

# West Hagbourne ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2005

May 21st 2005

## Report from the *Chair of the Parish Council*

The Annual Parish Meeting is an open meeting which is statutory, and meant to be an opportunity for us to tell you what the Parish Council has accomplished in the past year and give you a series of updates that affect the whole community - ***the aim is for you to be able to ask questions and give feedback that enables us as Councillors to continue acting and responding in the way you want us to.***

At our election we listed in writing our aims and objectives and an update on this list is available for new items to be added.

At the last meeting of the Parish Council in April, we reported on how we had spent the precept, which is given to the Parish to spend, as part of your Council Tax. If anyone wishes to see the accounts, please ask the clerk.

We have continued to build on the improved lines of communication between stakeholders, allied organisations, neighbouring councils and campaigners, so that West Hagbourne becomes more visible. We have seen a significant change in the greater use of email and have registered, launched and encouraged the web site which albeit in its infancy is accessible on the net at [www.westhagbourne.org](http://www.westhagbourne.org)

The web site is getting unique visitors – as the tracker below shows, this is an automatic record of different users that have accessed the site.



The biggest response to consultation we have made this year, is to SEERA - the unelected body called the South East England Regional Assembly. This is the government organisation which is responsible for planning the housing distribution ( among other things ) for the next 20 years. In it's plan for this region, the main area of contention is the expansion of Didcot and the implications for this Parish as the result of at least another 5,000 houses, this is in addition to the proposed 3,200 new homes that are already subject to an planning application, which has gone to appeal because no decision has been made.

***We have continued to emphasise the inadequacies of the road system in and around Didcot, and repeatedly pointed out that whilst Didcot is***

***growing all the time, the impact on this and other villages gets worse.***

It does appear at last, that South Oxfordshire District Council are agreeing with us and Didcot Town Council have acknowledged the situation and seem to have adopted the same point of view.

Whatever happens next, our traffic will continue to grow intolerably, the environmental impact on us will be severe, both air and light pollution will increase dramatically, and the very nature of our rural character continue to be changed. The very guidelines created in the text of planning policy are being flaunted, by all of this growth of Didcot, as the guidelines clearly state that no development should be allowed if it causes damage to a conservation area. We will have to wait and see what the planning appeal decision is, before pursuing any other lines of objection to additional growth.

***Prompted by the History Group, we did manage to get the phone box repainted, this was quite an achievement and happened a year ahead of schedule. Plus we have seen an improvement in the bus service through the village.***

And the War Memorial Bus Shelter has been renovated with a new roof and replacement guttering, partly with money from our reserves, and a grant from SODC, but also with the help of contributions from the History Group and the Village Association, I hope that the improvement will get to be appreciated by future generations. The garden area beside it will be managed and kept much tidier, as a result of changes to our village maintenance programme.

***We're going to continue the tradition of traffic counting and this year we will compare and report the change against all of the previous year's measurements and publish the results.***

Marion Judd has co-ordinated a series of tree planting sessions infilling and replacing the odd dead tree, these were all provided free of charge to the Parish.

The Conservation Team of SODC came and met the Parish Council and explained their role in helping to maintain and conserve, and they have now almost completed the long awaited 'Character Study' of the village, which will be incorporated into the fabric of the Parish Plan.

With help from Sue Totterdell and her steering group, The Parish Plan is in the stages of collation and reporting on the reactions and views of the Parishioners who took the time to fill in the forms. You should all be applauded for making the effort, especially those of you who added ideas and expanded on some of the elements you thought important.

The art scheme and sculpture that was installed on the old railway line, seems to have caused less concern than was expected, the track is getting used more, and the vegetation does seem to be getting a chance to return.

***We managed to get the highways department to instigate some painted lines, indicating the road narrowing beside Green Thatch - and reports indicate it has helped a little, though thanks to everyone who has adopted driving in the middle of the road, this seems to reinforce the signs which state it should be single file traffic.***

You will have seen the changes in surrounding villages on the A417 where gateway entrances have been installed, all part of the next stages of the Didcot Integrated Transport Strategy. In theory our promised improvements should come in the next financial year.

One of the points raised at last years Parish Meeting was the plot of land opposite the Horse & Harrow which is often referred to as the Toll House Garden. The landlord has no plans for this area, and I am in discussion with several contractors to get it cleared and the plan is to level it to grass, and then keep it cut and kept tidy.

Thanks you to my fellow Councillors for sharing the responsibility of taking part in other committees and their reports are available if you ask the clerk. They also ensured representation has been made on other local meetings including the Didcot Area Forum, and the Harwell Local Liaison committee.

I should also thank our current Clerk, Ruth Webb, who has put up with all of our idiosyncrasies, got to grip with the faster pace of email communication and generally kept our filing straight. We have accepted her plans to step down as clerk, and appreciate the timescale proposed which should help in the handover to a new clerk. Thanks should also go to Tracey Anderson for her work on the newsletter, Roger Sweet and John Baile, who have worked on the web site, and to Mary Ann LeMay for helping to keep the planters around the village looking so good.

We have yet again dealt with all of the planning applications put before us this year, within the allocated period of time allowed us by South Oxfordshire District Council. It has not always been easy to ensure the views of the Parish Council are made in a balanced way, but I must remind you that ultimately all final decisions are made by SODC and we are simply part of the local consultation process.

There is one specific item that remains unresolved in the planning department, and we have been approached by the planning officer responsible for Thatch Cottage. He would like us to ask the Parish what they currently feel about the retrospective application for a change of use – to allow the operation of a dog grooming business in an outbuilding which had a planning restriction placed on it when it was first built.

Yet again, I need to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Councillors who have worked hard to keep the promises they made at the beginning of their term of office. The burden of meetings, paperwork and consultation processes that a Parish Council is expected to undertake, continues to grow, and much of it has little or no relevance to a Parish the size of West Hagbourne.

Finally can I urge you to attend the odd Parish Council meeting, we set aside the first half hour of the meeting to discuss anything relevant or important that needs to be dealt with. It gives you the chance to see your Council in action, and whilst we appreciate your support, we also need to know that we are representing you in the way that you want us to.

***We can only do that by you talking to us and telling us what else is needed. You can always drop a note in to the clerk, or email one of the Council, and we'll make the effort to try and react to anything you care to raise, even if you can't actually attend.***

**Phil Taylor** - Chair

May 20<sup>th</sup> 2005

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## ***Village Association***

This has been a relatively quiet year for the Association. Following last year's parish meeting we had a bring and share supper which was enjoyed by 38 people.

In September the judging took place for the Madge Trophy. Joyce and Bob Beacroft were the winners with their delightful garden at Lilley Cottage.

In October we held a Skittles evening with Fish and Chip supper. Four days before the event we thought we were going to have to cancel but a late run on tickets meant we filled Upton Hall to capacity. The evening was enormous fun and I hope everyone enjoyed it as much as I did.

In February this year we planned a spring supper but had to cancel due to low ticket sales. This is the second year running this has happened. Did we get the date wrong or was there some other reason it was not popular.

We would appreciate feedback on which events you enjoyed and which you think we should repeat. We would also like ideas for other things to do.

In November we contributed £100 to the fireworks and in April £250 towards the new bus shelter roof.

The current balance is £1916.

## ***South Oxfordshire District 04/05 report from Councillor - Patrick Greene***

We were delighted to be graded as a "Good" Council following the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), an inspection of the Council's work by the Audit Commission.

Achievements are ***CCTV cameras in Henley and Wallingford***, which are already helping the Police to identify those causing a nuisance. Didcot will have CCTV cameras shortly followed by Thame. We are considering mobile cameras for our rural areas.

We have committed £100,000 towards the Police Community Support Officers who are already on the streets in areas identified as 'HOT' spots. We are very committed to working with others to reduce the fear of crime and make South Oxfordshire a safe place to live, work and visit.

***Affordable Housing*** – we have agreed £1m every year of our capital resources for three years to help provide more houses. Since the Government changed the national funding it has reduced the number of houses being provided. We do have a problem with landowners releasing land for schemes. We continue to work with parish councils to identify possible exception sites to add affordable houses to our villages.

We have reduced the numbers of homeless people in bed and breakfast, which is better for the families concerned and has reduced the cost to the Council.

Planning – the Local Plan works to achieve more affordable houses in private developments. Our improvements in the planning department achieving government targets means we have received £511,790 extra government funding. This funding is being used to make further service efficiencies.

***The South East Plan***, which has been drawn up by the South East Regional Assembly to replace the Oxfordshire Structure Plan has, and is, causing great interest; the large number of houses being imposed on us without the funding for the entire infrastructure needed, plus building on the Green Belt. The south of the district is in fear of Reading expanding, also in the north of Oxford City expanding into the Green Belt and Didcot growing without the proper infrastructure. We are doing all we can as a Council to give the views of the majority of residence.

***Collection of Waste and Recycling*** – we, as a Council, have a high government target of 29% but as a Council have a good record collecting at present 24%. We continued the community vehicles for green waste and general rubbish because we were told that is what the villages and towns wanted. The collection of green waste on the kerbside is very expensive and we are not convinced it is the best way to do it. We must stop using landfill sites for green waste and rubbish so please help us by recycling, composting and using the community sites. We spent this year £20,000 capital plus £50,000 for education and staffing. New underground bottle banks will be introduced on six sites round the district these will reduce noise and hopefully help to increase our targets.

***Didcot*** – we have achieved the opening of the Sainsbury's store at the Orchard Centre. We are on track for the new cinema and the arts centre for which we are financially responsible. We had

to change the art centre as it would have gone well over budget to build and the predicted revenue costs were far greater than we could agree. This is the largest project this Council has ever done and one we are proud of and will be a great asset for everyone in South Oxfordshire. Didcot has been recognised as a growth area for some years and needs these facilities.

This Council has supported the new Waitrose in Wallingford and we have worked with everyone to achieve as little disruption as possible during the building of the store and we look forward to the opening.

Economic development is important to the wellbeing of the district and we work with local businesses and organisations to encourage tourists and events by the way of grant aid.

***Recreation*** – we have continued to improve our leisure centres by agreeing capital expenditure as they had been neglected for some years. Working with Wallingford town council by sharing the costs, we have been able to achieve keeping the Riverside swimming pool and facilities open with improvements. We have negotiated improved contracts with SOLL who run our centres which means a reduction in revenue costs to the Council.

Flooding had been a problem in certain areas and we put £50,000 of capital money for schemes to alleviate the problem and £20,000 revenue funding towards improved response to flooding problems. 12 schemes were identified and most of them have been completed.

The environment is of great importance and we grant aid schemes to help improve the area such as tree planting schemes and historic buildings.

We have a very good record for catching residents who make fraudulent claims against the Council, especially when we take them to court and win prosecutions – we are tough on this crime.

The new Licensing Act has created a lot of extra work but to date we have had no requests for 24-hour openings or a casino!! Not only officers, but also councillors have been trained to enable the process of licences.

Financially this Council is in very good shape, by continually examining expenditure and schemes, we have been able to set the budget for 2005/06 to only give a 2.5% increase in Council Tax, one of the lowest in the country.

We are working towards this Council having a CPA 'Excellence' rating that should mean having freedom to do what the Council deems sensible and not to have targets being set by the government.

Late news: ***On the 12th May I was elected Chairman of the Council for the forthcoming year.***

Cllr ***Patrick Greene***

South Oxfordshire District Council – Hagbourne Ward

April 2005

## ***Oxfordshire County Council 04/05 report from Councillor - Patrick Greene***

### ***Some headline achievements and comments for the last year.***

Hennef Way in Banbury is one of the biggest road improvement schemes in Oxfordshire for years providing faster and more reliable journey times for motorists and reducing traffic on country roads.

Many improvements made to **road maintenance** e.g. Abingdon Road Oxford, repairs to the A40. Over a hundred individual transport schemes will be completed in the year with a similar number planned for 2005/06. Did you know that the Council has over 2,500 miles of road to maintain?

County Catering Team wins Healthy School Meals Award.

All services have gained investor in People Status.

New Kidlington library opened and Thame to get a much needed new Library soon. Library opening hours increased.

**New rural bus service** launched between Witney and Abingdon – Oxfordshire has one of the best records in Britain for improving bus services.

Youth offending service is rated as one of the best in the Country by the Home Office.

**Didcot Girls School** and the Blessed Napier School in Banbury are to get new sports halls of a size to accommodate four full-sized badminton courts! Providing a full range of sporting activities for school and community use.

Ofsted's recent inspection gave the Council's Youth Service the highest grade possible – very good – The Council's Education service was judged to be highly satisfactory.

**Grants totaling £56,800 have been awarded to village halls** and community centres for improvements and refurbishments.

A new trainee social worker scheme was launched attracting many applicants to be trained in an Open University degree in social work, on-the-job training and support to other allied qualifications. Successful applicants will join the Council's Social & Health Care team of around 340 social workers already working with vulnerable adults, children and families.

The Council's services it provides assessed by the Audit Commission shows an overall rise of 20% in service quality.

The Council is investing for long-term savings in financial systems.

Joanna Simons formerly the Chief Executive of the London Borough of Sutton is the new Chief Executive of the Council and has now taken up her post at the Council. She replaces Dr Richard Shaw who is now the Chief Executive of Surrey County Council.

**The first Community Strategy** for Oxfordshire has been launched. The strategy is the result of two year's work by the Oxfordshire Community Partnership (OCP) that has brought together over 150 of Oxfordshire's public, private, voluntary and community sector organizations. Several key organizations have signed up to tackle many important issues including three top priorities – Affordable housing – Transport – Safe and Supportive Communities.

**The Oxfordshire Plan** drawn up by the Council shows how the Council will work to achieve the ambitions of the OCP. The plan sets out the Council's specific priorities that working with partners it is working towards achieving. Copies of the plan can be found in libraries or on the Council's website. – [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

**Council Tax** – On the 15th February the Council approved it's budget for the year 2005/06 with a requirement of £584.022m and after government revenue support grant, National Non-Domestic rates and less collection fund adjustments a precept of £224.654m was agreed making the Council Tax for a Band D equivalent properties of £966.46. Making the Council Tax increase 4.5%. Although the government settlement was better than being predicted the increase of 4.5% was achieved by the Council's substantial reforms in its financial systems and financial management resulting in around £6.5m efficiency savings. Tax rises over the next four years are predicted as 4.5% each year and are dependant on the Council finding efficiency savings of £5m each year.

**Structure Plan 2016.** The recent report of the Examination in Public (EiP) on the Draft Structure Plan 2016 and its recommendations were considered by the Environment Scrutiny Committee on the 23rd February 2005. The committee was asked to decide on what advice to give the Executive that has now accepted the EiP's recommendations. The full Council considered the EiP's recommendations on the 5th April 2005 that will be followed by a further period of consultation in May/June 2005. The draft plan will be reported back to the Council with revised explanatory text in November 2005 with the adoption process completed at the end of the year.

**South East Plan (SEP).** The South East Plan will guide development in the region up to 2026. When Government approves it, the South East Plan will replace current Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) and the Structure Plan for Oxfordshire. The South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) is consulting the public on the draft SEP. The consultation period ran from the 24th January to 15th April 2005. It is important that the public make their views known to SEERA as this may well affect the levels of housing growth up to 2026. The Council has made its views clear that to implement housing growth in Oxfordshire direct government funding is essential to provide adequate infrastructure ahead of developments.

**The County Council Elections** were held on 5th May 2005. Following the Electoral Commission's review the County Council is now made up of 74 Councillors. After the election out of the 74 Councillors the Conservatives now hold the control with 43 Councillors, followed by the Liberal Democrats having 17, Labour 9 and the Green party 5. It is the first time for about twenty years the Council is not hung and is controlled by a single party. The Moreton Division result was: Conservative 1934, Liberal Democrat 1355, Labour 665 and Green 263. Total votes cast 4227 and an increased majority to 579. Conservative percentage of vote 45.75%. Approximate Turnout 72%.

Cllr **Patrick Greene**

Moreton Division – Oxfordshire County Council – May 2005

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## **William Tyrrell Trust** report 2005

The Trustees met only once during 2004-05

### **Tenancy**

Matthew Napper continues to hold the tenancy of the main part of the land. In recognition of the duty to optimise income, protect the interests of the village and ensure the land is well managed, the Trustees have undertaken to update the terms and conditions of the tenancy to bring it into line with the current legislation.. This work is ongoing.

### **Allotments**

There have been no applications for allotment land during 2004. West Hagbourne residents are reminded that plots are available with a water supply at £2.00 pa.

### **Dispersion of charity funds**

The Trustees continue to offer support to young people in the village for worthwhile projects, and welcome suggestions and

proposals from villagers . No applications were received for grants during 2004.

New Charity Commission guidance enables Trustees to make a block grant to other charities with compatible aims and geographical coverage.

This provides Trustees with an alternative strategy in the absence of grant applications from young West Hagbourne residents.

### **Accounts for 2004**

The Trustees are grateful once more to Bridget Pickup for preparing the accounts that are available for inspection. Current balance 22nd April 2005 £942.45.

### **Trustees :**

Bridget Pickup, Marion Judd, Mike Butler.

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## **Parish Plan** update 2005

The **survey forms** were delivered throughout the village over the Easter period. The Steering Group is very grateful to all those villagers who have helped with this.

If you have not had a copy, please contact Sue Totterdell on telephone 850080

We are now collecting the completed forms and Marion Judd has begun the analysis of responses. We hope to have a preliminary report to circulate during the summer and will then arrange an open meeting to feedback the conclusions and to determine the plan of action, based on the hopes and needs of villagers.

Raffle tickets will be drawn at the end of May and the winning numbers advertised in the Village Newsletter, so keep your green ticket safe.

**The Steering Group thanks everyone who took the time to complete their forms.**

# *Village History Group* Report 2005

This has been another busy year with the completion of several major projects.

## **Font**

The St Andrew's armorial font project was finally completed in June. This included the restoration of the stonework and the repainting of the West Hagbourne family shields in their original colours. Copies of an illustrated report on the conservation work were sent to the PCC and the church architect.

## **Medieval chapel**

One of our most exciting achievements has been confirmation of the site of the medieval chapel on land behind Chapel Hayes. The site was mapped by the Berkshire Archaeology Research Group (BARG) last September. A copy of the report has been lodged with the county archivist. BARG will return next September to carry out a second Resistivity Survey close to the first site.

## **Maintaining our historical heritage**

The History Group contributed financially to the repair of the memorial seat next to the bus shelter and also replaced the missing dedication plaque to John E Lay.

We contributed £250 towards the repair of the roof of the shelter/war memorial.

The Group continues to advise the Parish Council on historical matters and is gratified that the Council has responded to our suggestions concerning the maintenance of the small garden beside the shelter and the painting of the telephone box.

## **Current projects - Village map**

In cooperation with the Parish Council, the History Group is about to replace the current village map with a newly mounted version. This will include the addition of handwritten historical facts, illustrated with the family shields of the old manorial lords of West Hagbourne. As well as providing information about the village to visitors, the new map will hopefully contribute to the recent improvements in the appearance of the area around the war memorial.

## **Village website**

The History Group is currently preparing its contribution to the development of the village website and will use this as a way to keep villagers informed about its activities.

## **Archives**

The History Group continues to maintain an historical archive and is presently creating photo albums of village events.

## **Historical photos**

The History Group has come into possession of three recently discovered photographs taken in the late 1920s. These feature a view of the old cottages on the Square, York Farm Cottage and the local doctor doing his rounds in his car. These have been copied so that they can be made available to villagers.

The next **AGM will take place at 8pm on 28 June** and will be held at Silva Felix, York Road.

## **Keep an eye on the web site -**

there are now pictures of the village, minutes of previous Parish Council Meetings, useful numbers and you can even access previous copies of the newsletter.

For more information about how to get involved, or contribute contact the webmaster [www.westhagbourne.org](http://www.westhagbourne.org)

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