**Holford Parish Council - Chairman’s Report July 19th 2021**

It has been difficult to move projects forward due to various lockdowns and the large number of people furloughed has resulted in reduced staffing levels. Although remote working has enabled some progress it has often been painfully slow. From today all legal restrictions are to be removed although it seems likely that there are many people who will feel more comfortable continuing to wear masks and keeping their distance in public places.

Planning

An enforcement order has been initiated to remove the building on Strawberry Field but there has been no progress so far and there has been a recent appeal against the enforcement order. This is a matter for the Planning Authority and not within the PC’s remit.

We are pleased to announce that the planning application from Falcon Housing to update the facilities at the Portway playground has been approved. As yet they are not able to say when work will begin due to a large backlog of maintenance needs at their houses.

Alfoxton House has also received approval for its change of use to a Buddhist retreat and work is underway. The conservation officer is monitoring progress.

Environment

The ‘wilding’ of the grass verges on the A39 is an ongoing project. This aim is to establish an area for wild flowers and insects as endorsed by PlantLife. An update will be given under item 10 on the agenda.

In an act of extreme vandalism the rookery in the Silk Mills area has been systematically exterminated. The Police have been notified but there does not seem any likelihood that the culprits will be identified. The routine killing of wild birds has been illegal since the beginning of the year unless a farmer can demonstrate that they are damaging crops. It is a sad and shocking event not least because the dead birds were left in a pile on Stowey Lane to cause disgust and a health hazard.

The potholes around the Car Park in the village have been filled again. The noticeboards have been given a face-lift but it has not been entirely successful. The meeting will decide whether to repeat the process or leave it for another year and then have an upgrade or renew.

Traffic and Transport

Holford’s Community Speed Watch continues to run smoothly thanks to dedicated volunteers. The weather has been kinder too and they have only had to cancel two watches because of rain.  Our Speedwatch is one of approximately 65 in the County. Please see the Holford Parish Council website for more information.

To date The Parish Council has not received any emails, phone calls or letters regarding problems with traffic. However, due to monitoring by the Community Speedwatch Team it was established that some vehicles do exceed the speed limit on the A39.

The Parish Council’s Traffic Team (Emma Cavendish, Mike Copleston and Stephen Campbell) continues to investigate ways to reduce speeding on the A39. New signage has been agreed by SCC Traffic Management and we have been promised a time schedule for the work to be carried out. However, in the response from Traffic Management it said that it had to be completed with the financial year (which ends next April.) Hopefully it will happen sooner rather than later. The Parish Council is looking into applying for a grant from EDF for the purchase of two Speed Indicator Devices (SIDS) but there are strict requirements for the application which may take some time to fulfil.

The Chairman is in the process of drafting a questionnaire to be distributed to all Parishioners to assess their concerns regarding traffic. However, this will involve costs for postage and printing so will be debated under item 10 Traffic.

The Chairman attended a ‘Bus Back Better’ Stakeholder Engagement event via a Zoom conference. The Government is proposing to de-regulate bus services and give local authorities the power to decide how best to serve their communities. SWT council has begun a consultation on BSIP (Bus Service Improvement Plan) with the benefit of a large pot of government funding. SCC requests input from local people as to their requirements from a bus service. Any local person can contact SCC with their comments. John Woodman and Tim Reynolds are the transport contacts. Email address for your comments is

somersetbuspartnership@gmail.com

We can only dream of a reliable, hourly bus service in Holford.

Local Government

Local people voted for a two council system rather than one large council. The Government will need to confirm which model they will approve.

Hinkley Point are shortly opening a new visitor centre for the public at Cannington Court and they have invited any member of the Parish Council to go along and see the new centre in August.

Emma Cavendish

Chairman

Addendum : The Community bus service is now back. The shields around passengers will be removed only the driver’s will remain. Masks must be worn.

Timetables are published and a copy is available at the A39 bus stop in Holford.