



Stoney Middleton Parish Council (SMPC)

Chair's Report 2020/2021

This has been a year like no other for everyone.

For SMPC it has meant that meetings, to conduct parish business, have been held virtually by 'Zoom'. It was daunting at first but, even with normal life suspended, SMPC has been able to progress routine matters such as maintenance, mowing, repairs and commenting on planning applications. However, some issues require particular mention. As Annual Parish meetings were not held to reflect on the work done during 2019/20, due to the onslaught of Covid, some of the issues raised may link to this time.

Village Maintenance and Initiatives:

Repairs were made to the concessionary footpath, by the allotments, to try to stop water from pooling at that point but more work is required and is now linked to flood alleviation measures.

The Grove Garden was temporarily closed, on health and safety grounds, to repair and clean loosened paving slabs, wall toppings and steps. The pathways had to be cleaned again after the flooding in January.

Confirmation has been obtained from Derbyshire County Council (DCC) that, subject to budget, the rockface by Lovers Leap will be stabilised, probably with netting, during 2021/22.

The initiative to bring the village cross into community ownership is progressing, albeit VERY slowly. The adverse possession element of the application has been completed successfully and the transfer of the remaining land is in progress.

Another initiative is that lamp-post poppies were displayed for the second year and a donation was made to the British Poppy Appeal. It is envisaged that this will be an annual event.

Also to brighten up the village, Councillor Hall designed and erected display boards, in both bus shelters, embracing local themes of wells dressing, landscape and flora, World War II, and industrial heritage.

Environmental Improvements:

To support environmental improvements, Stoney Middleton Horticultural Society donated £200 to SMPC in 2019 towards the planting of wildflowers on the verge adjacent to Avenue Close. Councillor Flint is progressing this initiative. The verge has been scarified and 300

wildflower plants will be planted this Spring. Grove Gardens and Dale Mouth have also been identified for possible wildflower planting.

SMPC has also registered interest to be part of a Derbyshire Dales District Council (DDDC) pilot to look at using alternative solutions to glyphosate weedkiller along wall sides and footpaths in the village.

Also, through SMPC, Dr. Grafton has gifted a donation to the village school for children to undertake a local environmental project.

Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) Jacob's Ladder:

The TRO on Jacob's Ladder, prohibiting the use of motorised vehicles on the route, has continued to be breached. Last summer, following pressure from SMPC, Derbyshire Constabulary agreed to use drones and rural crime and motorbike teams to patrol the route and enforce the TRO. Unfortunately, it's still being used, often at night. To try to combat this issue and stop numbers increasing as lockdown eases, SMPC has asked Derbyshire Constabulary to install CCTV for a temporary period. The route was patrolled this weekend. To assist with monitoring the route, residents are asked to provide evidence of use and report these incidents to the Police using 111 or social media platforms.

Parking issues

Limited car parking throughout the parish and the obstruction of roads and footpaths by parked vehicles is a key concern for residents, as identified in the Village Plan. SMPC is continuing to lobby DCC Highways officers and members for a site meeting to explore possible solutions to the inconsiderate parking and obstruction issues around the Toll Bar, when the chip shop is open. SMPC is keen to find solutions for the benefit of all; residents, customers and business owner. Unfortunately, so far DCC is reluctant to meet but the council will continue to urge them to do so. In the meantime, to try to avoid obstruction on The Bank, SMPC has put up 3 'Keep Clear- No Parking' signs on the wall along the section marked by a white line.

Defibrillators

Issues regarding community defibrillators have been a focus of concern for SMPC. There are 2 defibrillators in the village; one at the bottom of High Street and a new one fitted to the football hut last summer, thanks to Allen Hodgkinson and Derbyshire Dales Engineering. Both models are recommended by EMAS.

In December 2020 the defibrillator at the bottom of High Street was used in a medical emergency but devastatingly it failed to work. Thankfully the patient survived. The defibrillator had been checked regularly following British Heart Foundation guidance and was showing full charge.

The device is currently in Germany undergoing diagnostic testing. The defibrillator Store in Tideswell kindly loaned the community a replacement defibrillator and SMPC has since purchased a different model, also recommended by EMAS.

Councillor Thorpe has been proactive in pursuing EMAS for advice and guidance regarding the situation. DALC was also notified of the incident so that other town and parish councils in Derbyshire (and the wider East Midlands area) could be alerted.

Since the incident, SMPC has discovered that defibrillator failure is not a rare occurrence but there appears to be an increase in the advice being circulated about them, including a national field safety notice on the model purchased for the playing field. The latest guidance is that defibrillators must be in heated cabinets and these must also be checked, particularly in cold weather. Both defibrillator cabinets in Stoney Middleton are heated and also checked.

Allotments

A change in the management of the allotments is that rents are charged from April to March and not October to September. This decision was taken to allow people taking on allotments to have time to prepare them in readiness for the growing season, rather than during the growing season. Rents have also been slightly increased to cover the rising cost of maintaining this valuable community asset.

At the start of the pandemic, Councillor Tsielepi kindly created 4 small temporary plots and offered them to residents for the summer to support exercise and good health during lockdown.

Unfortunately, during the January rains, the allotments and car parking area were waterlogged and/or flooded. Arrangements are in hand to undertake remedial work to improve water drainage in this area.

Flood Alleviation Measures:

SMPC must thank Dan Hodgson, the volunteer flood warden for his resolute mission to alleviate flood risk throughout the parish. During the last year, with the backing of SMPC, Dan has been instrumental in arranging for:

- The EA to dredge 120 tonnes of silt from a section of Dale Brook;
- Derbyshire Caving and Cave Rescue Organisations to jointly inspect/film the lower part of Moorwood Sough. The inspection confirmed it was clear though narrow under The Nook and a survey along the entire length of the sough, from Eyam Edge, is planned post-Covid;
- The construction of a storm drain on the concessionary footpath (partly funded by DCC) to help manage surface water run-off;
- The digging out of a drainage ditch in the field behind Meadow Close/Edge View, to channel water from the A623 into The Meadows (funded by DDDC);.

Dan is also working with DCC and the Trent River Authority regarding the possibility of grants for natural flood management systems in the Eyam and Stoney Middleton area. Despite all of this, in January, several properties were flooded, 11 properties on Edge View narrowly avoided being flooded and areas of the village were underwater. Sometimes it feels like water is coming down, up, over and round us!

SMPC has submitted a report to senior officers and members of DCC highlighting flood risk issues throughout the parish requiring their intervention and contending that a budget must be set aside for all remedial works to be carried out before next winter. So far:

- Repairs have been carried out to Dale Brook banking; and
- A DCC engineer has been tasked with surveying under the highway by Trinkey Lane. At this point, the pipework is deficient and unable to take the volume of water coming onto and under the A623 during periods of heavy rainfall. Without a doubt, DCC has riparian responsibility to resolve this preventable problem.

SMPC will continue to lobby DCC until all identified work is addressed.

Coombs Dale was also flooded in January, possibly due to the sheer volume of water.

However, Fluorsid (Cavendish Mill) is carrying out regular inspections of the watercourses to keep them clear.

Village Plan:

The progression of priorities identified in the Village Plan has been hampered by Covid restrictions. Nevertheless, some progress has been made:

- Stoney Middleton and Calver Parish Councils have worked together to lobby DCC, through an Epetition, to review and change the current speed limits throughout both villages to 30mph with a 20mph zone in The Dale, Stoney Middleton. Both councils have produced detailed reports to support the request. The Epetition will be considered by Cabinet members for Highways on 27 May 2021, provided the meeting is not delayed due to the results of County Council elections.
- SMPC is working with SMILE to explore how a community building can be achieved based on principles of viability and sustainability into the 21st Century. To progress this, a Community Building Group has been set up, coordinated by Anne Flint. This group is independent of SMPC and sits under the umbrella of SMILE. A questionnaire has been produced, based on information gathered from village plan events. It will be delivered to all homes to gather the views and wishes of all households in respect of usage, futureproofing and internal layout.

As lockdown is eased other Village Plan initiatives can start to be prioritised and addressed.

Playing Field/Playground

There has been a lot of work done to protect and improve this community asset. Pop stones have been placed around the perimeter of the car park to deter vandals from driving onto the field and causing damage to it. They were chosen to reflect the quarrying heritage of the village.

The new mowing contractor has weedkilled the field and the mowing regime has been increased to improve the condition of the field. It was agreed to ask the football club to financially contribute to any additional work, specifically benefitting them, on a league match basis. However, due to the pandemic, grassroots football (along with everything else) was cancelled. I think the first game was played on Saturday.

During the first lockdown the play area and car park were closed to protect public health. The playground re-opened on 4th July, in line with the Government's Covid-19 playground management guidance, following grass being cut, play equipment jet washed, trees lopped and signage put up to remind people of the social distancing and sanitising rules. The car park was closed again at the start of the second lockdown to promote the 'stay at home' message. However, it didn't deter visitors. They parked their cars in Meadow Close and close to properties in other areas of the village. Consequently, the car park was re-opened and has continued to be so. SMPC has agreed to monitor car park usage, particularly linked to any progress with the community building.

Councillors Hall, Spooner and Tsielepi cut down the trees and bushes encroaching the perimeter of the old tennis courts and Harry White kindly removed them from the site. Thanks to a donation from Dr. Grafton, Toll Bar Chip Shop; three successful grant applications; and the remaining tennis club funds SMPC has been able to pay for playground improvements. This includes a replacement zip wire seat, a replacement cradle for the tyre swing, two new springers and two replacement benches. Councillor Spooner removed the old play items in readiness for the new equipment to be fitted on 01 March. However, due to a delay with some of the parts the refurbishment is outstanding. An issue that has caused debate is the Public Space Protection Orders covering the playing field which are due for review in November. DDDC is undertaking a full public consultation exercise starting this month and SMPC will publicise the link to the consultation, as soon as it's available, and encourage all residents to have their say.

Roman Baths/Garden/Woods

Works in the Roman Baths area have continued, to preserve and improve this community asset. Thanks must go to the Village Volunteer Group who still managed to do some 'fettling' in the garden and woodland area.

Last summer several trees had to be felled in the woodland, mainly due to Ash Die Back. To mitigate against trees posing a health and safety risk, arrangements are in hand to commission a tree management service. It will include the Walnut tree in Grove Gardens. The service provides an online record of trees with defects, their position, what needs to be done, and the timeframe for doing it.

The large Perspex windows in the Roman Baths have been replaced by glass. This has made the building more secure and enabled the grid over one bath to be removed, making the space more aesthetically pleasing.

In the summer, water levels in the Roman Baths rose causing the building to flood. Dan Hodgson and Councillor Flint persevered to resolve the issue and were able to map the water flows in the area for future reference.

Currently, water is being temporarily diverted from its usual course - flowing under the road via the trough – until a flooding issue further along the road is resolved.

Thank you:

SMPC needs to thank many people. Firstly we wish to thank Karen Esposito, who has recently stepped down as a parish councillor. Karen's empathetic, common sense approach is greatly missed.

Thanks also to Barry Aldridge who is stepping down from the role of parish clerk but will thankfully continue as RFO. Barry's advice and guidance have kept SMPC on track and been invaluable.

Thanks are extended to District Councillor Helen Froggatt and County Councillor Jason Atkin for supporting SMPC's submissions for local project funding and to Dr Peter Grafton and Paul Fox (on behalf of the old Tennis Club) for their donations.

Thanks also to Tarmac, Woodroyd Solutions, Derbyshire Dales Engineering and Harry White for giving their services free of charge.

Similarly, thanks go to Dan Hodgson, the volunteer flood warden; Dan Esposito for sorting the Christmas tree; the Hancock family for providing electricity for it; Andrew Buckley for helping with jobs; David Hall for assisting with jobs and keeping the village tidy; the Village Volunteer Group for their work around the village; Adrian Heath, Nigel Barton and the host of other residents who clear grids and help neighbours at times of flood risk and to all of the contractors who have done work in the village.

And last, but not least, I personally wish to thank Councillors for getting 'stuck in' and giving up their time freely for the benefit of the community.

Sue Bettney
Chair
SMPC