

BUNWELL PARISH COUNCIL
MILL HOUSE, LENWADE MILL, NORWICH, NR9 5QA

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REPORT OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY
8th MAY 2024

Cllrs Present: Cllr J Chapman (Chair), Cllr R Smith and Cllr R Watson. The Parish Clerk, District Councillor Suzanne Wateridge and 19 members of the public attended.

Chairman, Cllr John Chapman, welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting and began by apologising for having to change the advertised date of the Annual Meeting. Unfortunately, four of the five councillors were unable to attend on the original date due to business or family commitments so the meeting would not have been quorate. The change had been advertised on the Parish website, the village noticeboards and social media, but the Parish Newsletter had already been printed so could not be updated. There are currently four vacancies on the Parish Council and if any resident feels they would be able to help, then Co-option Forms are available on the PC website or they can contact the Clerk or a Councillor if they want more information.

Chairman's Report – Cllr Chapman gave a report in which he said that he would like to take a moment to remember Barry Duffin, our County Councillor, who passed away last year and also Stephen Ridley, our District Councillor, who passed away a couple of months ago. He welcomed County Cllr Catherine Rowett and District Cllr Suzanne Wateridge to represent Bunwell and support our causes.

He said that the three main issues that have dominated the Council's attention this year are the National Grid proposed Norwich to Tilbury Pylon scheme, the inefficiency of the vacuum sewer system in the village and the dangers of speeding and road safety.

The Pylon scheme would see multiple 50m-high pylons running through Low Common and Bunwell Hill across several of the most popular footpath walks being visible for miles around. There would also be major disruption and damage to the land, environment and roads during many years of heavy construction work, with a large plant and lorry parking facility being proposed to be built in the parish and the many thousands of heavy vehicle movements associated with that. The Parish Council will be submitting a strong objection to the proposal and any views or information that anyone wishes to share would be gratefully received. Individual residents were urged to send their objections to the National Grid via the consultation process which is open until the 18th June 2024.

Ongoing issues with the vacuum system in the north of the village have been exacerbated by the poor weather this winter and spring with surface water drainage being an increasing issue as well. Many factors, including blocked ditches and drains, as well as culverts that are too small, are all contributing to the problem. Anglian Water attended a recent Parish Council meeting and things do seem to be moving in the right direction at long last.

Finally, the dangers around speeding and road safety have been increasing this year. As a growing village, more and more younger families have been welcomed which makes speeding and pedestrian safety along The Turnpike in particular a more pressing concern which the Parish Council are addressing, together with help from County Cllr Rowett.

In the playground new picnic benches have been installed and, thanks to a successful application for funding to the National Lottery Community Fund, a new cone climber has been installed which is proving very popular. Cllr Chapman said that he would like to thank Phil Gledhill for his work over the year in making all of this happen, not to mention in previous years, as well as for his work in the Housing and Development Group and the Surface Water and Drainage Group.

The Chairman of the Village Hall reported that the last year had been reasonably successful with many organisations now using the Hall together with private functions which help the finances. New fencing had been installed on the boundary of the site, and new emergency lighting was in place in the Hall.

St Michael's and All Saints' Parish Church. Unfortunately, Rev John Madinda was unable to attend but a summary of his report was read out and is attached to these minutes.

Annual Report from County Councillor Catherine Rowett. Cllr Rowett was not able to be at this part of the meeting, so a summary of her report was read out and is attached to these minutes. Subjects covered include her work with the Road Safety Community Fund, the problems of flooding caused by surface water and poor drainage, and the proposed National Grid Pylon Scheme. She said that she is grateful to all the activists who are putting time, effort and money into securing the right information and advice to inform our responses and give a full account of the damage that the scheme will cause to the local environment.

The Chairman asked residents to let the Parish Council have their ideas for using the Community Infrastructure Levy income from building developments to enhance the facilities in the village and for their thoughts on any improvements the Parish Council could make to village life. He encouraged residents to take part in the decision-making in the village by considering becoming a Parish Councillor.

He thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and said that the Parish Council will continue to do their best to ensure Bunwell residents' interests are looked after to the best of the Council's ability in the future and invited them to stay for the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

Bunwell Parish Council AGM 2024

Chairman's Report

It has been a very busy year for the Parish Council, and indeed for Bunwell as a whole. First of all I would like to take a moment to remember Barry Duffin, our county councillor, who passed away last year, and also Stephen Ridley, our district councillor, who passed away a couple of months ago. I would also like to welcome County Cllr Dr Catherine Rowett and District Cllr Suzanne Wateridge.

There are three main issues that have dominated the council's attention this year. The Norwich to Tilbury Pylons proposal is looming over us, rather literally, with the statutory consultation finally under way. This proposal would see multiple 50m-high pylons running through Low Common and Bunwell Hill, across several of our most popular footpath walks, and being visible for miles around – not to mention the disruption and damage to the land, environment, and roads during many years of heavy construction work, with a large plant and lorry parking facility being proposed to be built in the parish, and the many thousands of heavy vehicle movements associated with that. The Council will be submitting a strong objection to the proposal, and any views and/or information that anyone wishes to share would be gratefully received.

Next, the ongoing issues with the vacuum sewer system in the north of the village have been exacerbated by the poor weather this winter and spring, with surface water drainage being an increasing issue as well. Many factors, including blocked ditches and drains, as well as culverts that are too small, are all contributing to the problem. We were pleased to welcome Anglian Water to a council meeting earlier this year, and things do seem to be moving in the right direction at long last. We have also formed the Surface Water and Drainage Group who are working with the District and County Councils as well as affected residents and landowners to make improvements where possible.

Finally, the dangers around speeding and road safety have been increasing this year: we are a growing village and glad to welcome more and more younger families, however, this does make the

matter of speeding and pedestrian safety along the Turnpike in particular a more pressing concern. Unfortunately Cllr Rowett's efforts to have a 30mph limit introduced on the Turnpike were unsuccessful, however she has arranged a feasibility study into possible options for a safer crossing solution between the school and the playground. Finally, we have also arranged for two new poles to be installed for the SAM2 speed display machines, one at the north end of the Street and another to be added at the east end of the Turnpike.

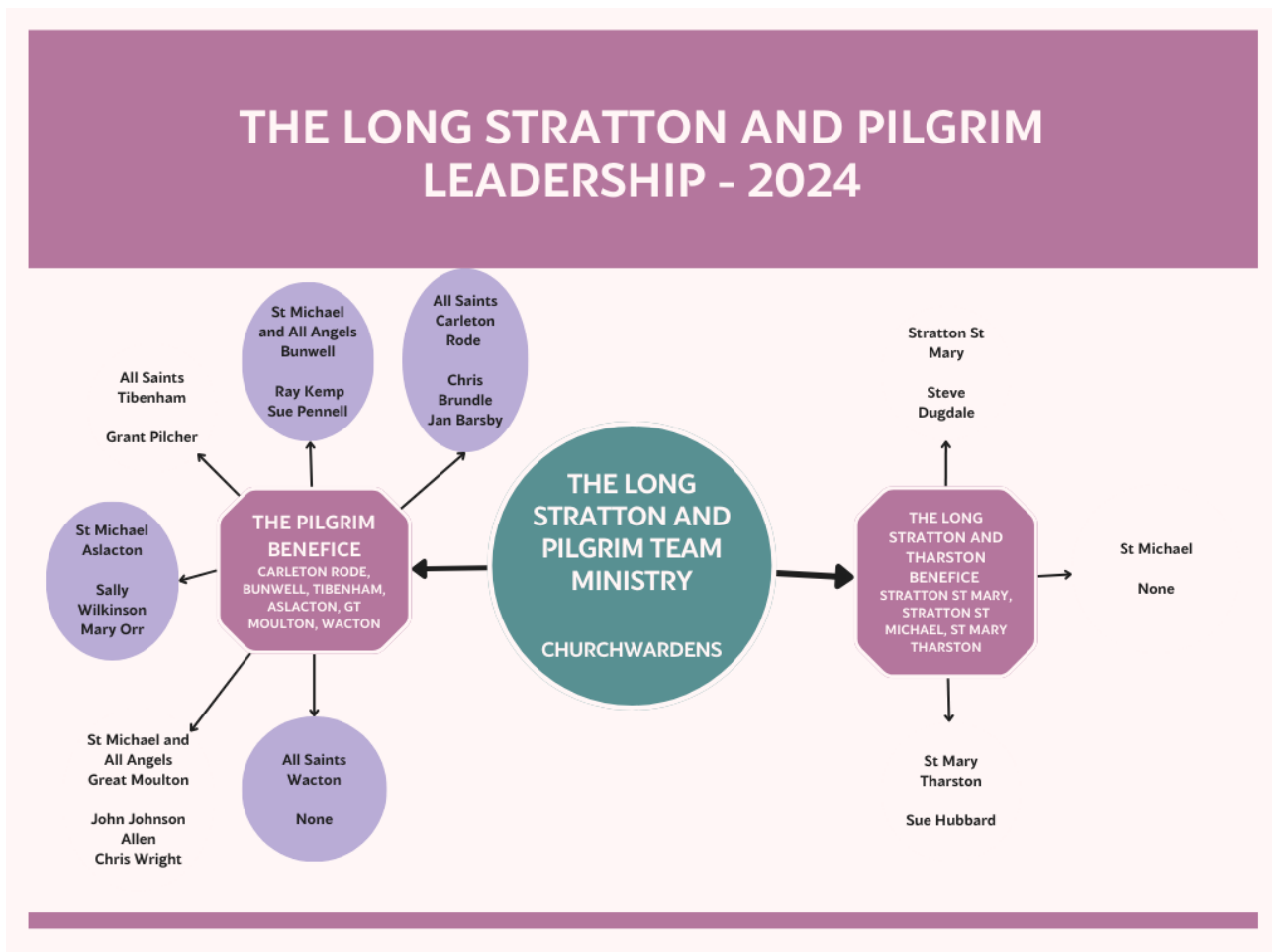
In the playground we have refreshed the table benches, and sadly had to remove the box climber that had reached the end of its life and was no longer in a safe condition. However, we were fortunate enough to be successful in our application for funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, which fully paid for a new piece of playground equipment, the cone climber that has proved very popular. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Phil Gledhill for his work over the year in making all of that happen, not to mention in previous years, as well as for his work in the Housing and Development Group and the Surface Water and Drainage Group.

At this point in time we do have four vacancies on the parish council, which we are keen to fill if anyone is interested! Please get involved in helping decide how to support and drive the village forward and the right direction for doing so. Feel free to speak to any of us if you have any questions about what the role entails, and to the clerk if you would like a co-option application form or any other information.

John Chapmen, Chairman, Bunwell Parish Council

ST MICHAELS AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH, BUNWELL, 2023

This Year in the benefice



INTRODUCTION: I begin by saying thank you for all your support and prayers through this last year. I also thank you for your great commitment to the task of leading the church in very challenging times. Your commitment and support have been of great encouragement to me.

As it says in the book, "How Village Churches Thrive." Your village churches are probably the oldest buildings in their villages... but its likely they are cared for by just few people in your local community who are regularly fund-raising."

The significance of the church: Churches were built by people for people and they have the relationship with the village throughout history and bring special memories including major life events involving high emotions and major life decisions such as birth, marriage and death take place in these buildings. These also includes big events such as Christmas, Easter, Remembrance Day, Harvest etc have been taking place in churches for centuries. With this in mind, it is clear that the church has played an important role to the community in the past and it still does so today.

The church is an integral part of the identity of the village. The church is the church of the village, and each village has a church. The church is where the religious ceremonies of the village are held. The church marks the spiritual presence of the village.

MINISTRY: Many wonderful and exciting things have been happening across all our churches apart from the regular Sunday services and mid week prayers. School assemblies and both in the schools and schools coming into churches for those festive seasons like Christmas, Easter, Harvest, Remembrance, Mothering Sunday etc. Some schools have decorated the churches during those times. We have also had lovely contributions towards the front cover of our magazine from school pupils - well done!!!

We have have had all age family oriented activities such as the Christingle Services, Easter Egg Hunt and Trails, A lot of work has been done towards fund raising mostly from behind the scene from many volunteers to whom we are extremely grateful. I must say we have seen many changes in our church building and around the churchyard. From work parties, gifts, new ideas, and plenty of work from repairing notice boards, organising and sponsoring events to installation of improved facilities. We are also very grateful to clergy particularly Bishop David Gillett, Canon Martin Smith, Canon Bob Baker, Revd Jennifer de Riverol, and Revd Paul Schwier who have been very supportive to the ministry Team during the Long Stratton Vacancy. And not to mention those who have decorated our churches and made sure they are ready for service. Our ecumenical services went well with the World Day of Prayer held at the Carleton Rode Baptist Church and the Good Friday Walk of Christian Witness.

The current state of our Benefice is that we are now back to being "The Pilgrim Benefice" comprising of Bunwell, Carleton Rode, Tibenham, Aslacton, Great Moulton and Wacton.

Long Stratton is now a separate benefice comprising of St Mary Long Stratton, St Michael and St Mary Tharston. The new Vicar The Revd Becki Bensusan will be taking her new role at Long Stratton sometime this year. Buit we all still remain in the same Depwade Deanery.

Further, following a recent email from the diocese, our next door deanery of "Humbleyard", has been dissolved and the Benefices of Upper Tas and Mulbarton will now be part of the "Depwade Deanery."

What we do not know so far, is which parishes in those two benefices will join the Pilgrim Benefice and whether that will involve a change of name for the Pilgrim Benefice. The challenge still remains that we keep our churches open and maintain our regular services.

Thanks: I would like to reiterate my sincere gratitude to all for the commitment in maintaining the church and the church yard and supporting the services. We have also kept the churches open for special services of baptism, weddings and funerals. And our regular Sunday worship.

We still face a fall in the number of people from the parishes who come to church and we have not quite reached the pre-Covid numbers. We also a low number of people willing to join the PCC's.

We promote the churches by keeping the "A Church Near You" website updated with activities and events in the Benefice.

CHALLENGES AHEAD: We are facing the following challenges:

- Planning activities suitable for all ages
- Getting more people to join our activities
- Finding ways of being both proactive and re active
- Reviewing our progress and making relevant adjustments

GIVING AND PARISH SHARE: Some of our parishes are still facing challenges in meeting the parish share allocated by the diocese. Please give your support where and when you can, it is always very much needed and appreciated for keeping your local church open.

FUNDRAISING: This is also a great challenge with our small rural congregations.

However, our greatest desire is to see more people with interest to support our church.

We welcome the use of the church for other events just get in touch with the vicar or the Churchwardens. These events can include special prayer, special thanksgiving for anniversaries or recovery from illness, safe childbirth, getting a job etc or you can also give, talks/lectures, exhibitions etc.

CHURCH BUILDING AND CHURCHYARD: The churches continue to remain special spaces in the village where many events past and present have left permanent memories. The churches and the village are almost synonymous, you can not mention the village without the mention of the church and vice versa. And it is in this space of the church that many memories or people past and present are found. However we are faced by a great challenge of keeping the buildings open if we do not get enough community support, and the PCCs are working very hard.

BAPTISMS WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS: These records can be found in our register books.

FUTURE AND VISION: This update report may seem to have pessimism in it, but if we embrace ourselves and have the moral will to move forward, we can look to the future with hope and trust in God. My prayers are that God brings more people and resources into the church. The diocesan vision this year is to be transformed by Christ Prophetically.

CONCLUSION: Finally I would like to thank everyone again for your invaluable support in this last year and hope that we will do the best we can in the coming year.

The Revd John Madinda [April 2024]

County Councillor Catherine Rowett's Annual Report

Introduction

I have been an elected Councillor for West Depwade since July 2023, (roughly ten months in office). I joined an existing group of three Green Party Councillors. This had a number of useful effects:

- (i) we now have members on all four of the select committees. I was given a place on the all-important infrastructure and development select committee, which covers many things that matter to us in these communities);
- (ii) it gave us enough councillors to be able to call in unaccountable decisions made unilaterally by cabinet members, for scrutiny at Scrutiny committee.
- (iii) I'm the first Green Party councillor to be elected from a rural area, which has shifted our focus to prioritise issues that relate to rural communities and rural roads and to keep existing councillors on their toes where they've been neglecting the interests of these communities. All of this has enabled us to be a force for good and to take care that residents' views are being heard at every level of Council business. I've forged good relations with the main officers who handle matters that regularly arise in our communities, especially the highways officers. The flooding and surface water officers have been a bit more elusive (but obviously also extremely overworked this year). The footpaths officers have also been helpful, and I am trying to make some progress with the officer who has responsibility for our buses and public transport issues.

Road safety

Much of my work during the Autumn was taken up with the Road Safety Community Fund. Ostensibly this was our chance to get the road safety schemes we all want for rural roads where it's scary to walk or cycle. It included Traffic Regulation Orders such as speed limits (which you can't get under

the Parish Partnerships etc). But in reality the amount allowed per councillor was sufficient for just one speed limit. I was advised that it should be possible to get several speed limits in a single village or parish under one TRO, but in the event, while I did get two approved, they clearly counted them as two separate ones and now they say that I got way more than my fair share of the funding, even though only part of one of my schemes, out of 18 requests, was funded. That's the one and only time we have access to that fund, so what we have is really a slap in the face for rural road safety in Norfolk. I've now allocated the residue of my annual highways allowance to some of my 17 schemes that didn't get the RSCF funding, and am already allocating this year's allowance to others that missed out, and collaborating with neighbouring councillors where an issue crosses the boundary. I'm also trying to get changes to the Norfolk Speed Management Strategy, aiming to change the criteria for reducing speed limits not just within the village but also on the tiny narrow winding roads between villages, where people want to walk, cycle or ride horses. We need a proactive approach, instead of requiring people to be killed first. It would also be good to get changes at a national level to address the inappropriate national speed limit, which seems rarely appropriate on single track roads.

Surface water

Rain and flooding has been a refrain throughout the Autumn and winter, and many people have suffered wretched situations with internal floods, flooded roads and sewage spills. I've attended meetings with Anglian Water and Parish Councils but many issues are still unsolved. It's shocking that people are paying for sewage treatment, and getting no such thing. We need political changes, including public accountability and regulation, both locally and nationally. The damage to rivers and coastal resorts is also part of this problem. Several parishes have had problems with water flowing from the ditch to the road. Since SNDC has now appointed an excellent riparian obligations officer, there may be some progress with situations where farmers/landowners are supposed to clear the ditches.

Footpaths

Many footpaths have been closed during the upgrading of the pylons. Other cases are more problematic, where landowners have diverted or closed footpaths. We now have a new route approved for the FP6 in Gissing. I very much appreciate the work that parishes do to help by using their own teams of volunteers to keep footpaths and drainage in good order, and to help residents with issues they have locally.

Public Transport

Slow progress with issues relating to bus timetables for Dickleburgh and Pulham and other villages that have badly timed bus services to Diss, but we should have a meeting with the public transport officer set up soon. I've also been floating plans for a new station on the London line near Long Stratton which would be transformative for all of us in this area.

Pylons, biodigesters and Planning

I'm regularly engaged in work to combat the planned Norwich to Tilbury Pylons scheme, including responding to the previous consultation in Summer last year and now I shall be examining and responding to the latest materials for the statutory consultation by National Grid. I'm grateful to all the activists who are putting time, effort and money into securing the right information and advice to inform our responses and give a full account of the egregious damage that the scheme will cause to the local environment. While it is true that all energy schemes, including offshore grid infrastructure, cause some damaging impacts on natural habitats—which is why reducing energy demand is also a key part of greening our future—we do need to find ways to outlaw schemes whose environmental costs vastly outweigh the benefits they bring in terms of renewable energy. I could say more about why we are in this mess, but this is enough for now.

Contact me on

Catherine.rowett.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk for Council-related business. See also my facebook page.

12th April 2024

Signed

Date