

COSSINGTON PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER No 14

January 2015

Members of the Parish Council

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Welcome to our 14th biannual newsletter – and a Happy New Year to all. The Parish Council forms an important part of Local Government comprising elected residents who carry out their responsibilities on a voluntary basis for the good of the community. We meet in the Village Hall - usually at 7:30 p.m. - on the second Monday of each month apart from January and August. The public are welcome to attend meetings where there is an opportunity to ask questions or raise issues at the designated open session. We pride ourselves on keeping the meetings open and inclusive for all attendees whilst maintaining our formal regulatory responsibilities.

We are pleased to announce that, after a review of our budgets for next year (2015/16), we have managed to keep the precept (the amount residents pay to the Parish Council as part of Council tax) the same as this year.

We're careful with how we spend Parish money so we try and keep this newsletter down to two sides. Much more information including full details of meeting times, agendas and minutes can be found on the parish notice board in Middle Road, opposite the School and on the Parish Council's web-site at

www.cossingtonparishcouncil.org.uk

Remembering the "Big Tree" - Update

In the last newsletter we mentioned our plans for a local lias stone monument at the site of the "Big Tree". We were hoping the monument would be in place by now but there have been considerable difficulties in sourcing a suitably sized stone. Rather than compromise on the size of the monument we have widened our searches to include suitable similar alternative types of stone such as blue/grey Portland (as used on some village buildings) or Pennant in addition to blue lias.

The white Portland stone plaque for the monument has already been carved in readiness with an impressive Elm tree relief by local stone artist, Nigel Alway (see photo, right). The size and shape of the plaque and monument do not allow a full pictorial representation of the old Big Tree at its peak – but provides the desired symbolic impression of vitality. We hope to have more news very soon. As previously mentioned, the costs for all the above are being met by a local resident.



Playing Field News

Since the last update the new Playing Field Committee has agreed on a medium / long – term vision for the field's development along with some particular short term goals. As a result, grant funding has been secured for a new quarter-pipe ramp to complement existing installed skateboard equipment. Various options are also being explored to fund one or two freestanding basketball hoops for the hard standing ("tennis court") area to the west of the car park.

In the meantime, issues with occasional fly-tipping, vandalism and general maintenance are being closely monitored and managed.

Finally, at the recent Playing Field Association AGM and annual awards, our field was awarded a "Highly Commended" certificate, in recognition of the quality and range of facilities available. This is something we are very proud of and are looking to build upon going forward. The award is confirmation that our field ranks amongst the very best in the county.

If you think you could help in shaping the field's future then we'd like to hear from you.

Cossington in Bloom 2014

For the first time the Parish Council's Cossington in Bloom Awards were presented at the end of the Annual Flower Show in the Village Hall on Saturday 9th August.

As usual there were four categories for the garden competitions namely Best Kept Garden (Winner: Mr. & Mrs. Kemmish, Middle Road), Most Colourful Garden (Winner: Mr. & Mrs. Beer, Park Crescent), Best Hanging Basket (Winner: Polden Hills Vets, Brent Road) and Best Small Garden (Winner: Mr. R Twose and Miss T. Mackey, Barley Close). Each garden visible from the public highway is automatically entered and judges from another village or town tour the village and make their decisions during early July. Fifteen different skilled and enthusiastic gardeners received recognition for some wonderful floral displays around the village, the standard of which seems to get better year on year

The Parish Council also sponsored a competition for Cossington School pupils. Eighteen children received awards for their decorative felt cupcakes Georgia McKenna (Class 3) was the overall winner of the Cudlipp Memorial Shield with Anthony Vessier (Class 1) and Kate Bell (Class 2) being the other main prize winners.

Full results can be found on the News section of the Parish Council website. For Cossington in Bloom 2015 the award categories are being reviewed – with the possibility of a village scarecrow competition being considered to replace the school prizes.

Cossington Primary School

School closure was finally confirmed on 21st December by the Lead Member for the government's Department for Children and Families, following the County's consultation process.

We have been informed that the ownership of the building and related equipment has now been transferred to the Somerset County Education Department. A full inventory will be carried out before offering the equipment to other primary schools in the area – a process which is likely to take some time.

A "guardian" will live in at the school whilst the building and site's future is being discussed. This is a commonly used practice in both private and public sectors to avoid excessive insurance charges for empty buildings. No decision has yet been made on future use but it is understood that other parts of the Education Service will be offered first refusal, followed by other County Services, before disposal is considered.

In the meantime, the possibility of putting historic school documents on display at the Village Hall before they are archived is also being explored with the help of Catcott School.

Community Energy Generation

The team has completed a thorough assessment of community energy possibilities in the Parish along with their respective viability potential. Both a medium-sized solar farm and two different wind options were examined.

Certain types of scheme looked very promising through utilising a cooperative - type business model. In such scheme, electricity generated would be sold – with profits providing for a community fund and returns to scheme investors (with local investment priority). However, discussions with Western Power Distribution revealed that electricity grid capacity is likely to be an issue in the area – at least for the next few years whilst network upgrades are taking place.

The project has therefore been put on hold for the time being. However, a lot has been learnt and we will be in a much better position as and when the grid connection situation changes. In the meantime, anyone interested in finding out more can view the team's reports on the Parish Council website.

We are aware of a recent proposal for a single medium-sized wind turbine near Gold Corner for which the company Earth Green are conducting the required pre-application consultation (details at: www.engage.gb.net). For the avoidance of confusion this is a private initiative and not related to any of the above work.

In Short

- **Cossington Flood Group** – Wessex Water successfully completed the re-siting of its mains water pipe from the culvert running under Middle Road – thereby removing one of the biggest village flood risks. Major clearance and de-silting works have also been completed along the open 150m watercourse between Middle Road and Locks Way. Works have been funded either by Wessex Water or through the County Council's Flood Mitigation Fund.
- **Superfast Broadband** – is now available in Cossington. Your broadband band contract and perhaps your router will need to be updated if you want to take advantage of the significant speed increase now available.
- **Trees** – the two Chestnut trees in the school grounds are now subject to a Tree Preservation Order. Sedgemoor District Council has agreed to plant a replacement Maple Tree in Maple Tree Court. Wessex Water has also offered a Winter Flowering Cherry to be planted near to where the diseased Beech was removed prior to the flood mitigation work.