Councillors Nicky Searle, Roger Sewill, Dennis Walsh, Graham Waters and me. I was honoured to be re-elected as chair of the Parish Council in May last year and at the Parish Council's AGM which follows this meeting, a new chair will be elected by councillors.

Former councillors Colin Hampton and Carol Byrom did not seek re-election this year and I would like to acknowledge their hard work and dedication to both the Parish Council and Cheselbourne over many years. I know that I speak for all my colleagues when I say that they will be greatly missed.

Colin and Carol, supported by the playpark steering group, have been active in developing the playpark which now has some wonderful new equipment. I think that special thanks must go to Carol for the fantastic work she has done in obtaining grants from a number of different sources which has enabled the purchase of this equipment.

The Climate Action Group, led by Carol Byrom has continued to be active in the village. The Group has focussed on areas where a small difference can be made, such as

- Encouraging households to increase habitats for pollinators in gardens, on roadside verges and in the churchyard.
- Seeking tree and hedge planting opportunities
- Encouraging people to reduce waste and recycle such as placing recycle bins at the village hall for soft plastic, tetra packs and tin foil.

Cllr Nicky Searle, together with a dedicated group of volunteers, have arranged regular litter picks both within the village and along the roads leading into it from as far as the junction with the B3142 near the Northbrook roundabout. The Parish Council is grateful to everyone who gives up their valuable time to help keep the village and its environs as neat and tidy as possible.

Cllr Searle has also organised regular community speed watch sessions at various locations throughout the village. Again, she is supported by a dedicated group of volunteers who have all received training in the use of the speed watch equipment by Dorset Police. It is encouraging to note that the overwhelming majority of vehicles have been recorded as travelling within the 30mph speed limit.

Many people will be aware that a village-wide survey was undertaken at the end 2022 regarding the introduction of a 20mph limit through the village. Of those who responded, the overwhelming majority was in favour of reducing the speed limit to 20 mph. Following this, an application for the speed limit reduction was made by the Parish Council to Dorset Council early in 2023. We understand that the application is making its way slowly through the relevant Council departments and we anticipate that a final decision will be made before the end of the year.

The Parish Council has continued to raise the issue of the non-existent footpath which is supposed to have been built by the developer of Brook Green between the village hall and the existing footpath at the top of the site. The purpose of this footpath is to provide pedestrian access, especially for school children, from the centre of the village to the playpark. We understand that this matter is now with Dorset Council's legal advisers.

Fortunately, with the exception of the village hall field, there has been no real flooding in the village during this year although once again, was some road flooding at Chebbard. Cllr Graham Waters, as flood warden, has arranged meetings with the Parish Council and the Environment Agency and Dorset Council's flood management team to seek their expertise in managing flood risk.

The advice from both the EA and Dorset Council was that the stream will find its own course and this may mean that the field floods during spells of wet weather. This may help protect properties downstream. This issue will be kept under review by the Parish Council .

I would remind everyone that sandbags are available for householders' use from the store Mayden Revel. The Community Emergency Response Plan was last updated in December 2023 and a copy of this can be found on the Parish Council's website.

Finally but not least some thank yous (in no particular order) on behalf of the Parish Council and all Cheselbourne residents:

- The Roberts and Bere families for organising the putting up and decorating of the Christmas tree outside the school which is admired by everyone;
- Everyone who maintains the flower boxes at the entrances to the village and near the school;
- Sara Timlin for all her work in maintaining the defibrillator by the front door of the village hall;
- Sue Widdowson for her hard work over many many years in ensuring that the village news was published each month and now to Stephanie Worth who has taken over from Sue. Also, thanks to everyone who distributes it.
- Bev Waters and the village hall committee for ensuring that the hall remains at the centre of village life;

If I have missed anyone whom I should have thanked, please accept my apologies for not having done so.

Finally, if you have any concerns or ideas you wish to raise with the Parish Council, please contact the clerk, Amanda Crocker or any of the councillors directly. Alternatively, please do come to one of the bi-monthly meetings which always begin with an open forum. Contact details are on the Parish Council's website.