

Four Issues For Stinsford

1. Traffic

Apart from the A35 blustering through the parish, our roads are charming, narrow, winding, rural lanes.

Our concern (and DCC's), as the lanes are increasingly used as 'rat runs', is to keep traffic moving and people safe. The issues are road surfaces, speed, volume of traffic, signage, detour routes and road side parking. We are talking to DCC about accidents and speed limits on the road from the Stinsford roundabout to Bockhampton Cross. We think that because there is a college and a school as well as people, traffic and businesses, it is time to reduce the 60 mph limit. We are also talking with DCC about the traffic and road surface issues associated with the Hardy's Cottage visitor centre and the continuing implementation of the traffic management plan.

2. Housing

We are keen to do something about the housing crisis, particularly the shortage of affordable homes; we are keen to support the emerging Dorset Local Plan and are determined always to support progress and improvement. On the other hand we believe that house building should be sustainable, high quality, affordable by local people and that its impact on homes and heritage be positive.

This year we have supported numbers of plans to improve people's homes and businesses and have voted against the proposed (later withdrawn) plan to build some 70 houses in Lower Bockhampton.

3. Climate Change

We want to do our bit towards reducing CO² emissions as much as we want to protect the visual environment. So far South, we are in one of the sunnier parts of the country; so near the sea, one of the windier; suitable both for wind farms and solar farms. But we are in an area of great natural beauty; an area of intense historical and cultural importance and have to consider carefully before changing the landscape.

In the last year we supported an application for a solar farm at Higher Kingston Farm (subsequently rejected by WDDC) and recommended rejecting an application for a wind farm next to Slyer's Lane (which WDDC has yet to decide.) Our reason for supporting the one and rejecting the other was that solar panels are visually less intrusive than wind turbines.

4. Heritage

The world has changed since Hardy's time: what now are tall firs and beeches were then unplanted; what now are roads were then but narrow paths shut in by ferns; garden plots and orchards were then uncultivated slopes o'ergrown with brambles. Yet much remains: beech trees, in copses, clumps and single spies, oaks, such flowers as flourish best untrained, open fields, distant hills; the footpath from Hardy's birthplace to Stinsford Church; the Roman Road, Kingston Maurward houses and gardens, the views from Rainbarrow.

The question for the parish council is what we can do to protect our heritage, while engaging visitors and encouraging readers. What can we do to support those who would inspire, educate and tell stories and how best can we work with the other curators of the legacy.