

# **NITON AND WHITWELL PARISH COUNCIL**

## **ANNUAL REPORT TO THE ELECTORS 2019/20**

The lockdown instigated in response to the Covid-19 pandemic has inevitably now dominated the past year. It has severely impacted on the way in which we live, work and enjoy our leisure time, but we share this in common with many others who don't benefit from living in such a community-minded part of the country. The Parish Council is indeed grateful to the many local volunteers who have stepped forward to provide assistance to our most vulnerable parishioners during this period, from help with food and shopping to collecting prescriptions and providing personal protective equipment. Community Response And Backup (CRAB) groups operating in Niton and Whitwell have led this work; and we are also grateful for the grant funding provided by the Isle of Wight Council to help finance this activity.

However, the normal business of the Parish has not been overlooked and there have been a number of achievements that deserve a mention. A raft of improvements has been undertaken at both of the main public spaces managed by the Parish Council. Niton Recreational Ground saw the provision of new tables and seating as well as the inaugural go-kart race. The Village Green at Castlehaven has also seen improvements. The Green has been sensitively landscaped by Island 2000 Trust and additional gabions have been installed on the seaward-side with a view to retarding the erosion of soil. We were also very pleased when the Isle of Wight Council successfully reopened the footpath in this area and the PC is currently evaluating further improvements of this amenity for the benefit of all.

Perhaps the singular disappointment is another year passing where little work has progressed on the reinstatement of the Undercliff Drive. This important A road forms part of the round-the-Island scenic route and its closure has continued to force all traffic through our small village roads. This remains an important priority for this Council and we will continue to press the Isle of Wight Council to reopen the road in the near future.

The Parish Council would like to take the opportunity to offer our thanks to one of our longest serving Parish Councillors, who has stepped down after more than 37 years. Ann Innes was first elected to the Parish Council in 1983 and was also the former headteacher of Niton Primary School. Thank you very much, Ann, for your service and dedication, for which we are all very grateful.

Finally, it is worth noting that the current need to implement "social distancing" has prevented normal face-to-face meetings taking place. The Parish Council has embraced the potential of video conferencing to undertake virtual meetings, including of course the Annual Meeting where this report will be presented and discussed.

The following provides a summary of activity undertaken over the past 12 months:

### **ASHKNOWLE LANE BRIDLEWAY**

The Parish Council has continued to carry out minor maintenance to the surface of the Lane to ensure safe vehicular access for residents and visitors to the cemetery. It is looking to provide appropriate signage indicating a safe right of way between the Villages in the near future.



## **WHITWELL WAR MEMORIAL**

Following the steam cleaning of the Memorial in 2019, the Parish Council was advised by the War Memorials Trust not to carry out further work to improve the definition of the lettering. A contract to remove rust from the metal railings and repaint them has been awarded locally and work will begin once the raw materials become available to purchase.

## **SMUGGLERS TRAIL**

To promote tourism and associated business within the Parish, the Parish Council developed a Smugglers Trail in the form of a printed leaflet and dedicated page on the website. A considerable time was spent conducting historical research locally. A special Smugglers Trail map was commissioned and subsequently designed by Alan Rowe of Potting Shed Cartoons. The Parish Council is grateful to Tregear Pottery for the design and manufacture of the ceramic plaques attached to the buildings along the Trail.

## **NITON RECREATION GROUND**

The first ever NitWhit Soap Box Derby was held at the Recreation Ground on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019. It was a wonderful afternoon, thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended, and the Parish Council is hoping to build up the event year on year. It also provided a great opportunity to work in partnership with our local youth service, SWAY.

The Parish Council carried out a public consultation in December 2019 in preparation for the budget-setting process in January 2020. As a result, a number of projects are in the pipeline including a trim trail, new skateboard park, wildflower meadow, tennis court and toilet facilities.

## **CASTLEHAVEN**

The Parish Council remains committed to fulfilling its statutory duty as custodian of Castlehaven Village Green, thereby preserving the full public amenity. It is indebted to the Niton Harbour Club for grass cutting on the Village Green and to Island 2000 Trust for accepting the site into its Gift to Nature portfolio. To protect the seaward end of the Village Green, the height of the adjacent stone gabion baskets was increased by half a metre. Work will continue with the aim of creating a safe and functional public space that provides a natural habitat which is sympathetic to its environment. The Parish Council also contributed £2,000 towards the cost of repairing and re-opening the stretch of NT46 running along the sea wall.

## **COMMUNITY GRANTS**

During the year, grants have been awarded to South Wight Area Youth Partnership (SWAY) (£5,000), Niton Village Day (£200), Niton Christmas Day and Lantern Parade (£300) and Niton and Whitwell Parish Churches towards the grounds maintenance of Niton Churchyard and Ashknowle Cemetery (£900 and £400 respectively). Grants are awarded in recognition of the benefit to the community afforded by each asset or service.

## **PUBLIC TOILETS**

The Parish Council is indebted to local volunteers, who clean the toilets daily; to Norris Stores, which supplies cleaning materials free of charge; and to Councillor John Stotesbury, who continues to solve minor maintenance problems. Progress on the promised transfer of the freehold from the Isle of Wight Council is, yet again, still awaited.

## **ALLOTMENT ROAD CAR PARK**

The Parish Council remains committed to acquiring the car park and has agreed in principle to its acquisition with the garages in situ. The nuisance of "abandoned" vehicles continues and is being closely monitored by the Parish Council and Councillor Dave Stewart, Isle of Wight Council Ward Member.



## **ROADS, INCLUDING UNDERCLIFF DRIVE**

The closure of Undercliff Drive continues to have a serious impact on the Parish roads, with the diversionary route through the villages following "B" class roads. Encouraged by the result of the Isle of Wight Council's public consultation on the future of Undercliff Drive, the Parish Council remains resolutely committed to the re-opening of the road and continues to work with Councillor Stewart to achieve this.

## **PLANNING**

The Parish Council considered 26 of 29 planning applications in the Parish. During the year, one planning application was granted by the Isle of Wight Council against the recommendation of the Parish Council. The Parish Council held a Planning Committee meeting in January to consider planning application 19/01419/FUL: Proposed residential development of 20 dwellings; formation of vehicular access, parking and landscaping on land rear of 1, Hillside Terrace and Trenale (known as School House Meadow), High Street, Whitwell. In view of the scale of the proposed development, a professional planning consultant was engaged to assist with compilation of a comprehensive set of comments/concerns for submission to the Isle of Wight Council. The application was withdrawn in March.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

The Parish Council's website continues to be an invaluable tool in maintaining communication. Under the Transparency Code, all documents available to the public are posted on the website at [www.nitonwhitwell.org.uk](http://www.nitonwhitwell.org.uk)

Notices and agendas are also 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 this will continue to be available for the foreseeable future. Written reports are provided monthly for the 'Connections' magazine.

Our Isle of Wight Council Ward Member, Councillor Dave Stewart, continues to attend Parish Council meetings whenever possible.

In line with GDPR legislation, the website was converted to a secure https connection and a cookie notice added in June. Accessibility tools were also added at this time. In line with The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018, the Parish Council adopted its Accessibility Statement through delegated authority in March and this has been published on the website.

## **PARISH PLAN**

The updated Parish Plan was published in September 2013 and adopted as Supplementary Planning Documentation (SPD) by the Isle of Wight Council in 2014. 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 may be accessed via the Parish Council website.

As the Parish Plan is now over 5 years old, the Parish Council is considering the best means by which to influence local planning policy for the benefit of the Parish going forward.

## **DOG FOULING**

The Parish Council continues to fund the services of an Isle of Wight Council Environment Officer with the power to issue £75 on-the-spot fixed penalty notices where owners fail to pick up after their dog. The Officer patrols affected areas, acting on local intelligence.

## **SOUTHERN VECTIS NUMBER 6 BUS SERVICE AND COMMUNITY TRANSPORT**

During the past year, Chale, Chillerton and Gatcombe and Niton and Whitwell Parish Councils have, once again, jointly funded a winter Sunday service between Newport and Ventnor. Parish excursions were run to Freshwater Co-op and the End of the Line café in May, Arreton Barns in August, Dalverton Garden Centre in October and Busy Bee "Christmas World" in



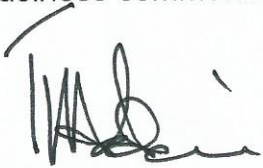
December. The Parish Council is very pleased to be working with Ken Day of Island Minibus Services to continue the programme of outings.

### **PRECEPT**

To maintain current services and approve projects for the coming year including community transport; youth outreach; Village and Parish maintenance; and further improvements to Castlehaven Village Green and Niton Recreation Ground, the Parish Council raised the precept to £49,915 for 2020/21 from £48,828 in 2019/20. This represents an increase of 6p per month for Band D properties. Full details of the budget are available on the Parish Council's website.

### **MEETINGS**

The Parish Council meets on the fourth Monday in the month (except August and December). Ordinarily, the venue alternates between the Edward Edwards Library in Niton and Whitwell Village Hall. However, meetings held between 4<sup>th</sup> April 2020 and 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021 may be held remotely in accordance with the provisions of the 2020 Coronavirus-related regulations. 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.



Cllr Tim Addison  
Chairman of the Parish Council



Vickie Ford  
Clerk to the Parish Council