

“Working Together for a Better Community”

NEROCHE PARISH PLAN

NEWSLETTER

Issue No 1

February 2010



Welcome to the first issue of the Neroche Parish Plan Newsletter. The aim of this publication is to keep you informed of the Steering Group’s progress in developing the plan. 2010 is *‘The Year of the Neroche Parish Plan’* (for the civic parish of Neroche, which comprises Bickenhall, Curland, Orchard Portman, Staple Fitzpaine and Thurlbear). By the end of the year the plan will have been published and the implementation process will have commenced.

What is a Parish Plan?

A Parish Plan is a document that lays out a vision of how local people wish to see their community develop and improve. It considers all aspects of local life including social, economic and environmental; it is a plan created by the residents for the residents. It is a process by which the whole community can voice their opinions. The views of the community are gathered by means of a lengthy consultation process (which includes a questionnaire going to every household in the Parish) to identify what aspects of the local area the residents wish to protect, enhance or change. The Parish Plan final document will include a detailed report covering all issues raised and an action plan to put the recommendations into effect.

Update From the Steering Group

*Tim French (Chairman), Nicky Baxter, Mary Bell, Jane Hole,
Jason Jackson, Ann Jones, Julie Pope, Mark Pope, Joanne Routley,
Clare Stewart, David Symmonds, Wally Torrington*

So far, The Steering Group has met on five occasions, and it is well advanced in putting the legal and bureaucratic ‘building blocks’ of the organisation in place. It is currently in the process of: attracting more funding; developing a database; designing a website; and populating the Working Groups. It has produced an action plan, and a short mission statement that will appear at the top of all official stationery “*Working Together for a Better Community*”; we hope you like it.

In the early stages of the consultation process residents have raised numerous concerns and made many suggestions, all of which will be investigated and the findings included in the plan. In this newsletter the subjects of ‘community shops’, ‘traffic’ and ‘local businesses’ have been highlighted. This does not mean they are considered any more important than all the other issues, just that there is something to report on each.

It was marvellous to see such a great turnout at ‘A Parish Affair’, the community day held at the Neroche Parish Hall in November. Discussions with those who attended have helped the Steering Group to further develop their thoughts on those areas that they need to look into.

Feedback on this newsletter or your contributions to any aspect of the Parish Plan would be warmly welcomed, as the aim is to maintain constant communication with you all; this will ensure that your wishes and aspirations regarding improvements to, and protection of, the community and its environment, are reflected in the final report (contact details are on the back page).

Winter scenes of Neroche Parish pictured during the recent cold snap



Speeding Traffic Spoils Our Parish Roads

From residents' comments received to-date, speeding traffic and inconsiderate driving is considered a major problem along many roads and lanes, and through some of the villages in Neroche (especially along well established short-cuts and rat-runs); walkers, cyclists and horse riders often feel intimidated and are sometimes placed in dangerous situations. It is evident that inappropriate and excessive speed has a deleterious effect on village life. This was recently highlighted when the local authority closed The New Road, which runs between Staple Fitzpaine and Bickenhall, and diverted traffic through Curland. No attempt was made by the Highways Department to control the increased traffic, and when formal representation was made for some form of speed management



or possibly a one-way system, it was ignored. In the end, after the very best efforts of the Parish Council and others, it took the relentless actions of a lone Curland resident who bombarded the Highways Department with e-mails and telephone calls until they capitulated and put out some temporary 'Slow Down' signs. Such Herculean efforts from individuals should not be necessary just to stay safe when using our village roads.



The Parish Plan will establish a Working Party to look into all aspects of how traffic impacts on the lives of Neroche residents, looking at the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and pets, as well as analysing the needs of the motorist.

Further shots of the parish in all its winter glory



A Parish Affair

As mentioned earlier, a combined Christmas fair, community event and information day, entitled “A Parish Affair”, was held in the Neroche Parish Hall on Saturday 28th November. It was a great success with around 180 attending. There were stalls where people could buy arts and craft by local artists and makers, as well as produce from the WI. Other attractions included a competition run by The Cook’s Shop, Santa, a book swap stand and students from Thurlbear Primary School singing carols.



The event provided an opportunity for the Blackdown Hills AONB, the Neroche Project, Neroche Parish Council and local community services (including Neighbourhood Watch) to discuss their work and to get feedback from the community. Local businesses were able to show their wares, which included samples of English Longhorn Beef from Bickenhall Farm. Many

local clubs ran stalls and recruited new members. The WI and Café Fitz provided the catering; and of course the Parish Plan Steering Group attended throughout to continue with the dissemination of information and the consultation process. It is hoped that it will be the first of many such events.



The day was organised by a Neroche Parish Plan sub-committee, led most admirably by Brian Phelps, Ann Jones and Jane Hole and sponsored by the Blackdown Hills AONB Sustainability Development Fund.



A few more snaps of 'A Parish Affair' – have you spotted yourself yet?



All pictures have been provided by our local expert photographer David Spears who can be contacted at david@cloudhillimaging.com

Community Shop

As highlighted in the NFU magazine ‘Countryside’, the long-running radio soap ‘The Archers’ has been examining how rural communities are battling to save their local shops. The possibility of locals taking community ownership of Ambridge’s only shop and post office, which is facing closure, is a storyline that



has recently been aired. The Plunkett Foundation, which promotes and supports rural cooperatives and social enterprises, including offering help in setting up and running community-owned shops, has been advising the programme’s producers on this particular plot. “Community ownership is often the only viable way of saving or reintroducing vital rural services such as a village

shop...” said Peter Couchman, the Plunkett Foundation’s Chief Executive Officer, “...and we hope The Archers storyline will encourage more people in rural areas to take action”.

The Neroche Parish Plan Steering Group needs no such encouragement. One of its Working Parties will be looking into the viability of establishing a community shop in the Parish. A stand-alone community shop may be difficult to achieve but joining a community shop with a new farm shop thus combining a self-help funded initiative with a small entrepreneurial commercial enterprise is a symbiotic arrangement that might work, especially as there is the possibility of funding from a number of sources. Any farm owner possibly interested in going down this route, contact Wally Torrington at wallytorrington@hotmail.com 01823 480656

Local Businesses

The Plan seeks to embrace all those who are running farming enterprises and businesses in the parish; this includes all forms of commerce and trade e.g. B&B, catteries and kennels, artists, gardeners, landscapers, arts and crafts, builders, handymen, child minders, nurseries, race courses etc, both large employers and those operating as ‘a one man band’ - nobody is excluded. The main question being asked of the businessman is “what can the Parish Plan do for you?” e.g. improved broadband, better transport links, improved parking, meeting venues, local advertising, signposting etc – “you tell us”. To assist the Steering Group in looking after their best interests, businesses based in the civic parish of Neroche are urged to forward

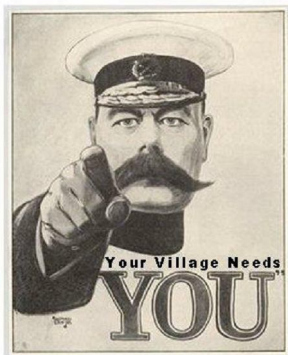


their details (name, address, telephone numbers and type of business) to tim-french@tiscali.co.uk for inclusion in the Parish Plan database of local businesses.

It is also proposed to run a Breakfast Meeting for Businesses to discuss, in detail, what advantages can be gained by them being involved in influencing the Plan. It is hoped that the breakfast will be free so the event will be at nil cost. Those interested in attending this event should contact Jason Jackson at info@jacksonarchitects.co.uk 01823 443742.

Volunteers, “Your Parish Needs You!”

At the first two public events held by the Parish Plan team and using the proformas distributed to all households in the Parish, a large number of Neroche residents have already put their names forward to assist in formulating the plan. They are currently being contacted to invite them to join appropriate Working Groups, in a wide variety of subject areas. That having been said, more volunteers are still required. If you feel that you can be of assistance in any way, then please make contact (details on the back page). The work involved does not necessarily have to be time consuming or onerous – volunteers can do as much or as little as their available free time allows.



The following are the general areas for which volunteers are required for working groups:

Natural Environment, Planning Development, Traffic/Roads/Speeding, Buses/Cycle Routes, Footpaths/Bridleways, Equine/Rural Pursuits, Parish Social Events, Community Shop, Local Business/Farming, Website/Newsletter, Service to the Elderly, Children and Young People, Improve Carbon Footprint, Tourism, Community Purchasing.

Do you have a particular skill that you might be inclined to offer

e.g. IT, Local Knowledge, Secretarial Accounting, Organising Events, Catering, Publicity/Media, Creative Design, Data Analysis, Conservation

What Happens Next?

What next? In accordance with the action plan it is proposed to take the project forward as follows: in February the Working Groups will start their research; as mentioned earlier, it is hoped to hold a business breakfast for local businesses, and the website will go live; the second newsletter will be sent out in April; the questionnaire (which will go to every household) will be drafted and trialed in April/May then printed, distributed and collected in June; the final public event will be held in October; the Plan will be produced in November and delivered to every household in December, and that is when the work of implementing the recommendations will start!

Your Involvement is Essential

If you would like to join in, find out more about the Plan, make some suggestions, or just to have your contact details placed on the database to ensure that you receive regular updates, please contact:

Tim French (Chairman)

tim-french@tiscali.co.uk 01460 234410

or

Wally Torrington (Newsletter Editor and Project Coordinator)

wallytorrington@hotmail.com 01823 480656,

or

Jason Jackson (Steering Group Member and Chairman of Parish Council)

info@jacksonarchitects.co.uk 01823 443742

Wider Communication

(A message from the Parish Council)

If you would also like to receive regular Parish Council information e.g. on changes to services (such as refuse collection), emergencies or dates of meetings etc then send your name and address followed by "YES PLEASE" to Peter Crossley, the Parish Clerk at neroche.pc@virgin.net



**Blackdown
Hills AONB**

