



Neroche Community Review 2022 -2023

Update September 2024

The Neroche Community Review and Action and Prioritisation Plan (NCR) was adopted by Neroche Parish Council in September 2023. Since then the county has become a unitary authority - Somerset Council (SC) and along with many authorities has experienced major financial difficulties. A material effect has been experienced by the Parish Council with for example, staff reductions in Planning and at Rights of Way departments at SC make for slower decision making.

Neroche Community Review 2022- 2023 Summary

Residents told us their three top concerns for the parish were climate change and environment, traffic and speed and rights of way. So far the PC has acted on:

Climate Change & Environment

- Articles giving more information and what actions we can all take appear in every Neroche Newsletter and many email alerts
- Citizen Science initiatives have been promoted such as Big Butterfly Count, RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch etc
- PC is acting on issues relating to ditches, drainage run off and hedges and working with SC on the cutting of verges
- Some of the projects identified in the NCR need residents to get actively engaged; currently no volunteers have come forward for an environment group
- There has been success with a new group of volunteers who have begun testing local streams and rivers for water quality
- More residents are leaving parts of their grounds uncut making more spaces for wildlife such as bees, insects, butterflies, frogs and newts

Speed and Traffic

- The Village Gateway speed reduction scheme for Staple Fitzpaine is underway and the PC are waiting on Somerset Highways for the go ahead
- The PC will continue lobbying Somerset Highways to adopt other speed reduction approaches on the dangerous roads in the parish
- How to report problems with potholes to SC is available on the parish website <https://:nerochevillages.org/parishcouncil/reportaproblem>

Rights of Way

- A RoW maintenance group will soon be starting
- The PC footpath officer is active in responding to requests for cutting back etc
- SC is taking legal advice on opening a contested RoW
- PC is developing an expertise about RoW
- Information on how to report problems with RoW to SC are on the parish website <https://:nerochevillages.org/parishcouncil/reportaproblem/highways>

Community and Communication

- The PC is encouraging residents to keep up to date on parish matters by using <https://:nerochevillages.org>
- A councillor rep has joined the Neroche Hall committee to support the hall as it faces considerable increases in maintenance costs
- A new notice board will soon be erected in Orchard Portman and others renovated as needed
- To help improve communication with residents PC will be posting items on village Facebook sites
- Neroche Hall will soon have a notice board with PC updates and A4 posters will be regularly be placed on village notice boards
- Residents will be aware that Airband has paused their work in the parish in bringing fibre to the premises. A letter has been sent to SC digital lead asking for urgent progress report

Planning

- Planning – The PC is a consultee in all planning applications, it has no direct powers itself but will discuss every planning application and comment when appropriate. PC letters opposing an application can be seen on <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/view-and-comment-on-a-planning-application/> To find current planning applications for Neroche see <https://www.nerochevillages.org.uk/planning-applications>
- Somerset Council's current Strategic Plan 'Improving Lives' is in place from 2019 – 2028. Within the current strategic plan Neroche Parish enjoys 'Open Countryside' status which means no large scale developments should be able to take place. With the sell-off of the Crown Estate in 2018 land was sold to new landowners including farmers and also to Taylor Wimpey who bought over 200,000 acres of land which are currently being managed by a tenant farmer
- As SC prepare their plans from 2028 onwards the Parish Council will be lobbying for Neroche Parish to maintain its Open Countryside status Status.
- *Our Neroche community will grow stronger and more resilient if residents get active, become involved with current groups, start their own groups, take on littler pick-ups in their local patches, etc, etc.*

A review of the action taken by the PC in response to the Neroche Community Review Action Plan is summarised below: see details highlighted in blue in the Action Plan below

Neroche Community Review Action and Prioritisation Plan 2023



RED Urgent/Critical – start immediately

AMBER Medium term – start in next 12 months

GREEN Nice to do

Topic 1	Issue & Objective	Action	Outcome	Key Milestones	Action Taken	Who is Responsible	Resources needed
Climate Change and Environment	<p>1a People want to be more aware/know how to find information on reducing their carbon footprint</p> <p>The community has easy access to relevant information</p>	<p>Review what is available and where</p> <p>Community Action Group on Environment (CAGE) to highlight how parishioners can take simple action to reduce carbon footprint</p> <p>PC to debate whether named councillor/s will hold Environment Portfolio</p>	Reliable information source(s) identified	<p>1 Review Information</p> <p>2 Establish Community Action Group on Environment (CAGE)</p> <p>3 Establish central hub on PC website Circulate information on environmental matters in Newsletter, email alert</p> <p>4 Decision re portfolio holder taken</p>	<p>Information obtained & ongoing</p> <p>No volunteers come forward</p> <p>Articles in all Newsletters since NCR published and is ongoing plus regular email alerts</p> <p>PC decide not to name portfolio holder</p>	CAGE works with Parish Council, Neroche Newsletter & Neroche Villages website CAGE and Parish Council & Newsletter	Access to reliable information via authenticated advisory bodies
		<p>Undertake a feasibility study</p> <p>Review potential for a community green power project</p>		<p>A report on viability and demand</p> <p>1 Set up working group 2 Review demand 3 Review options make recommendations</p>	<p>No action taken yet</p>		

Topic 1	Issue & Objective	Action	Outcome	Key Milestones	Action Taken	Who is Responsible	Resources needed
Climate Change and Environment	<p>1c Ditch maintenance</p> <p>Key roadside ditches are more effectively maintained</p>	<p>PC to work via the Local Community of Parishes(LCN) to contract ditch maintenance</p> <p>PC Finance Committee investigate reclaiming relevant parts of Somerset Council (SC) budget</p> <p>PC to debate named councillor/s to hold in house contracts</p>	<p>Freer flowing ditches/less road water</p> <p>SC Information about potential finance obtained</p> <p>Decision is reached re portfolio holder</p>	<p>1 Agree arrangement with LCN to take on contracts</p> <p>2 Finance Committee engage with SC</p> <p>3 Commence hedging/verges contract</p>	<p>PC take on oversight of ditches, drains and safety of hedgerows & verges</p> <p>No devolved budget from SC</p> <p>PC increase annual precept to take account of needs arising from action plan</p> <p>1 PC undertakes creation of run off points on main road. 2 PC in process of digging out drain sites. 3 PC to identify all major landowners with land abutting ditches & roads. 4 If hedges are overgrown or there are flooding points PC will contact landowners to remind them of their maintenance responsibilities in keep hedges in check & ditches clear. 5 Cllr John Parson is managing the contracts</p>	<p>LCN</p> <p>PC Finance Committee</p> <p>PC & portfolio holder if appointed</p>	<p>Funding for contracts</p>
Climate Change and Environment	<p>1d Develop local action on environment projects</p> <p>Establish projects supported in review</p>	<p>Engagement with large & small landowners & gardeners on environment management</p> <p>Promote Citizen Science approach</p> <p>Seek expert advice on best environmental</p>	<p>PC & CAGE to promote best practice.</p> <p>Residents encouraged to take part in SWT Big Garden Count,</p>	<p>1 Review current actions & agree on further engagement</p> <p>2 Counts submitted to relevant organisations. Over time biodiversity levels increase</p>	<p>1 No volunteers come forward to join action group</p> <p>CAGE yet to be established</p> <p>New volunteers engaged with water quality monitoring</p> <p>2 Citizen Science projects & nature counts published in Newsletter & on email alert.</p>	<p>CAGE with support of PC & interested residents</p> <p>Email alert.</p> <p>Advice from Blackdown Hills AONB & Farmers</p>	<p>Residents & Volunteers</p> <p>Funding for promotional material/community information.</p>

	All parts of the parish are more actively	practice on how PC works to incorporate	RSPB Big Garden		Residents encouraged to take part	Wildlife Advisory Group	
Topic 1	Issue & Objective	Action	Outcome	Key Milestones	Action Taken	Who is Responsible	Resources needed
Climate Change and Environment	engaged with environmental issues	best practice into any contracts it takes on	Birdwatch, Butterfly count Increased interest & knowledge		More local people are allowing their gardens/grounds to have wild areas		
Climate Change and Environment	1e Climate Emergency Improve understanding about climate change across the parish	Work with Newsletter & Website Review benefit/implications of PC declaring a climate emergency Take vote at next Annual Parish Meeting	Regular articles in Newsletter Relevant projects/management on website Yes/No decision	1 Regular articles in Newsletter 2 Relevant projects/management on website 3 Yes/No decision	1&2 Following PC adoption of NCR by the PC, articles on environment appear in Newsletters & regularly in email alerts & on website 2 Brief report of environment matters given at 2024 Annual Parish Meeting. 3 No action yet on declaring climate emergency	PC & CAGE Newsletter & website	
Climate Change and Environment	1f Litter Reduce litter across parish	Encourage regular walkers to pick up litter Promote how residents can report fly tipping Identify is there is an interest in re-starting a litter pick up group	Less litter Residents become more involved in looking after the parish	Confirm litter 'hot spots' Create rota Fly tipping is reported	How to report fly tipping to SC is on website PC take decision to promote individual parishioners pick up on their regular walks within the parish	CAGE & PC, Forestry England, residents & volunteers	Litter picking kit Volunteers

Topic 2	Issue & Objective	Action	Outcome	Key Milestones	Action Taken	Who is Responsible	Resources needed
Traffic, Travel and Transport	<p>2a Road conditions</p> <p>Improve road conditions</p>	<p>Potholes</p> <p>Mud on road</p>		<p>1 PC to communicate how potholes can be reported</p> <p>2 Work with local farmers re any excessive mud</p> <p>3 Liaise with Highways through LCN on best ways to report issues</p>	<p>1 Pothole hotline address on website</p> <p>3 Potential of establishing a QR code reporting system to report local potholes. ?? Will this just duplicate the SC reporting system</p>	Parish Council	
	<p>2b A358 upgrade</p> <p>If A358 upgrade goes ahead need to mitigate impact locally</p> <p>Maximise benefits/minimise downsides to parish</p> <p>Reduced road speed on Staple Fitzpaine Rd & throughout parish</p>	<p>Maintain engagement with Highways England via joint parishes group</p> <p>Establish local traffic group</p>	<p>Recommendations are accepted by Highways England</p> <p>Somerset Highways reduces road speed</p>		<p>Highways England A358 has put upgrade from Southfields to M5 junction on hold.</p>	<p>PC, residents and potentially local traffic group</p> <p>Somerset Highways</p>	

Topic 3	Issue & Objective	Action	Outcome	Key Milestones	Action Taken	Who is Responsible	Resources needed
Rights of Way ROW	<p>3a Quality of upkeep/access</p> <p>All rights of way to be well maintained to British Standards</p>	<p>Maintain dialogue with landowners</p> <p>Work with local authority re enforcement</p> <p>Encourage use of 'Adopt A Path Scheme'</p> <p>Establish Active group to replace/repair ROW furniture</p>	<p>Users & landowners involved</p> <p>Walkers see blocked paths are opened</p> <p>Local walkers assist in keeping ROW in good condition</p>	<p>1 PC to keep pressure on SC re enforcement of access/conditions</p> <p>2 Blocked routes are opened</p> <p>3 Overgrown ROW are better managed.</p> <p>4 Working Group to repair/replace is established</p>	<p>1 Regular contact with ROW dept at SC by Parish Council</p> <p>2 Currently SC is considering legal action on contested closed route</p> <p>3 Parishioners have been encouraged to take secateurs on walks to cutback overgrowth. Parish footpath warden is active on clearing paths when they are reported.</p> <p>4 Work in progress to establish group</p>	<p>PC</p> <p>Repair/Replacement Working Group established</p> <p>Newsletter & Website</p>	<p>Funding for materials</p> <p>Identify if ROW dept still run H7S course for volunteers</p>
Rights of Way	<p>3b Quality of upkeep/access</p> <p>PC to debate whether named councillor/s will hold ROW Portfolio</p>	<p>Ensure usage and reporting of issues</p>	<p>Repair/replace volunteers receive any necessary training</p>	<p>1 PC to communicate how issues can be reported.</p> <p>2 ROW Portfolio Councillor appointed.</p>	<p>1 How to report a ROW problem to SC is on website</p> <p>2 Bickenhall councillor proactive on ROW matters</p>		
	<p>3c Dog Poo</p> <p>Reduce incidents</p>	<p>Agreement to place bins at main hotspots</p> <p>Install poo bins</p> <p>Public education</p>	<p>Cleaner footpaths</p> <p>Less poo bags left lying around</p>	<p>Start poo bin trial</p> <p>Meet with local forestry team</p> <p>Work with forestry England re public education</p>	<p>Forestry England feel dog poo bins are not the solution. They prefer to continue with public education.</p> <p>Poo bin trial on hold currently.</p> <p>PC and FE to meet to discuss working together on the problem.</p>	<p>PC</p> <p>PC and Forestry England</p> <p>Residents and walkers</p>	<p>Cost of poo bin trail from precept</p>

Topic 4	Issue & Objective	Action	Outcome	Key Milestones	Action Taken	Who is Responsible	Resources needed
Broadband and Mobile	4a Superfast Broadband 4b Availability of superfast broadband	Monitor installation progress	Availability to all households as per Connecting Devon & Somerset (CDS)	Project implemented on time.	Much of infrastructure in place. But Airband have currently paused the project. PC to ask CDS Connecting Devon & Somerset for progress report.	PC CDS Somerset Council	
Topic 5	Issue & Objective	Action	Outcome	Key Milestones	Action Taken	Who is Responsible	Resources needed
Housing	5a Potential Orchard Portman housing development Neroche Parish's 'Open Countryside' status is maintained long term. 5b Ensure local views are incorporated if any Taylor Wimpey plans go ahead	Lobby Somerset Council to maintain 'Open Countryside' Status Monitor situation and make representations as necessary	Parish retains its 'Open Countryside' status (this status means land is not for major development)	1 Work collectively with nearby affected parish councils.	1 PC have regularly lobbied SC councillors on maintaining open countryside status PC keeping a watchful eye on situation	PC	Legal Advice SALC advice
Topic 6	Issue & Objective	Action	Outcome	Key Milestones	Expected Completion Action Taken	Who is Responsible	Resources needed
Community & Social Activities	6 a Parish Life 6 b Satisfaction with parish life	Parish Council to prioritise creation of working groups as per survey & build them into overall parish plan	Working groups in place	1 Working group on environment established	1 Environment group not established. However volunteers are working on water quality monitoring project	PC and Local Groups	

	is maintained and improved			2 ROW working group established	2 ROW working group in process of being established. 3 Parishioners encouraged to become involved individually.		
Community & Social Activities	6c Neroche Hall Support/encourage the Neroche Hall Committee	Share the results with Hall Committee Encourage new members to join hall committee Encourage community to put on events	New Hall activities New members on hall committee	PC considers nominated member to attend Hall meetings	Cllr Jane Hole nominated to act as PC rep on Hall committee	Neroche Hall Committee	Finance to support maintenance & upgrades to the hall
Topic 7	Issue & Objective	Action	Outcome	Key Milestones	Expected Completion Action Taken	Who is Responsible	Resources needed
Communication	7a Communication of news/events across the parish. 7b Improve awareness	Review usage & awareness of parish noticeboards Review usage & awareness of parish website	Enhanced community engagement	1 Review of notice boards completed 2 Enhanced parish website in operation	1 Review of notice boards completed. New notice board for Orchard Portman in progress & other replacement boards commissioned as needed. 2 New website designed and is use	PC Newsletter team Website tem Parish Magazine	Funding for newsletter Volunteers to keep parish notice boards tidy & up to date
Topic 8	Issue & Objective	Action	Outcome	Key Milestones	Expected Completion Action Taken	Who is Responsible	Resources needed
Children and Young People	8a PC has awareness of subject						
Topic 9	Issue & Objective	Action	Outcome	Key Milestones	Expected Completion Action Taken	Who is Responsible	Resources needed
Business	9a PC has awareness of subject						
Topic 10	Issue & Objective	Action	Outcome	Key Milestones	Expected Completion Action Taken	Who is Responsible	Resources needed
Parish Council Matters	10a Community awareness and engagement	Review how the profile of the Parish Council can be raised	All working groups in	1 Review conducted.	1 NCR adopted by PC	PC Newsletter team	

	<p>Improve community awareness & engagement</p>	<p>Consider social media site for use by Parish Council</p> <p>Improve awareness of PC matters in Orchard Portman</p>	<p>place and effective</p> <p>All Parish Councillor roles filled</p>	<p>2 Communications improved</p> <p>3 Following acceptance of NCR report Parish Councillors take on specific portfolios/responsibilities</p> <p>4 Audit of Parish Noticeboards conducted</p> <p>5 Site for Parish Noticeboard in Orchard Portman be explored.</p>	<p>2 PC discuss how to improve communication. Small team of councillors to feedback regularly on village Facebook site. Regular updates by posters on notice boards</p> <p>3 Councillors decide to take responsibilities collectively</p> <p>4 Audit completed, new boards commissioned, others repaired</p> <p>5 New Notice Board to be erected near to Post Box in Orchard Portman.</p>	<p>Website team</p> <p>Parish Magazine</p> <p>LCN Area 18</p> <p>Chard & Blackdown Hills</p>	

The action plan is a live working document that will be amended and change as projects and activities develop. A report on the progress of the Neroche Community Review will be made at the Annual Parish Meeting. [Brief report given at Annual Parish Meeting April 2023.](#)

[Review and report on progress completed July/August 2024.](#)

