

“Working Together for a Better Community”

NEROCHE PARISH PLAN

Issue No 2

NEWSLETTER

May 2010



Welcome to the second issue of the Neroche Parish Plan Newsletter. The aim of this publication is to keep you informed of the Steering Group’s progress in developing the Plan and to help improve communication within the Parish. If you wish to read our previous Newsletter, find further details of ‘what is a Parish Plan’, view a full copy of the Action Plan or join a Working Group then go to our website at www.nerochevillages.org.uk

Update From the Steering Group

***Tim French (Chairman), Nicky Baxter, Mary Bell, Tami Boden-Ellis
Jane Hole, Jason Jackson, Ann Jones, Joanne Routley,
Clare Stewart, David Symmonds, Wally Torrington***

The Steering Group has now met on seven occasions and much progress has been made: a ‘matched funding’ grant of £1,500 has been received from the Blackdown Hills AONB ‘Making it Local’ fund (*matched funding means that the AONB will match any monies that we raise on a £1 for £1 basis, so there is still some way to go before we can claim to be fully funded*); the Parish Plan website has just gone live (albeit only in its embryonic form); a database of supporters has been established; and Working Groups have been formed and will be gathering information on their specific subjects until the beginning of May. (*Continued over...*)

It was marvellous to see such an excellent turnout at the Business Breakfast in February; many businesses resident in Neroche were represented, including a number of farmers. Equally encouraging was the contribution made by those who attended the Working Group Coffee Morning at Tami Boden-Ellis's home to discuss support for elderly people living in Neroche. These are just two of a number of Working Groups that are focusing on a wide range of subjects.

Feedback on this newsletter or your contributions to any aspect of the Parish Plan would be warmly welcomed, as the aim is to maintain regular communication with you all; this will ensure that your wishes and aspirations regarding improvements to, and protection of, our community and its environment, are reflected in the final report.

Support for the Elderly

Tami Boden-Ellis is leading the Working Group that is looking into 'Support for the Elderly' (*part of the Parish Plan Consultation Exercise*). As well as consulting widely she also held a coffee morning at her home where those in attendance proffered some excellent views and positive suggestions as to how the quality of life for our older residents could be improved, including: expansion of the public transport system (both commercial and voluntary); assistance with IT (both the procurement of equipment and instruction); extra assistance for the housebound; assistance during severe weather conditions; newcomers welcome pack; better communication, including a parish newsletter; social functions specifically for the elderly; a directory for the elderly; services of a local handyman; and many, many more. Tami's study is ongoing and she can be contacted on 01460 234444. All concerns raised will be addressed in the forthcoming questionnaire.

Family Adventure Day

The British Association of Shooting and Conservation (BASC) has volunteered to run a Parish Plan Family Adventure Day at their South West Centre based at Smokey Bottom Lodge in Staple Fitzpaine. It will cost £15 per adult, with children under 16 years going free (for safety reasons, every child must be accompanied by an adult). Activities are likely to include: shotgun; rifle coaching; field craft; dog handling; assault course; quad biking; and more. Food and refreshments will be available. (*Date and full details will be published soon*)



Business Breakfast for Local Businesses

The Neroche Parish Plan Business Breakfast held in Neroche Parish Hall on Thursday 18 February 2010 was a great success. The 'Breakfast' was part of the Parish Plan consultation exercise to ensure that the widest spectrum of Parish residents is given the opportunity to contribute to the formulation of the Plan. Over 20 local businesses were represented, all of which operate within, or very close to, the Neroche Civic Parish. Also in attendance was Councillor John Williams.



These, together with the presenters and helpers, meant that almost 30 sat down to a hearty breakfast cooked by Jane Hole and her team of volunteers.

After a short introduction and explanation of the Parish Plan by Jason Jackson (Parish Plan Steering Group member and Chairman of the Parish Council), an open forum was

facilitated by Jason and Wally Torrington (another Steering Group member and Parish Councillor). A wide range of topics was discussed from 'mobile phone reception' to 'road signage' and 'pride in the parish' to 'care of the environment'. All concerns will be reflected in the Parish Plan Questionnaire, which will be going out to every household in the Parish later this year. All in attendance agreed that much would be gained from regular meetings for local business and it is therefore planned to run another such event in about six months time.

'Parish Plan' and 'Community' Websites

The Parish Plan website is now 'up-and-running'. It is fully comprehensive and contains everything that one would wish to know about the Plan. Go to the site now at www.nerochevillages.org.uk and tell us what you think. However, of greater importance, because of the rapid progress that the Parish Plan is making, and due to strong support from residents during the early part of the consultation process (particularly the Neroche business community) the Parish Council has agreed that work should now proceed on developing a Community Website. It has made available the £250 granted by our Somerset County Councillor David Fothergill (to add to the funds that the Parish Plan Steering Group have already secured) and a further £100 a year henceforth for maintenance. If you are interested in assisting in taking this project forward then please contact Dianne Hood on 01823 480927 or Tim French on 01460 234410.



Taunton Transition Town Workshop

The next public meeting involving the Parish Plan has been arranged for **Thursday 29 April 2010 at 7:00pm in the Neroche Parish Hall.** The Taunton Transition Team will be giving a presentation and facilitating a workshop on issues around climate change, reducing the use of fossil fuels, looking at the use of alternate sources of energy, increasing local energy production and other steps to reduce the carbon footprint. *(Further details will be circulated closer to the date).*



The Questionnaire

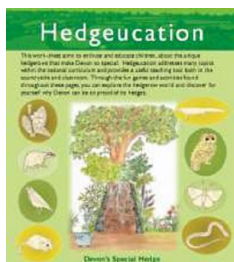
The most important part of the consultation process for the Plan will be the questionnaire, which will be delivered to every home in the Parish with the facility for every person in the household to have their say.

To ensure neutrality and professionalism, the Steering Group have commissioned experts at the 'Community Council for Somerset' to assist with: setting the questions (crafted from all the concerns raised by the community during the early phase of the consultation process); evaluating the answers; and carrying out the statistical analysis.



It is hoped to deliver and collect the questionnaire during June. Assistance will be offered to those who request it (e.g. for the elderly and those with poor eyesight).

Valuing the Natural Environment - Hedgerows *(Getting young people involved)*



Caring for the local environment has featured high on your list of concerns. Young people, in particular, can learn about the importance of our hedgerows thanks to a new interactive website. Funded by Defra, Natural England and the National Hedgelayering Society, the micro-site provides 7 to 11-year-olds with resources, such as interactive games, to learn about the many different species that live in hedgerows. The site also provides teachers with activity sheets to help them plan the subject of hedgerows into their lessons. "This is a fun way for children to learn about our hedgerows and about

the importance of the nature on our doorstep...” said Wildlife Minister Huw Irranca-Davies “...hedgerows are a part of our natural heritage and as well as providing us with blackberries, sloes, hazelnuts, and elderflowers, they are also vital for food and shelter for many birds, insects and animals, including many of our rarer species.”

Launched by ‘Hedgelink UK’ the initiative also provides children with the opportunity to take part in a hedgerow survey, which will help build a picture of the state of the nation’s hedgerows. Rob Wolton, chair of Hedgelink, said “hedgerows offer so much to society, not only as wildlife havens, but also as a rich part of our landscape and history”. The micro-site can be found at <http://www.hedgelink.org.uk/index.php?id=33>

Broadband

During the first phase of the consultation process many residents have complained about the speed of broadband. To enable Somerset County Council to address this issue, they require accurate data about actual Internet speeds to enable resources to be properly targeted. They would like as many responses as possible to a survey they are currently conducting; please ‘cut-and-paste’ the following into your search engine:



<http://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=dGFDSVhJa3NCanhiNIBxQjFQeWIBQkE6MA>

The evidence will be used to help form an accurate picture of broadband speeds, and in particular to help provide evidence so that we can draw down EU money. Please pass this on to friends and associates in Somerset who use Broadband. Another good site for checking broadband speed is: <http://www.speedtest.bbmax.co.uk/>

Wider Communication *(A message from the Parish Council)*

If you would like to receive regular Parish Council information e.g. on changes to services (such as refuse collection), emergencies or dates of meetings etc then send your name and address followed by “YES PLEASE” to Peter Crossley, the Parish Clerk at neroche.pc@virgin.net

A Few Notes From the Farming Community

Editor: *As many of us living in the Parish do not fully comprehend the world of farming, Mark Pope has kindly penned a few words to give us a better understanding of 'life on the farm' at this time of year...*

“ **We** have had a long cold winter followed by a late spring. The consequence of this being no fresh new grass for lambs or for turning out the cattle, resulting in the requirement for extra ‘feed’.

At long last, however, the ground is beginning to warm-up, enabling us to start working the fields. This is the time of year when stock farms have to empty their muck heaps and begin spreading their contents on the ground (with the associated ‘country’ aroma that you will have smelt recently). The ‘muck’ increases the organic matter in the soil and improves its condition; it also gives the ground much needed nourishment and helps to reduce the use of bagged fertilizer. Ploughing will soon begin in preparation for the planting of maize, which is used to feed to the cows in winter. At Staple Farm we are also weed-spraying and carrying out fungicide treatment to help keep the plants free from disease. Because of all the foregoing, there may well be some mud on the roads, as the fields are not yet completely dry; your understanding in this matter would be greatly appreciated and we will continue to make every effort to clean-up as we go.



At this time of year you will see large machinery on the roads, so please drive carefully on the narrow lanes. Also, when walking your dogs please check to see if there are any stock in the fields and, if so, please keep your pets under control; at Bickenhall Farm there will be a lot of young lambs about!

Looking ahead a little, the next major task will be silage making in May. This is a time when we need dry warm weather. The grass is cut when the sugar content of the crop is at its highest and is then left to wilt for 24 hours. After this it is picked-up as quickly as possible to maintain the quality, and taken back to the farms to be pushed into the silage pit. Here the grass is rolled to remove as much air as possible, and then the pit is ‘sheeted’ to keep the silage in top condition.



That’s it for now, but if you have any questions regarding what is going on in the Parish, from a farming perspective, please feel free to e-mail me at markpope@staplefarm.co.uk and I will endeavour to give you an answer.”

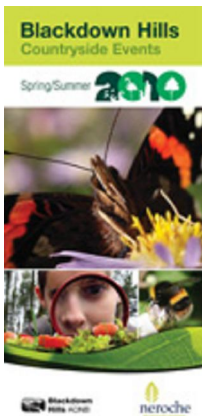
Parish Council

To keep 'up to speed' with the activities of your Parish Council, go to www.neroche.net There you will find a wealth of information, including: a list of Council members; agenda and minutes of meetings; news, views and general details; plus a facility to 'have your say'. Council meetings are open to the public; so if they are discussing a subject, in which you are interested, please feel free to attend.

On Our Doorstep

There are numerous activities taking place within the Parish that are well advertised in the Parish Magazine and on the Parish Hall website, however, there are many more happening within our area that you might not know of; here are a few that you might find of interest...

Blackdown Hills AONB Countryside Events Programme. The new Blackdown Hills Countryside Events programme is packed with a variety of activities from 'Family Nature Days' to 'A Bluebell Walk' and a 'Moth Trapping Evening' to 'A Bat Search', something for everyone. So take a look and discover just how much is going on in this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Log on to www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk to see what's on offer.



The Neroche Scheme to be Extended. The Neroche Scheme's current programme of activities and projects across the northern ridge of the Blackdown Hills will now be continuing for longer than previously planned, thanks to an agreement with the Heritage Lottery Fund to extend its operating period. Previously, the main programme was to have finished in April this year, but will now continue until March 2011. Highlights of this now extended period will include: development of a new walking trail from Staple Hill to Hemyock; LiDAR image ground-truthing, surveys of 'lost' buildings in the forest, and oral history recording; and publication in the autumn of a much-anticipated book, which will provide a colourful exploration of the heritage of the northern Blackdowns.

Digital Trail Guides now at Taunton TIC. Explore the Neroche landscape through the new handheld interactive digital trail guides (DTGs). They are now free to hire from Taunton Tourist Information Centre, as well as the Blackdown Hills AONB office in Hemyock. They are easy to use and lots of fun. Visit their website at www.nerochescheme.org to see an example of the animation.

A Call for Help From the Parish Magazine !!!

Due to the recent absence of Roger Godin through illness, the Parish Magazine Committee have identified a number of volunteer roles that it would like to see filled, including: Event Photographer, Photo Processor, Advertising Manager, and Assistant Editor plus anybody willing to help with routine tasks. The magazine is a valuable community asset and has been a great supporter of the Parish Plan Team, hence the reason for placing this notice. If you feel that you can help please contact David Knight at editors.pm@googlemail.com or on 01823 443936.

What Happens Next?

In accordance with the Parish Plan Action Plan it is proposed to take the project forward as follows: during this month the Working Groups will complete their research, work on producing the questionnaire will commence, the website will 'go live' and the Taunton Transition Town Workshop will take place; the questionnaire (which will go to every household) will be trialed in May then printed, distributed and collected in June; the BASC Family Adventure Day will probably take place in July; the Plan will be produced in November and presented to the Parish Council then delivered to every household in December, and that is when the real work of implementing the recommendations will start!

Your Involvement is Essential

It is still not too late to be involved. The areas that we are looking at cover a wide variety of issues, including: Natural Environment, Planning Development, Traffic, Buses/Cycle Routes, Footpaths/Bridleways, Equine/Rural Pursuits, Parish Social Events, Local Business/Farming, Website, Service to the Elderly, Children and Young People, Improving the Carbon Footprint, Tourism, and more. For further information visit our website at www.nerochevillages.org.uk or contact the editor.

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