

## **Painswick Parish Council – Annual Report 2007-08**

The event which overshadowed most other happenings was the great flood. The owners of the twelve mills along the Painswick Stream are unlikely to forget the inundation of their properties. Lessons were learned by the local authorities and much work has been done since, not least in the removal of debris from a range of watercourses. The collapse of the A46 at Salmon Springs had a considerable impact on many people's lives. Painswick's businesses suffered markedly with visitors deterred from making the circuitous route necessary to reach the village. The business support organisation Gloucestershire First received much praise for the publicity campaign it mounted through the media to inform everyone in the region and further a field that

"Painswick was open for business". Concerns were expressed by residents about the length of time necessary to repair the road but the technical explanation was convincing. Users of the A46 were grateful that the contractors were able to meet the planned reopening date of 15th February. The road had been closed for six months. The road closure has highlighted the absence of Heavy Goods Vehicles in that period and the Parish Council has made representation to the County Council to have a weight restriction introduced along the road between Brockworth and Stroud. If the restriction is agreed it would also have to apply to the A4173 (Edge) and B4070 (Slad). A petition to Government raised by parishioners calling for the A46 to be downgraded to a B class road in order to effect the weight restriction has been circulating within the parish.

The flooding caused the closure of Severn Trent's water distribution plant at Tewkesbury and the Parish Council became involved with the distribution of bottled water when the mains supply was cut off. Tributes were paid to the police who manned the bottle distribution centre throughout the period. Parishioners were themselves praised by the authorities for the calm manner in which they dealt with the situation. The help given to the housebound by neighbours was much appreciated. However, the overriding reaction from most residents was relief that the electricity supply had been maintained. Loss of electricity would have caused considerable hardship.

There were a number of happier events during the year. Painswick became a Fairtrade village and the Parish Council was awarded Quality status. There was considerable sympathy for those communities whose post offices were scheduled for closure but relief that Painswick did not feature in the list. The Parish Council decided not to await the possible relocation of the men's convenience which is located in St Mary's Street and carried out the necessary renovation work. The Gateway Project has been the subject of much discussion during the year. The Parish Council has continued to support the Gateway concept but concern has been expressed about the business plan. The recently announced audit of public meeting halls/rooms will help to better identify how those halls/rooms may be best used.

### **Finance**

Finance Committee Chairman Martin Slinger comments that It has been another tight year with little opportunity for movement. The increased costs of essentials such as heating and lighting have not helped the financial position. That said we spent a considerable sum above the core budget on various projects. Examples are £2,000 for the St Mary's Churchyard footpaths, £1,200 for the St Mary's Street men's convenience, a £1,000 loan to the Gateway Project and £500 towards the repair of the sundial at the Chemists. Donations totalling £450 were divided between several charities among them being the Stroud Citizens Advice Bureau, Stroud Victim Support and the Air Ambulance. The Parish Council is responsible for maintaining the Recreation Field, the main cost being grass cutting. There is no income. We were therefore pleased to have been able to reduce that expenditure with a new contract. The Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008 will be available for inspection at the Parish Council Office in due course.

### **Planning**

Planning Committee Chairman Davis Hudson reports that in 2007 the committee dealt with 140 planning applications compared with 117 for the previous year. This year there have been 28 applications up to the first of April. The majority of applications continue to be for extensions to existing dwellings, though in 2007 four of the applications related to the building

of new dwellings. The trend is for the District Council to grant consent in the majority of cases which normally mirrors the Parish Council's approach.

### **Traffic**

Mention has been made earlier of the A46 closure. There was an unexpected bonus from the closure in that County Highways took the opportunity to carry out resurfacing and repairs to other parts of the road particularly at Fiddlers Elbow where there is periodic slippage. The Highways Department has now promised, after due survey, to repair the over used and much damaged roads such as Wades Lane and Wick Street for which we and, in particular the inhabitants of those areas are very grateful. Traffic Committee Chairman, Ann Burges Watson comments that lack of funds is a fair reason for not doing much else. Ann reports that "we continue to ask for a 20mph speed restriction within the village envelope, a pedestrian crossing by the pharmacy and several more dropped curbs to help the less mobile and young mothers with push chairs. She says that "parking is an ever present problem and we must ask yet again for residents and their guests to please look before you park to ensure that the vehicle is not causing an obstruction to other road users i.e., the fire engine which requires 10' in width and that there is sufficient space for a wheelchair or pushchair to pass along the pavement. The new traffic regulations are much tougher than the previous ones".

### **Footpaths**

Footpaths Committee Chairman Ann Daniels reports that (a) a Modification Order is being sought to make the New Drive between Stamages Lane and the A46 a public right of way; (b) the County Council has conducted a 100% review of all the footpaths in the parish and is now carrying out the identified repairs; (c) Cotswold Way signage has been erected throughout the village.

### **Plantation**

The main item to report is that the application for a Woodland Improvement Grant has been successful. Committee Chairman Ann Daniels says the work on this Site of Special Scientific Interest will be carried out over the next five years.

### **Cemetery & Parish Maintenance/Town Hall**

Martin Slinger reports that his committees have managed to keep on top of things this year. He says that problems are being overcome but because of lack of finance this is taking a number of years. Clearing up people's rubbish is a particular problem. There is so much work being undertaken within the Civil Parish that we are getting to the limit of Parish Handyman George Hodder's working hours.

### **Slad Ward (Cllrs Norrie Curtis and Jackie Woof)**

Another successful year, although the closure of the A46 did result in an increase of traffic on the B4070 through Slad. The Parish Council kept in close contact with the County Council to ensure the essential repairs

to the road were treated as a priority and were completed on time. Precept money was used to pay for an edition of the Slad Valley News magazine which is delivered to every household in Slad, Elcombe and The Vatch. Our thanks to George Hodder for all his work around the village.

### **Sheepscombe Ward (Cllrs David Harcup and Dhushy Mahendran)**

A quiet year. There are continuing problems with road repair materials being washed away with heavy rain.

### **Edge Ward (Cllr Martin Slinger)**

The main concern to villagers has been the additional traffic problems caused by the A46 road closure diversions.

### **Summary**

The Parish Council's four-year term ends in early May when a new council will be elected. I wish to thank the councillors and the co-opted members from the local community for the considerable amount of time they have given on a voluntary basis in helping to run the parish affairs. The councillors in turn wish to express their appreciation to the Clerk to the Council, Roy Balgobin, the Assistant Clerk, Liz Fisher and the Parish Handyman, George Hodder for all they do on behalf of the community.

**Terry Parker**

Chairman