

Cllr's Christopher's E-mailed Report – 25 January 2022

We meet as Covid restrictions are being further lifted again.

I thought I would start this report by noting that I attended this afternoon (Saturday), the funeral service for Francis Patrick Weeks known to many as Paddy.

Paddy was an ex Royal Marine who I knew well for some 40 years and would, amongst other things dish out much humour and advice while drinking and reading his newspaper at the Clock. Paddy would join in on a quiz and when really pushed support the Castle Ruins skittles team , whose home alley was at the old Castle Pub . Paddy lived just outside of the Chideock Parish council boundary but was known by many throughout West Dorset. What was unusual about the service, aside from the detailed arrangements that Paddy had set out including the Royal Marines providing music inside the Church at Whitchurch, was that it was also effectively a memorial service for Paddy's wife Pat who died in April 2020. Pat had been cremated at the height of the lockdown without such mourners present, due to the tightest of restrictions on public gatherings. We must remember those who have endured the most draconian of restrictions at the darkest of times.

I received a communication from Ben Hampson of National Highways

It reads as follows:

“Hello Simon,

I have asked our team to prepare a meeting with the parish council in February, I expect an invitation to be sent out in the next week with some available dates.

We will look to discuss the severance issues and the air quality issues as well as an update on our safety scheme.”

Kind Regards,

Ben Hampson

Route Manager

South West Operations

I have received confirmation that after a period of some pressing on my part , Mr Graham Duggan Dorset Council Head of Community and Public Protection will be meeting with you as parish Councillors early next month.

Dorset Council issued a draft Air Quality Action Plan, I understand your concern and I imagine this is your unanimous concern, it fails to address the Chideock specific pollution problems. Clearly where the Marshwood Vale Ward contains some 25 villages or so, pollution is worse and concern is greater than elsewhere in the ward. That may be a reasonable statement, except we do not know how far A35 pollution travels . Clearly Chideock is a special case and therefore requires special measures and why I have been so committed in my desire for you to meet with Mr Duggan Face to face . I have of course attempted to see that more senior politicians and high-ranking Dorset Council officers meet with you face to face to discuss amongst other things A35, access to Seatown , Hell Lane, other UCR s Cycle paths etc..

Our present Prime Minister is said to be a fan of the words of Churchill who died 57 years ago this week on.24 January 1965 . Perhaps I would do very well to remember some of the words of Churchill i.e. "never flinch, never weary never despair", in my attempt to get those with greater influence to meet with you.

To perhaps reiterate from previous, I am aware that the current Parish Council, and past Councils, have for many years asked for an updated Air Quality Action Plan to address the very serious issues arising from the high levels of pollution in this specific village. I appreciate your frustration and your comment that the plan appears to not be Chideock specific and instead reads as a 45-page policy statement addressing the issue of pollution across the whole of Dorset. I appreciate what is described as injustice, where you see the document claims that funding will be available for several transport improvements of benefit to Chideock. and your argument that it is disingenuous given the evidence is that all funding to date has been for the East. It could be argued actually for the North and the East parts of Dorset.

I will discuss this further at the meeting and indeed the e mail from Chris Loder MP to Chideock Parish Council on 6 January 2022.

I look forward to discussing matters relating to second homes/ holiday let's following your recent request for information from Dorset Council Revenues Service and would welcome the opportunity to speak about this in some detail.

Now for some other points.

BUSES

Work on the Enhanced Partnership is continuing though there is no definite date by which the Department for Transport will respond to the request for £92million of funding both capital and revenue within the submitted BSIP .

The Enhanced Partnership Plan high level vision will have objectives which is expected to closely follow the Bus Service Improvement Plan. It is expected that the Enhanced Partnership scheme will set out the precise details of how the Bus Service Improvement Plan vision and objectives will be achieved . These details will include any commitment made by the Local Transport Authority and standards to be met by bus operators.

The legal framework mentioned in (2) above will include governance and user representation. While Town and Parish councils were invited to stakeholder meetings taking place last week I will be pleased to discuss this further.

RIVERS

Neighbouring Char Valley Parish Council commissioned Dorset AONB and Dorset Wildlife Trust to prepare an initial report on the State of the River Char and Monkton Wyld Stream. The Community project has stated aims to clean, revive, and restore the River Char .

I am pleased to say that following the report being published I along with many Char Valley Parish Councillors and members of the public attended the launch of the River Char Community Project on Saturday 11th December with a short talk about the report and the setting out of plans for working parties and other actions in 2022. This was followed by an informal riverside walk commencing from Becklands Organic Farm. Speakers included :

Ian Rees, Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Dorset AONB)

Nick Gray, Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT)

This week there was a virtual meeting convened by Char Valley Parish Council for the provision of further information by the above and to allow further question and answers in relation to how the health of the River Char could be improved.

FARMING

There is a concern that tenant farmers should not be excluded from receiving agri-environmental subsidies.

I will elaborate further , there is a concern that safeguards that exist for those who rent under the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986 should extend to Farm Business Tenancies, such that tenants will not be prevented by landlords from accessing the schemes .

I will detail the concern .There are three proposed ELM (Environmental Land Management) schemes and in respect of the first 2 of them there are uncertainties as to the extent to which tenant farmers will benefit. The reasons for the uncertainties with respect to the first 2 schemes involve :

- 1) The Local Nature Recovery Scheme, which will not be widely available until 2024, that amongst other things, encourages farmers to create new habitats and plant trees
- 2) The Landscape Recovery Scheme which seeks a more dramatic approach assisting farmers and land owners who manage 500 to 5000 hectares (and note hectares not acres) and so only benefiting larger agricultural concerns
- 3) The sustainable Farming Incentive which will fund sustainable farming practices and should be widely available

You may wish to contact your Member of Parliament to address any particular concern you may have for the future of the countryside and indeed family farms. There are a great many who are uncertain about the future prospects for farming and would welcome clarification of eligibility, rules, and payment rates for schemes 1 and 2 above .

Best regards

Simon

Councillor Simon Christopher

Dorset Councillor Simon Christopher

07798833715