

**Wilcot, Huish and Oare**  
**Annual Parish Meeting 17 May 2022**  
**Chairman's Report**

Once again, as a Country, we have had a difficult year although we have come out of lockdown and in many ways life has returned to normal, World events have meant that many in our Community are facing real hardship as the effects of higher fuel and food costs impact on our daily lives. These factors may well also affect local Government's ability to provide services as costs escalate. It is unclear how this will affect the workings of Parish Council's in our area, and we are no exception, however, we will continue to advocate on behalf of our residents with Wiltshire Council.

Summary of issues dealt with by the Council in the year 2021/2022.

### **Highways**

The Parish Council has continued to push for improvements to be made to our local roads:

Cross Hayes junction, this remains an accident black spot although some works have been carried out by Wiltshire Council to improve the road surface and markings. Neighbouring Manningford Council is continuing to push for change with help of Councillor Oatway, to reduce the speed limit along the C52 from unlimited to 30. This should have the effect of stopping Google Maps and other sat navs from sending people along this road since it will no longer be the quickest route. The junction itself will not be safer unless we have some form of traffic light system or at least stop signs, maybe even a 4 way stop sign. The Parish Council shares the frustration of the local residents over this junction and we will continue to exhort the Unitary Authority to improve it.

A345 gully cleaning in Oare: The gullies are not cleaned regularly and through the Clerk, when they are compacted, they are reported to Wiltshire Council for clearing. This is not an ideal solution, but we have not control over the scheduling of gully cleaning in our area. If you spot a blocked gully please report it to the Parish Clerk.

Signage: We have reported a number missing signs in Wilcot and also two signs with damaged poles to Wiltshire Council. We await their response.

General tidiness around the Parish: The Clerk continually updates our requests to the Parish Steward system for works that are a priority across the patch. Sadly, not every action is carried out or is only partially fulfilled. Please do report issues to the Clerk, we cannot get "in the queue" if we do not make Wiltshire Council aware of our issues. Unfortunately we do not have control over when nor how well our requests are carried out.

### **Speedwatch**

Speedwatch is entirely run by volunteers, our numbers are dwindling and we could do with extra helpers. You will be given full training and, at least during the summer months we can undertake both early morning and evening sessions to suit those who work during the day. Please note that it is not uncommon to register cars at 50+ miles per hour in Oare. When we

run Speedwatch on successive days the number of speeders and the top speeds seem to reduce so we do make a difference to everyone's safety. There is some good news on controlling speeding throughout the Country as there is now have a dedicated traffic officer who monitors speeding with a special camera that can issue on the spot fines. He made a visit to Oare in late April with the following results: 18 speeders during his session, 16 will be offered speed awareness course, 1 will get a £100 fine and 3 penalty points and 1, doing 50 will go to Court. I hope the officer will be back soon, but given he serves the whole of Wiltshire it cannot be a weekly occurrence. The good news is that we are expecting 2 more such dedicated officers to be in post soon and hope to see a real positive impact on drivers attitude to speeding in our villages in the future.

### **Speed Indicator Device (SID)**

The Parish Council continues to part fund the deployment of 2 SIDs around our villages, providing another timely reminder to stay within the speed limits. One of the SIDs is a brand new camera, our original camera having finally stopped working. It is possible to download the data from the new camera to get statistics on how many speeders, speeds and so on, which we can report to the police.

### **Planning:**

We have had a busy year again for planning applications, having reviewed some 41 applications. May I respectfully remind everyone that if you wish to undertake any building works or works to trees and gardens either in the AONB or in the conservation areas you may well need either planning application or to submit a notice to carry out works. If you have a Grade II or above listed building you MUST apply for listing building consent. Wiltshire Council's planning Department is very helpful and will give you guidance on any requirements and planning applications you may need to fill out. Please do not ignore this since you may find yourself being forced to take out retrospective planning application or worse to undo the work you have carried out. If you remove trees that have preservation orders you may face a significant fine.

### **Parish Council Finances:**

The Parish Council continues to be in a strong financial position, with sufficient funding to allow us to deal with small local emergencies, as well as maintain our suite of defibrillators and other assets such as the bus stops. It is possible in the future that the responsibility for looking after our pavements, verges etc., will be devolved to us. There will be no funding devolved from Wiltshire Council and we will be responsible for covering the costs via the Precept. This is a double edged sword potentially giving us more control over these things, but we will have to find the funding for them to be dealt with, while Wiltshire Council keeps the monies back that were used to provide these services. At present this is in abeyance but it will be an issue that returns to the table in the near future I am sure.

## Around the Parish

### **White Hart in Oare**

Unfortunately, we have been unable to further the recovery of the White Hart as a Community asset and its continued deterioration is only going to make the possibility of restoring the building more remote. We are in the process of listing the building with English Heritage.

### **Greensward**

The Greensward committee has meet on a couple of occasions and a new fence and gate have been installed which demarks the sites location. A dangerous elm tree has also been removed. Sadly only one person came forward to help with the pond maintenance. We do plans to dreg the pond in the future. Finally, any one is welcome to visit the greensward but do remember that it is not heavily managed so watch your footing and beware the muddy shores of the pond.

### **Defibrillators**

These simple devices can help you save a life. If you think you need to use one please dial 999 and they will tell you where the nearest is to you, and how to use it. The machine itself will monitor what you do and you cannot give a shock to someone who does not need one. We have replaced the cabinet on the Oare defibrillator on Oare Village Hall. We have also provided it with a small canopy, thanks to Oare Village Hall committee for their continued support; we rely on them to provide us with both location and power supply. Similarly we have replaced the cabinet for the defib at Huish would like to thank the Huish resident, Stowell Estate, and Wilcot Village Hall for hosting defibrillators in their area. Our defibrillators will need replacing in the not too distant future and we are ensuring that appropriate funding will be available when this time comes.

### **Littering**

Sadly this year we have not been able to hold our annual litter pick, in Oare. Wilcot litter pick collected 10 bags of rubbish, assorted junk from a fly tip on Hare Street and 6 5 gallon rape seed oil drums. Thanks to all those individuals who helped at the Wilcot litter pick, and to all those who take it upon themselves to pick up rubbish at any time. We believe that some of the considerable littering that takes place in some areas is down to a few locals; if this is you, please remember to treat your own patch with respect. We also know that the majority of our litter comes from "transients" based on the amount of litter we pick up along our verges.

## Volunteers – thank you

From litter pickers, and speed watch, to Village Hall Committees, a huge thank you to everyone who volunteers around our Parish, there are many of you, each looking to improve all our lives without you this would be a less vibrant and caring place to live.