

Arreton Parish Council Newsletter

December 2020

The Parish Council has held the last meeting of 2020 and, being in tier 1, we were able to hold a hybrid meeting at Haseley Manor Barn and test out our new gadget – the conference speakerphone. Inevitably there were one or two initial problems but once those of us in the room figured out that you have to both look straight at it and speak loudly, it seemed to work reasonably well. Certainly those in the room could hear remote voices and I believe that those on the end of a computer could hear those in the room – eventually (see above). Normally, being December, we would have gone mad with a mince pie or two but sadly those were off-limits this year. Probably just as well, as we might have been rather muffled with a mouthful of pastry (see above again).

Environment

The members Parish Council are looking to do their bit towards being environmentally friendly and the proposed tree project was discussed in more detail, although not enough to announce any particular schemes yet. However, it is intended to put a sum of money in the next budget to cover any possible costs, although it should be possible to obtain trees for free. One major concern is that any trees planted anywhere other than on private land will need some maintenance initially, especially watering. This is something that will be at the forefront of any planning.

There are few trees in Gore Cemetery and the cherry trees in the Churchyard, whilst still fit and healthy at present, will come to the end of their useful lives at some point. It is intended to do some planting in both areas sooner rather than later.

Whilst on the **environment**:-

Bird Aware Solent - Looking out for Coastal Wildlife

Bird Aware Solent is a local initiative that raises awareness of the migratory birds that return to the Solent every winter. It is a partnership made up of Natural England, the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Chichester Harbour Conservancy and fifteen local councils.

The Solent coast is of worldwide importance for its birdlife, welcoming up to 125,000 ducks, geese and wading birds each winter. Many of these birds have travelled long distances (sometimes thousands of miles!) from the arctic and they need to feed and rest undisturbed so that they can survive the winter. It is crucial they build up enough energy to complete their migrations in the spring back to their summer habitats and breeding grounds.

Our coastline is also very busy with people, development and recreation which is putting pressure on wildlife and the environment. Birds perceive us (and our canine friends!) as a potential threat; if we get too close, sensing danger, they will change their behaviour. Birds that are disturbed from their natural activities lose valuable feeding and resting time, and will waste precious energy walking, swimming or flying away. If this happens regularly, for example over the course of the winter, the impact on these migratory species can be significant.

Anyone who visits the coast can cause disturbance to wildlife, but this also means that anyone can help to reduce it – and that is where we come in. I am one in a team of rangers who cover around 250km of coastline which includes three SPAs (Special Protection Areas). Working across the northern shore of the Isle of Wight and the south coast of Hampshire together with Chichester Harbour, we engage with visitors and communities around the coast to help them understand the importance of the different bird species and the impact of disturbance.

Each of the rangers have their own patches that they cover and focus on, and for me it is here on the Isle of Wight. I grew up on the island, so it is wonderful working on a coastline I am so familiar with and passionate about.



During the winter season we undertake site visits which involve regular patrols, monitoring work, surveys, telescope sessions and pop-up events out on the coast. We also lead guided walks, training classes and give presentations to local groups within the community. Being able to engage with visitors to the coast, share our knowledge and show them their local wildlife is incredibly rewarding. Raising awareness of the birds, the environment and the impact of disturbance is very important to help protect these species.

We are also involved in the planning and implementation of physical changes to improve sites together with designing interpretation and outreach material such as resources for schools. Each year we also run the 'Great Solent Birdwatch', a new citizen science project helping to encourage responsible birdwatching and use of the coast.

During the summer months we spend our time reviewing and analysing the work and data collected throughout the winter. This is then used to help plan the next season and evaluate the effectiveness of the project overall. Running and attending events is another part of our work over the summer season, which gives us opportunities to engage with local communities further. This year sadly has been a little different due to the Coronavirus pandemic. We haven't been able to run our events, but we have reached out to communities in a virtual way through increased online engagement.

As a long-term behaviour change project, we aim to raise awareness of the birds and their environment, whilst helping to reduce the impact of disturbance and add to the enjoyment of people visiting the coast.

If you see one of the Rangers out on the coast, please come and say a (socially distanced) hello! We are always happy to have a chat, share the amazing wildlife we have here around the Solent and help you to become more Bird Aware!

Charlotte Goswell – Assistant Ranger

For more information, please visit www.birdaware.org and follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership

The SRMP, which includes the IW Council, exists to protect the coastline of the wider Solent region. The existence of the SRMP means that our coastline can remain evolving and vibrant, benefitting from considered and relevant development whilst also ensuring ecological needs are duly met. The a public-facing brand of the SRMP is Bird Aware – see above.

The aim of the strategy is to prevent any net increase in bird disturbance as a result of additional recreational pressures arising from the approximately 64,000 new dwellings which are planned around the Solent SPAs up to 2034. This will be achieved by:-

- raising awareness and encouraging behavioural change of coastal visitors;
- implementing projects to better manage visitors and provide secure habitats for the birds;
- providing and promoting new/enhanced greenspaces in less sensitive areas as an alternative to visiting the coast.

Public access to the coast provides benefits including health, education, inspiration, spiritual and general well-being. Visitor access is also important in the management of the sites for nature conservation, because people are more likely to want to be involved with and protect local sites if they have close links with them. So, by maintaining public access but with measures to ensure that recreational activity and nature conservation interests are not in conflict, the coast can be managed for the benefit of both wildlife and the public. There is a package of mitigation measures in place, including the rangers mentioned in the article above.

Some of the funding for this project will come from contributions from the developers of the proposed 64,000 new dwellings – known as Habitat Mitigation Contributions. This total cost when divided amongst the number of new dwellings to be mitigated each year (estimated as 3,538) means that an average developer contribution of £564 per dwelling is required (these figures will be increased on 1 April each year in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI) rounded to the nearest whole pound.) In practice this will be charged on a sliding scale based upon bedroom numbers per dwelling.



The new developer contribution rate will apply to all relevant applications and will be required for every net additional dwelling within 5.6 kilometres of the boundaries of the Solent Special Protection Areas, unless the developer can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the local planning authority and Natural England that it will provide alternative 'bespoke mitigation' which will fully mitigate the recreational impact of the development.

For further details see ; - [https://solent.birdaware.org/media/29372/Bird-Aware-Solent-Strategy/pdf/Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy.pdf](https://solent.birdaware.org/media/29372/Bird-Aware-Solent-Strategy/pdf/Solent_Recreation_Mitigation_Strategy.pdf)

For those of you who like to get out and about, there is good news on the subject of one of the bridges on the cycletrack, especially for the horse riders amongst you. It is not in the Parish but many of you use the track and get that far.

New footbridge improves countryside access

Work by Island Roads to upgrade a key section of the Sandown to Newport cycle track has been completed. In partnership with the Isle of Wight Council, Island Roads has replaced the former footbridge over the Eastern Yar at Alverstone with a new, longer, wider version also including higher parapets, making it suitable for use by horse-riders as well as cyclists and pedestrians.



For the first time, it will now be possible for horse riders to follow the whole route from Shide to Sandown along the track. Horse-riders on the Island and beyond have been involved in the planning and delivery of the new bridge section, and the work was delivered with the support and cooperation of the IW Bridleways Group and British Horse Society. Both organisations also made a financial contribution to the scheme.

The work was completed on schedule despite periods of flooding during heavy rainfall in November. This section of the cycle track lies within a flood plain and the new bridge has been raised slightly to keep it clear of floodwater. Doing so not only means it is less likely to be rendered impassable because of high waters, it is also less prone to damage, or to being affected by the river flow.

The original bridge was due to be refurbished by Island Roads under the highways PFI contract but the IW Council stepped in to provide additional funding for the replacement project. “While we have been undertaking work, it has been necessary to close the track at this point so we would like to thank those who have helped us by following the signed diversion,” said Ian Hodson, Island Roads structures manager.

“We hope cyclists, pedestrians and horse-riders will agree the small period of inconvenience was more than offset by the benefits of a new, more accessible bridge.”

Ian Ward, cabinet member responsible for the Highways PFI said: “We are delighted that by working with Island Roads we have been able to deliver an enhanced scheme that increases access to our magnificent countryside. “I would also like to acknowledge the contributions from the IW Bridleways Group and the British Horse Society and we look forward to working with them again in the future.”

The Red Squirrel Trail has also been expanded and enhanced, courtesy of Natural Enterprise. The Parish Council makes an annual grant to Gift to Nature towards the upkeep of Merstone Station.

Red Squirrel Trail expansion and enhancements

The famous Red Squirrel Trail is 32 miles of mostly traffic-free cycling through the heart of the Isle of Wight's beautiful countryside. The trail takes in estuaries, woodland, farmland, downland, and a stretch of the Island's fantastic coastline.

Now cyclists can enjoy even more of the Island's countryside thanks to a project by local charity Natural Enterprise to produce maps for a 28-mile East Wight Explorer circular route that includes part of the Red Squirrel Trail as well as spectacular coastal scenery and the beautiful water meadows of the Eastern River Yar.

The East Wight Explorer can be joined at a number of places including Newport and Sandown. The majority of the loop is on cycle-tracks, off-road routes and quiet roads. Working in partnership with the



Isle of Council the mapping also enables cyclists to join the existing Red Squirrel Trail from Ryde. All maps and, if required, GPS files are downloadable from www.redsquirreltrail.org.uk. Funding to make this possible came from Isle of Wight Council's Sustainable Access Fund.

Additionally, as part of their Gift to Nature project, Natural Enterprise have produced a map with a series of walking and cycling trails from its Merstone Station site which is at the heart of the Red Squirrel Trail and East Wight Explorer. The map allows users to enjoy less busy network of paths around Arreton parish and beyond. The routes are graded from 'easy peasy' to 'tricky' to allow

everyone to enjoy them. Merstone Station is an ideal hub for these as it can be reached from Newport on the Red Squirrel Trail or by a regular bus service, stopping directly outside the Gift to Nature site. As well as being available at the station, the route map can be downloaded from <https://gifttonature.org.uk/discover/out-in-the-country/merstone-station/>

New app

Coming off the environmental theme, the members of the Parish Council would like to draw your attention to the NHS app. GP surgeries on the Island recommend that all patients download the free NHS App if they are able. This is nothing to do with the Covid tracing system but is purely for the NHS (and that is all it says on the app - NHS).

It allows you to ask for repeat prescriptions and gives you access to all your own medical records. Once you have registered and have asked to have access to your record, your practice rings you to ensure you are the patient and then they allow you to have access to them. It is not complicated to register and should help you and your practice.



And finally ...



from the
Chairman, Councillors and Clerk
of
Arreton
Parish Council

PARISH COUNCIL CONTACT DETAILS

Chairman: Cllr Martin Kimber – martinkimberapc@gmail.com

Clerk: Mrs Sheila Caws - arretonpc@outlook.com 07587 008183