

*“Working Together for a Better Community”*

## NEROCHE PARISH PLAN

Issue No 3

## NEWSLETTER

September 2010



**W**elcome to the third 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, help improve communication within the Parish and pass on some general information of local interest. If you wish to read our previous Newsletters, find further details of ‘what is a Parish Plan’, or to volunteer to assist with the latter stages of the project then go to [www.nerochevillages.org.uk](http://www.nerochevillages.org.uk)

### *Update From the Steering Group*

**T**he Steering Group continues to meet regularly and much progress has been made. We welcome ‘on board’ David Widden who will be editing the final Parish Plan report, and Sheila Green who provided invaluable assistance in structuring and compiling the questionnaire. The project is now fully funded following a most successful fund raising event sponsored by the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC), support from the Blackdown AONB ‘Making it Local’ fund and an initiative by the Parish Council to apply for monies from the National Lottery ‘Awards for All’.

The questionnaire was exceptionally well received by residents and had a very high response rate. A team of volunteers, guided by experts from the Community Council of Somerset, is now undertaking the long and involved process of analysing and statistically evaluating the responses.

It was marvellous to see such an excellent turnout at the BASC activity day and the Transition Town Workshop (*see individual articles*) which sends a clear message that there is wide support for similar such events to be run in the future.

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

## *Taunton Transition Town Workshop*

On 29<sup>th</sup> April the Parish Plan Steering Group, on behalf of Neroche Parish Council, hosted a Transition Town Workshop in Neroche Hall. The aim of the evening was to raise awareness in our community of the potential impact of climate change and 'peak oil' (the point at which global oil demand outstrips supply).



Paul Birch and Chrissie Godfrey of the Taunton Transition Town Group orchestrated the evening, which began with a presentation followed by a number of activities and discussions. These allowed those attending to debate how best to make our community more resilient to climate change issues and to discuss how we might become less dependant upon fossil fuels for energy, food, transport etc and increase local sustainability.

The report produced by the Transition Town Group can be found on both the Parish Plan and Parish Council websites at [www.nerochevillages.org.uk](http://www.nerochevillages.org.uk) and [www.neroche.net](http://www.neroche.net). It presents a story of what Neroche might look like in the future if residents adopt the suggestions made at the workshop, and move to a lower carbon lifestyle; it culminates with a compilation of what residents see as the immediate priorities for individual households, the local community and Taunton Deane Borough Council.

### **BARN DANCE & HOG ROAST**

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> September      Battens Farm, Bickenhall.**

**Live Music with 'Fiddlestix', Bar, Skittles.**

**Adults £12.50, Children £6**

**For more information contact David Symmonds 01823 480208,  
davidsym@gmail.com**

## *The BASC Family Country Sports Activity Day*

The BASC Family Country Sports Activity Day was a Parish Plan fundraising event sponsored and run by the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) at Smokey Bottom Lodge in Staple Fitzpaine (their centre for the South West). It was an outstanding success both as a highly interesting and fun event, and as a fundraiser. It was well attended with many local residents and their families taking advantage of the preferential booking period to secure an early place. Without exception, all agreed that they'd had a super day out and had learned a great deal.



The programme included: shotgun and airgun training and tuition; hide building and use of decoys; a gun-dog handling demonstration; and deer recognition and stalking and its role in forestry management. All legal and safety aspects were covered in the briefings, and the conservation role demonstrated by examples.



A delicious two-course lunch was served which comprised dishes produced from a variety of game. At the end of the day there was a demonstration on how to prepare freshly killed rabbit and pigeon 'for the pot', after which recipes were handed out on how best to cook them.



The party were most fortunate with the weather and to have had a team of such professional, knowledgeable and highly committed instructors who organised a most excellent day of interesting activities.



The BASC run a variety of country pursuit courses at Smokey Bottom, so if you are interested, contact: Jamie Stewart - Regional Director (South West), Smokey Bottom Lodge, Staple Fitzpaine, Taunton, Somerset, TA3 5BL Tel: 01823 480903 or visit their website at [www.basc.org.uk](http://www.basc.org.uk).

## *The Questionnaire*

All of the subject areas in the questionnaire were developed by local people during the consultation process via a series of public meetings and working groups, except those with demographic detail, which were requested by the Parish Council or the Deane. The editorial team of Jane Hole, Tim French and Ann Jones wrestled them into questionnaire format. Several drafts were circulated for comment, and finally a pilot run was conducted before it went to the

printers. The editors were ably assisted by Sheila Green whose skills came to the fore in designing the layout. Jane was set a very tight timetable for its design, production, printing and distribution and achieved the target date with time to spare. After that, however, the speed of response and collection took a little longer than anticipated but, as the saying goes, *'some things in life are worth waiting for'*; and in this



case it was certainly true; the response (at the time of writing this article) could possibly be as high as an impressive 85%! This has been achieved by a dedicated team of 16 deliverers/collectors who each took a proportion of the parish households and businesses to visit, and were requested, where possible, to hand questionnaires to each resident/owner in person, and attempt to ascertain a convenient time for its collection; the strategy obviously worked.

The completed questionnaires are currently in the process of being analysed and statistically evaluated by a team of 6 volunteers under the guidance of experts from the Community Council of Somerset. The results will then be converted by our editor, David Widden, into an easily understandable format that will be presented in the final Parish Plan report, which will be presented to the Parish Council for adoption in November, and then delivered to every Neroche household and business in November/December.

Many residents completed the 'Staying Involved' section of the questionnaire and will be contacted soon to establish how they can help with further work and the Plan's implementation.

## *Potholes*



During the first 6 months of 2010 the County Council claim to have repaired over 18,000 potholes, but they accept that there is still a lot of work to be done; so, if you've spotted an annoying pothole, call the pothole hotline on 0845345 9155 or got to [www.somerset.gov.uk](http://www.somerset.gov.uk) and follow the link.

## *A Few Notes From the Farming Community*

*Mark Pope's article was the highlight of the May Newsletter; he has kindly agreed to continue giving us an insight into 'life on the farm' in Neroche*

Much has changed since my last article. Mid August saw us well into our wheat harvest, about 2 weeks earlier than normal, due to the dry weather. This has been a very strange season; earlier on we had a very cold winter and a cold dry spring. The cold spring and lack of warm rain in April didn't do us any favours, and it took a long time for our heavy clay soil to warm up and allow the crops to start growing. We have seen the result of this at harvest time with crops on our higher fields being a lot thinner than those lower down.



Generally speaking, the yields have been down on the past two years but not as bad as we had first thought, certainly nothing like as bad as in Russia. As soon as the fields of wheat are cut they are baled for bedding for the livestock farmers. Following that, we spread the various heaps of 'muck' we have

around the farm, the aim being to cultivate it in as quickly as we can so as not to lose the nutrients (apologies for the sweet fragrance in the air). I will soon be sending some wheat for testing to see if it is good enough for us to use as seed.

Our aim is to start planting the next crop of wheat around the end of the first week of September and if all goes to plan nearly all the seed will be in by the end of the month (apart from the fields that have maize in them which will be harvested at the end of September for use as feed for the Dairy Cows). In the meantime, down the road at Bickenhall Farm, Chris Salisbury has been selling lambs.

The dry weather is causing a major problem to the livestock farmers who have been unable to make sufficient winter food because the grass has not grown (which you know from your own garden lawns). The worry is that this will lead to some farms having to sell stock early, which is not good news.



That's it for now, but if you have any questions regarding what is going on in the Parish, from a farming perspective, please feel free to e-mail me at [markpope@staplefarm.co.uk](mailto:markpope@staplefarm.co.uk) and I will endeavour to give you an answer.

## *'Taste the Harvest'*

*"To reconnect children with food and the countryside"*

*"To create a first-hand memorable learning experience that they will always remember"*

**A**t Staple Farm on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> September Mark and Julie Pope are hosting an event called 'Taste The Harvest' and will welcome around 800 Primary School Children to their farm. They, and their many helpers, will be showing them how wheat is grown today and how it was done in the past. The youngsters will be given a small plot to plant so they can watch their own wheat



grow throughout the year via a web cam. They will then sit down to a meal of locally sourced food, which they will help to prepare in a field kitchen assisted by chefs from RAF Yeovilton. Their day will finish with a lively harvest service. As you can imagine, a lot of assistance will be required,

so, if you are willing to be a volunteer helper, please contact Mark on 01823 480282 or at [markpope@staplefarm.co.uk](mailto:markpope@staplefarm.co.uk). Also, Mark would appreciate the loan of some mini marquee style tents. In essence, your help, in any way possible, would be greatly appreciated.

## *Local Business*

**T**o the amazement of the majority of local residents the Parish Plan project has established that there are numerous businesses operating in the civic parish of Neroche. They vary from individuals working from home to large enterprises like Taunton Racecourse (another surprise, not many locals realised that the racecourse is actually situated within the Parish boundary – albeit only just).

**Future Gatherings.** The Steering Group has established that many of those running local businesses would appreciate the opportunity to meet on a regular basis: to share ideas and experiences; pool information on grants/funding; discuss local business initiatives; establish symbiotic relationships; and develop other networking advantages. There is an option also



to bring-in some guest speakers to give short 'punchy' presentations. It is proposed, therefore, to establish a programme of gatherings, with the first taking place later this year in the form of another business breakfast. More information will be coming out soon by e-mail. If you think that you may not feature on our business database please contact the editor (details on back page).

**Funding.** The Blackdown Hills AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) has a pot of money available to fund local projects. The fund seeks to encourage individuals, community groups and **businesses** to work together; projects need to show that they have an environmental, social, or economic benefit. The fund is divided to enable grants to be awarded to small or large-scale projects - application forms for Small Grant Fund applications (for projects under £1000) can be submitted at any time and will be processed within 10 working days from the date of receipt. Larger project applications (for projects of £1000 - £10,000) will be appraised by a panel at meetings through the year. The deadline for the next application round is 24th September. For more information contact the AONB on 01823 680681 or on their website [www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk](http://www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk)



**Advice and Support.** If you are currently running or thinking of setting-up a business in the Parish then there is plenty of help out there. For example, 'Connecting Somerset', a partnership led by Somerset County Council, offers support for IT training and development, and runs regular workshops and conferences. 'Working with Business Link – Connecting Somerset' also provides advice for local businesses. To find out how you can obtain help with IT related issues' visit [www.connectingsomerset.co.uk](http://www.connectingsomerset.co.uk). For more general business advice, contact Business Link on 0845 602 3657.

### *Thanks to our Helpers*



On completion of the production and distribution of the Parish Plan questionnaire an afternoon tea party was hosted by the Steering Group at the home of Tim French and Jane Hole to thank all the volunteers who have been involved in the project so far. It was a lovely day and over 30 guests enjoyed the wonderful views overlooking Neroche whilst consuming copious amounts of home made 'goodies' produced by various members of the team. The atmosphere was very much one of celebration having reached a major milestone in the project.

## Tour of Britain 2010

Rarely does a national sporting event include our area but on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> September 100 cyclists, 60 outrider motorcyclists and 100 support vehicle on



the fifth stage of the Tour of Britain cycle race, which covers the leg from Hemyock to Glastonbury, will pass through Staple Fitzpaine between 12.50pm and 1.30pm and Bickenhall a few minutes later. It will require some road closures but quite a spectacle and well worth turning out for.

### QUIZ NIGHT

**Neroche Hall, 7.30pm Friday 8<sup>th</sup> October, Fish & Chip supper, BYO drinks.  
Phone 01823 234377 to book your table**

## Local Communication and Information

**Parish Council.** If you would 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](mailto:neroche.pc@virgin.net). To keep 'up-to-speed' with the activities of your Parish Council, go to [www.neroche.net](http://www.neroche.net) where you will find a wealth of information, including: a list of Council members; agenda and minutes of meetings; news, views and general details; plus a facility to 'have your say'. Council meetings are open to the public; so if they are discussing a subject, in which you are interested, please feel free to attend.

**Walking and Cycling.** If you are looking for walks and cycle rides close to where you live then take a look at [www.movingsomersetforward.co.uk/walking-maps](http://www.movingsomersetforward.co.uk/walking-maps)

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**Blackdown  
Hills AONB**

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