

SOUTHROP PARISH COUNCIL

February 2024

Dear Residents

Welcome to the first Southrop Parish Council newsletter of 2024.

FLOOD AWARENESS

As you may be aware, last year we joined the Gloucestershire Flood Warden scheme. The aim of the scheme is to have somebody in every parish who can act as the link between local residents and those authorities responsible for mitigating flood risk and responding to flooding events. The flood warden for Southrop Parish is Cathy Brickley.

We are fortunate in this village that very few properties are at regular risk of flooding. However, we learned from the 2007 flooding, and again more recently, that a few days in a row of heavy rain can result in flooded roads at the very least. The key areas are Eastleach Road, where run-off from the fields can overwhelm the ditches and drains and find its way down into the village centre, and the bends heading east out of the village after the bridge. During the first week of January the river



was high enough here to cover the road for a couple of days.

Ditches have been improved since 2007 so future flooding shouldn't be as severe as it was then. It is, however, vital that we pay attention to the maintenance of all the drainage ditches, underground culverts and drains to ensure they operate as efficiently as possible. To do this we have to maintain the contact we already have with a number of different agencies such as Gloucester Highways, Cotswold District Council, the Environment Agency and a number of volunteer organisations and it is not always clear where responsibility lies! We are grateful for the efforts of residents and landowners to keep ditches clear, where their responsibility for this has been established.

The eyes of all villagers are vital to assist the Parish Council with this vigilance. If you notice anything such as blocked drains or overgrown ditches, please contact Cathy Brickley on 01367 850504 or the SPC via email at southroppc@gmail.com

If anyone owns a pump that they would be willing to lend in the event of a flood, we would like to hear from you. The more we can share resources, the stronger our community response can be. During the very heavy rain we had last July, there was one property which was nearly flooded and only saved by the prompt action of a villager who was able to lend three pumps very quickly.

The SPC holds a small number of single use 'hydrosnakes' (an alternative to sandbags) for use by any resident in an emergency. However, if you feel your property is likely to be at particular risk we do encourage you to consider investing in some simple flood defences for yourself. Listed below are a few links you might find useful if you are interested in keeping a eye on the flood risk for yourself or wish to take any action to increase your preparedness for potential flood events.

Flood guide - Gloucestershire County Council – GCC Flood Guide which covers how to prepare for flooding and what to do during and after a flood. It also has FAQs and a link to the emergency contact list.

Learn more about flood risk - GOV.UK (check-long-term-flood-risk.service.gov.uk) – You can view the Environment Agency's Risk of Flooding from Rivers and Risk of Flooding from Surface Water maps here.

Check for flooding in England - GOV.UK (check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk) and Sign up for flood warnings - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) – EA flood warnings and how to sign up for them.

Find river, sea, groundwater and rainfall levels - GOV.UK (check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk) – EA's river and rainfall gauges.

ROADS AND PAVEMENTS

Many villagers raise matters relating to our roads etc. We have had a strong working relationship with Glos Highways over several years, achieving a great deal, but we have had a much cooler relationship for several months.

The SPC does look into and represent your numerous concerns but there appears to be a difference of opinion with Highways about the urgency or need. We have raised, and will continue to try to do so, your concerns about the South Farm crossroads safety, Tiltup bend safety, the condition of Lechlade Road, the footpath deterioration from Tubbs to Newmans House, the aged school sign and so on.

More recently we escalated this to the Head of Highways, requesting a constructive conversation about this situation and looking for ways your council can perhaps progress some matters that Highways will not. We still await their engagement. Please bear with us.

Meanwhile please do put your highways matters on the record via their website. This does help.
<https://fixmystreet.gloucestershire.gov.uk/>

RECENT AND PLANNED SPC MAJOR ITEMS OF EXPENDITURE

With fairly limited funds, we think very carefully before committing to major items of expenditure and look to limit these to items likely to be of long term benefit to most, if not all, villagers.

Over the last year the major items have been (numbers have been rounded):

£600 on legal fees to upgrade legal title on Jubilee Close. Before the upgrade, Jubilee Close only had Possessory Title to its freehold property, theoretically open to challenge. This has now been upgraded to Title Absolute, the highest level available.

£600 on a new tannoy speaker system. This replaces the basic megaphone which has been found to be inadequate, especially at major events such as the Village Fete. The new system will be made available to all village institutions requiring it.

£1,300 on the new hardwood King Charles 3 bench on the village green, replacing the old bench which had deteriorated into a dangerous condition. Unfortunately, the new bench was destroyed by a large tree which fell on it in the recent gales. Our insurers have accepted liability and a new bench has been ordered!

£1,500 to remove over 5 tons of silt which had accumulated, over very many years, in a chamber under the road near The Swan. As many of you will have noticed, after heavy rain this was causing severe flooding on the road down towards the river and was lifting drainage covers - a hazard to pedestrians. Since the work was done, the situation has much improved.

The major item we have committed to this year is a £10,000 grant towards a substantial internal redesign/ refurbishment to the Village Hall. The intention is that this grant will be supplemented by other grants and financial contributions.

We made a similar £10,000 grant for major work to the Village Hall, successfully completed in 2020. This followed a village survey which revealed that the Village Hall was probably the most used and valued village asset; all the more so now in its much improved state.

NEW BIODIVERSITY POLICY

At our last SPC meeting we agreed to adopt a Biodiversity Policy setting out how the Parish Council intends to play its part in securing our rich local habitats and abundant wildlife for future generations.

Establishing the policy (available to view on our website) is just the first step. Next we intend to complete an audit of Biodiversity 'assets' within the Parish and consider how they might be preserved and enhanced.

As a village we already do a lot to support and promote biodiversity - this is about taking a moment to understand what we have, how we might protect it, and where - with your help - we can improve. Our expectation is that at the time of our next audit, in two years, we will look back and be proud of having made Southrop's natural environment even richer than it already is!

GOODBYE AND THANK YOU!

The social life of a small rural village is the product of countless activities and events supporting core amenities. These activities require a small army of volunteers working behind the scenes in planning and organising, putting adverts on noticeboards and leaflets through letterboxes, setting up the events – and clearing up afterwards.

In Southrop we have been blessed with a small army – of one: Margaret Davey.

Margaret gave up her career as a teacher and came to Southrop with her husband, Keith, and their two sons in 1982 from Ashford (Middlesex), setting a trend in escaping from 'London and the South East' which many of us have followed.

Margaret soon threw herself into village life and became involved in running the Community Shop which was set up in response to the closure of the old Post Office and a severe winter which had left many villagers cut off for days from access to basic supplies. Margaret was instrumental in ensuring that soft toilet paper was a core stock line – just in case of emergencies!

With Margaret's tireless support the Community Shop, open on Wednesday mornings, has grown over the years and now has its own Post Office, sells fresh produce and serves tea, coffee - and cake. Margaret is still a frequent visitor.

Margaret's involvement with village life increased over the years and she has acted as Clerk to the Parish Council, prompt for the Leach Valley Players and has organised or been involved with countless fetes, harvest suppers, safari suppers, raffles and open gardens – all to raise funds for village amenities.

In 2000 she was involved in many of the community events, hosted meetings of the Millennium Committee in her living room and was a keen promoter of the Millennium pantomime, Cinderella.

In 2012, in celebration of the late Queen's Diamond Jubilee, Margaret organised a raffle for the Jubilee Trust. In recognition of the funds raised by the raffle, Margaret and her husband, Keith, were invited to a Reception at Buckingham Palace hosted by the Queen.

Margaret has been heavily involved with the Church having been a Churchwarden for many years and helped to create the Garden of Remembrance where the ashes of her husband, Keith, were the first to be scattered. She also took on the mantle of village archivist and was instrumental in organising safe, fire-proof storage for the villager records which are housed in the village hall.

So, after some 42 years Margaret has decided to leave the village and move to Painswick to be nearer to her children and grandchildren.

Margaret, you will be missed. We wish you well in the future.

TWO DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

You are invited to the Village New Year Party in the Village Hall on Saturday 9th March at 6.30. Tickets are £5 to include nibbles and your first drink . Proceeds are going to the restoration of the church bells. Tickets will be available from the village shop and the pub and you can also pay on the door.

This year's annual litter pick will take place on the weekend of 23rd and 24th March. As always, this is very much needed; you will have noticed the kerbs and ditches filling up with litter again. Please do consider volunteering an hour or two of your time over that weekend. It really does make a difference to our village! Come to the village green from 10am on either day (or both!) to pick up your litter picker, hi-vis jacket and black sack and be assigned a stretch of road.

With very best wishes from your Parish Councillors

Tim Guest Russ Giles Peter Brickley Rod Jones Cathy Brickley