

NITON AND WHITWELL PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE ELECTORS 2014/15

EDWARD EDWARDS LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY HUB

Since the closure of Niton Youth Club in July 2012, the Parish Council has supported the retention of the old schoolhouse/youth club building and car park for the use of the community; these were acquired by Niton Community Projects in early 2014. In September, in recognition of the importance of the new Edward Edwards Library and community hub project, the Parish Council awarded a grant of £4,000 towards the new heating system for the building. It now enjoys the privilege of holding its Niton meetings in beautifully refurbished surroundings!

LOCAL YOUTH SERVICE

In the absence of Isle of Wight Council funded youth provision, the Parish Council has supported Niton Methodist Church community youth work. In June 2014, it awarded a grant of £2,000 as backing for the Church's 'South Wight Area Youth Partnership' (SWAY) bid to run a devolved youth service for the Parish and south west Wight area on behalf of the Isle of Wight Council. The Parish Council subsequently welcomed the success of SWAY's bid.

PUBLIC TOILETS

The Parish Council is indebted to local volunteers, who clean the toilets on a daily basis, and to Norris Stores, which supplies cleaning materials free of charge. During the year, electricity costs were met from a £500 donation received from grateful visitors to Niton and repairs to the exterior brickwork were carried out free of charge by Andy Power.

ROADS

Communication with Ringway Island Roads has improved. However, requests for highways work other than like-for-like replacements or repairs remain a problem as they are not covered by the Highways PFI contract and require funding from the Isle of Wight Council.

PLANNING

The Council commented on all of the 27 planning applications in the Parish. During the year, 1 planning application was granted by the Isle of Wight Council against the recommendation of the Parish Council.

COMMUNICATIONS

Under the Freedom of Information Act Model Publication Scheme, a list of all documents available to the Public is posted on the website. Copies of the list are held by the Clerk and at Niton library. Notices and agendas are placed on the village notice boards. A file is currently available in the Edward Edwards Library in Niton with information about the Parish Council including the annual report, minutes and agendas, and will continue to be available for the foreseeable future. This information is also available from the Council website at:

https://secureservices.iow.gov.uk/council/parish_councils/nitonwhitwell/

The Parish Council is looking to develop its own independent site in the very near future. Written reports are provided monthly for the 'Connections' magazine.

PARISH PLAN

The updated Parish Plan was published in September 2013. In 2014, following a public consultation from 15th March to 28th April and consideration by the Isle of Wight Council Executive on 10th June, the Parish Plan was adopted as Supplementary Planning Documentation (SPD) by the Isle of Wight Council on 20th June. The content of the Plan is now a material consideration, where relevant, when determining planning applications within the Parish.

Hard copies are available from the Edward Edwards Library in Niton; the adopted (updated) version can be found at:

<https://www.iwight.com/Council/OtherServices/Supplementary-Planning-Documents/Community-Plans-SPDs>

(scroll down to 'Niton and Whitwell Parish Plan SPD')

The Parish Action Plan, which forms Appendix 6 of the Parish Plan 2013, is attached showing progress to date.

HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY

In May 2014, in conjunction with the Isle of Wight Council Planning Department, the Parish Council carried out a Housing Needs Survey, distributing almost 1,100 questionnaires to homes throughout the Parish. The response rate was an overwhelming 47%, with many residents using the final section of the form to give additional comments.

The results of the survey were analysed and used to produce the final Housing Needs Survey, which was accepted by the Parish Council in November; the report identifies a need for a very small number of houses in Niton.

The Housing Needs Survey report can be found at:

<https://www.iwight.com/Residents/Environment-Planning-and-Waste/Planning-Policy-new/Community-Planning/Housing-Needs-Surveys>

(scroll down to 'Niton and Whitwell')

UNDERCLIFF DRIVE

On 20th June, in support of Undercliff residents and businesses, the Parish Council held a hastily-convened meeting with Mr Andrew Turner MP, Dr Bruce Denness and representatives of Undercliff businesses to discuss the problems ensuing from the closure of the road. Consequently, the Parish Council purchased and erected three green tourist signs giving directions to Niton Undercliff businesses, obtained a physical barrier to parking beyond the end of the bay in Niton High Street to assist traffic flow and resolved to actively support Dr Denness' drainage scheme for stabilising the road.

Although signage for diverted traffic has recently been improved, the Parish Council continues to press for additional signs in Whitwell and Niton for west-bound traffic.

PERPETUUS TIDAL ENERGY CENTRE (PTEC)

In February 2015, the Parish Council made representations to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) regarding the lack of consultation on the project and requesting an extension to the formal consultation period. It is working to learn more about the technical and practical aspects of the project in a transparent manner.

NUMBER 6 BUS SERVICE

Although the service looks to be secure until September 2015, the Isle of Wight Council cuts to bus subsidies are of great concern with regard to the winter timetable. The Parish Council is taking all possible action to prevent the loss of any journey.

PRECEPT

In April 2014, the Parish Council increased its emergency reserve from £3,000 to £8,500 to cover anticipated additional costs due to the Isle of Wight Council's budget deficit and plans to devolve responsibility for discretionary services to local communities. In January 2015, it resolved to make no further increase to its reserve and to maintain its budget at the previous year's level as

far as possible. Thus it was able to hold the Parish precept at £20,000 for 2015/16. At £20.40 per annum per Band D household, the precept is still one of the lowest on the Island.

MEETINGS

The Parish Council meets on the fourth Monday in the month (except August and December), with the venue alternating between the Edward Edwards Library in Niton and Whitwell Village Hall. If required, there is a Planning Committee meeting held on the second Monday in each month. The press and public are welcome to attend and there is a public question time before the formal business commences.

G R Melville
Chairman of the Parish Council

V J Ford
Clerk to the Parish Council