

Report from District Councillor February 14th 2024

Flooding (again)

We have had a complex few weeks. The flooding, mainly at Mellor's, is the result of absence of maintenance of culverts and some ditches by the county council and ditches and streams by landowners, in some cases going back 50 years!

I have posted much of this long and sad story on my Facebook page but we are told that no work can be done on the under-road culvert carrying Childrey Brook and water from Cornhill Lane until water levels went down, for H&S reasons! This has been delayed more than once by erratic but heavy rainfall. At one point the discharge from the canal was blocked by the county council to facilitate inspection of the culvert and ditches but the canal water level rose and threatened the two bungalows on Cornhill Lane so the blockage had to be removed by the council resulting in a small tidal wave which flooded the A417 again for a few hours. The complicated drainage system at Mellor's will be resolved but how quickly is anyone's guess. There is also a drainage system of pipe and overgrown ditch running south of the A417 and west of Silver Lane which is currently being dug out. I think we will have traffic lights there for a number of weeks yet!

I have been in touch with many of the companies at Mellor's and on the W&G Estate. Thank goodness things are returning to normal but many thousands of pounds have been lost and I have advised that they claim for lost income.

In addition to the A417 at Mellor's, I would also like the drainage system on the A417 at Haynes looked at again because this also still floods despite the work done on it a few years ago.

You probably also know that we are not the only ones suffering. The back road into Letcombe Regis (at Bablake's Farm) was also blocked with a flood and the completely blocked drains on Court Hill there means that heavy rain ends up in the garage of The Mill!

County Health Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)

At the recent HOSC meeting in Oxford we reviewed the improvements in the South and Central Ambulance Service (SCAS). Response times have improved although the number of Category 1 and 2 (Life-threatening and emergency) cases have increased to an unprecedented 70%. Issues of patient and staff safety and infection control have also improved.

We also reviewed improvements to responses at the JR to patient incidents (bed sores, patient falls etc).

The county Public Health Team is now developing a strategy to improve health issues resulting from long-term climate change. I will report on this when the report is published.

County Council Highways visit

We had a visit to this ward from County Councillor Andrew Gant, who has responsibility for Highways, to look at our road surfaces and drainage which we know are in very poor condition. He pointed out to us that they have less than 50% of the money that they need just for routine maintenance. I have no idea whether the county council could shift money around within their budget but central government certainly has less money than they would like and continue to cut contributions to local government mainly because

the UK is £30-40 billion p.a. poorer than we used to be. Unfortunately, I don't see Highways issues improving over the next few years. It is very worrying and we will keep on to the county about this. Poor roads contribute to a poorer local economy and accidents. The only very small bright light in this darkness is that they have upgraded FixMyStreet which should be more responsive – we are told.

Childrey Way and School Children

Although, not specifically a village issue, we have heard (bizarrely, via the Wantage Herald!) that, despite the fact that Childrey Way has been resurfaced, the spare-seats scheme which allowed Childrey school children to access bus transport to KAs is to be discontinued. We are trying to get facts. I do wonder whether OCC have looked at the new No. 68 Community Bus that supplies our villages, and can drop children off in time for school (just about), and think that this is enough. Something is going on at the County Council about this but I am not sure what. More when I hear anything.

Hedge Planting

The Challows and Childrey Hedgerow Group has completed planting 500m of mixed-species hedge along Silver Lane (Whitelands Rd) between West Challow and the B4507. Many thanks are due to our Parish Council and County Councillor Yvonne Constance, who contributed to our costs.

We will carry on with more sessions next winter. If you are interested in getting involved watch out for notices on the village Facebook pages next autumn.

Recycling talk – reminder

I will put out reminders on Facebook nearer the date but please remember that we have a talk by Clara-Legallais-Moha, the Vale recycling officer, at 7pm on February 26th in our Village Hall.

Cllr Dr Paul Barrow