

# Pillerton Hersey Annual Parish Meeting

7:00 pm, Tuesday, 16 April 2024

The Church of St Mary, Pillerton Hersey, CV35 0QQ

## **Present:**

Cllr Hewson (Chair)

Cllr Brooks, Cllr Hitchman. Cllr Thomas – Pillerton Hersey Parish Councillors

Cllr Seccombe – Warwickshire County Councillors

Alana Collis – Clerk to the Parish Council

17 Members of the public

Professor Rosemary Collier and Lucy Hartley – Guest speakers

## **Apologies:**

Cllr Forsyth – Pillerton Hersey Parish Council

Cllr Littlewood – Stratford District Council

The meeting started at 19:01

### **1. Welcome**

Cllr Hewson welcomed people to the meeting. Meeting for the residents.

### **2. Apologies for absence**

Cllr Littlewood and Cllr Littlewood had both sent their apologies.

### **3. Approval of minutes of previous Annual Parish Meeting, held on 23 May 2023**

It was agreed to approve the minutes of the meeting held 23 May 2023.

### **4. Annual report of the Parish Council for the year ended 31 March 2024**

Cllr Hewson had provided a written report (contained in the meeting pack and available online). The main business of the parish council relates to planning applications – the PC responded to 14 applications including those outside of the parish. These included an application for change of use from farmland to a site for travelling show people. In this case it was outside of the parish, so councillors worked with Pillerton Priors. This application was refused but the applicant could yet appeal the decision.

Over the year, the parish council has also responded to consultations (topics include policing, fire and rescue, and public rights of way) and has attended events including the fete, SDC service fair (to see what services they offer to local councils), and engaged with WALC AGM (an opportunity to meet with other parish and town councillors and network).

A key issue of interest to the village is the environment. In response to this, it is now a standing item on parish council meeting agendas where the issues are covered. This can range from dog fouling to surface run off and flooding including sewage.

The parish council also works with other parish councils on a range of issues e.g. primary healthcare in Upper Lighthorne (could have an impact on the village) and Shipston Town Council re inpatient beds at the Ellen Badge site as part of the redevelopment of the site.

A substantial amount of work has also been done to investigate the ownership of parcels of village greens in Pillerton Hersey. The parish council has engaged services of solicitor to submit an application to the Land Registry. This is a standard requirement.

Cllr Hewson thanked councillors and the Clerk as well as residents for the engagement.

## **5. Annual financial report of the Parish Council**

The meeting pack contained a draft finance report for the account for 2023/24 financial year. When budget was set, there was high inflation and struggles with cost of living. Mindful not to increase more than required – so this was limited to an increase of 5%.

Main expenses are salary for the clerk, purchase of grit bin, costs to cover administration of election process (even though this is uncontested).

## **6. Report from local and community organisations**

### **The Poor's Lot charity**

Mr Tery Hitchman had provided the finance report of the Poor's Allotment. There are currently three Trustees rather than the usual four. The current Trustees hope that the new vicar, Nicki Chatterton will engage and become a Trustee at some point. In her role she will have knowledge of people who would benefit from the support available.

## **7. Reports from county and district councillors**

**Cllr Littlewood – ward councillor, Stratford District Council** had sent apologies but had met several people over recent months, particularly regarding the planning application at land adjacent to Coverwell Farm.

**Cllr Secombe – Warwickshire County Council** provided an overview of county activity. Warwickshire is a growing county in terms of population, which now stands at ~600,000.

Areas of significant investment are roads and highways, libraries, museums (and the interesting archaeological items including in the Warwick Museum).

In terms of social care and education, education has changed since 2014 with academisation. However the county council is still responsible for the admissions and other administrative things.

The County Council has three priorities: (i) to look after the most vulnerable in our society. (ii) to build the economy and (iii) work to address the climate emergency. With reduced central government support have to look at other areas of income – this could include consideration of council tax and business rates.

In terms of looking after vulnerable people, safeguarding is key to this and includes fostering, adoption, and looked after children.

Highways – significant work on potholes particularly with the high levels of rainfall. Need to fill these as soon as possible so this is often done as a temporary patch to reduce the risk particularly to road users such as cyclists.

Other activities – apprenticeships (support young people and give them the skills that give them a career and support businesses), supporting to support businesses.

Work closely with Districts particularly regarding Local Plans (SDC working on a combined plan with WDC). How can the WCC work with DCs to ensure the right infrastructure is in place – e.g. health – output documents should be holistic and support the development of thriving communities.

A government policy around levelling up agenda resulted in the County Council working with District and Borough Councils in 26 super output areas (areas of significant deprivation). Although none of these are in Stratford District, the District does have areas of rural deprivation. But rural deprivation does not tick the box for government grants etc. Since pandemic, the County Council has also provided a deprivation grant fund to support families, food charities and community groups – to try to look after the most vulnerable.

Cllr Seccombe noted that a number of councils around the country including in the Midlands are in financial difficulties. WCC is not in this situation but this still a challenge. There are four demand led services – that take 70% of budget:

- adult social care (biggest spend, old people and working age adults – may have had needs from when they were children, lot of specialist housing, provide training etc),
- children social care (demand is greater than the number of beds to support children – market dictates activity, started to bring back small children homes 5-6 per home),
- SEND (area of concern, growing, cause for concern, over last five years increase of 37%, no controls to manage this),
- transport (including home to school transport for SEND children). Costs are ~£12m for normal school transport, but considerably more for transport for SEND children.

WCC was invited in March 2023 to be one of three councils to be a level 2 devolution deal. (West Midlands is a Level 3). This means there will be more freedom on spending, without needing to go to central government. This will bring skills funding.

Following recent the Josh McAllister review, WCC been working with Solihull to support children safeguarding. Government asked WCC to become a Pathfinder – put more into upstream prevention in this area. Communication between key agencies is crucial. Working to see how to break down the barriers to make this happen. Does have some funding but the key issue is to ensure that it benefits those that need safeguarding.

## **8. Invited speakers: *Building Climate Resilience with Nature in the Pillertons*, Professor Rosemary Collier and Lucy Hartley.**

Cllr Hewson introduced the speakers and outlined that the councillors had invited to them because this is an area of relevance and interest to residents.

Lucy Hartley introduced herself as a former science teacher and retrained as a garden designer. Lucy now does talks on climate change and gardens.

Although a small village, Pillerton Hersey is connected to other places by hedgerows but there could be more. It is important to remember that even small communities are part of the wider planet, this includes it being a stop-off point and providing habitat for passing (migratory) organisms.

In the carbon cycle, photosynthesis is crucial to create carbohydrates, other molecules and produce oxygen. Humans can't do this. When plants die, this is then released back into soil and air. A few billion years ago, there was more CO<sub>2</sub>, at levels that would be quite toxic to humans and the environment was very hot. There were very large plants, that captured a lot of carbon, and in turn this cooled the earth (carbonaceous period). These then formed coal and gas deposits.

During the industrial revolution, humans started to produce a lot of CO<sub>2</sub>. In the greenhouse effect, CO<sub>2</sub> absorbs heat but does not release it. With more heat, there is greater evaporation leading to more moisture in the atmosphere. The result is more instability, and more extreme rainfall.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has a lot of information on climate change. There is also the Global Biodiversity Outlook 5.<sup>1</sup> The projected changes in temperature (due to climate change) and therefore precipitation have an impact on the whole world and modelling clearly explains why Paris Agreement was to limit average global temperature rise to 1.5 °C (based on pre-industrial levels). The projections are currently that this will be 2-3 °C.

In terms of trying to understand the climate change, the changes mean that the climate is shifting towards poles by ~ 7km per year. For gardeners in the UK this means a longer growing season. However, birds that need to feed on caterpillars suffer (pupation now occurs earlier, before chicks are hatched). This is just one example of the threat that climate change poses to biodiversity.

It is essential to build climate resilience – through mitigation and adaptation. For a community such as Pillerton Hersey, this means actions to help with flooding, hedgerows – with the aim to create island biogeography – to connect nature.

On all scales, cooperation is vital – in all our communities, but also across countries e.g. Communities across different central African countries have worked together to create the great green wall in to help stop the Sahara spreading.

Professor Collier introduced herself. She is an academic at the University of Warwick and formerly HRI, Wellesbourne. As a local resident from Tysoe she had an interest in the topic and how these impacted things including in the Local Plan. Unfortunately, the Local Plans are focussed on development rather than looking after the environment.

In addition to national initiatives such as the Environment Bill and post-Brexit reform, there are Local Nature Recovery Strategies and the county is tasked with delivering a strategy. There are also community groups in South Warwickshire working on things such as the Natural flood management (e.g. Shipston-on-Stour).

Currently we have a highly fragmented landscape. To improve nature, this needs to change. The Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Local Nature Partnership has targets to:

- reach 30% of land in sensitive management by 2030 to meet IUCN target (30 by 30). The current scale is 13% if all agreements are fulfilled
- Enhance woodlands – previously 7% has now increased to 15%
- Restore grasslands – restore 663 ha – increase to 2,000 ha

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/gbo5> [accessed 20/04/2024].

- Restore and create ponds – target to restore 400 ponds by 2030 and create 400 new ponds

There is a lot of talk about planting trees for carbon capture, but it is also important to remember other habitats too. In a mapping and planning exercise, each county identifies what there is, where the biodiversity is and use the information to target activities.

In Warwickshire, the person in charge is David Lowe. WCC are seen as leaders in the field of environmental management. There is already a lot of the information gathered but there needs to be more. This work is supported by Local Nature Partnerships – communities, farmers etc. The work is currently at consultation phase and there will soon be an online consultation – what do you value in your landscape and what do you think needs to be improved?

In terms of action, Government has established the Biodiversity Net Gain initiative. This means that a planning development with a negative impact on biodiversity has to have funding allocated to improve elsewhere. There are also new schemes for farmers post-Brexit. Groups of farmers can work on a collaborative landscape scale initiative. It is important to identify sources of funding and target action appropriately.

In relation to local community groups and their activities, there are a wide range of activities which can include No Mow May and planting wildflowers on verges. There are many enthusiastic volunteers, who often have a wide range of skills. Some community groups work with local parish/town councils. There are also different sources of funding. Examples of groups include:

- SWAN<sup>2,3</sup> – South Warwickshire Area Network for Wildlife – network of groups to work together, plan activities together (e.g. joint talks, great green week, water testing, hedges etc). Raise awareness within communities – churches, councils and residents
- Shipston Cornmill Meadows – water meadows for wildlife including swifts
- Clifford Chambers – fostering hedgehogs
- Shipston area flood group SAFAG<sup>4</sup> – formed post flooding – volunteers but had help from the Environment Agency and Coventry University. The work looked at flooding in a landscape scale, across the river catchment, with a consideration of how to stop water getting into river so fast. Action has been taken which includes 706 leaky wooden dams (slows water flow but does not stop it), creation of 40 ponds, 13 wet woodland areas created (an important habitat that has been lacking), 1,300 trees planted (plant in the right place, as streams get higher, trees in the right place can slow the flow). One project around the Blockley catchment involved the creation of sediment traps and planting of over 600 whips (small trees). This has reduced sediment run-off

Local Nature Action Plans are optional for parish councils. Some local councils have been working with WALC who run a workshop for parish councils to learn about how to do their own plan.

<sup>2</sup> <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/lifesci/wcc/about/naturalenvironment/swan/> [accessed 20/04/2024]

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/teamwilder-story-south-warwickshire-area-network>

<sup>4</sup> <https://safag.org/>

## 9. Community discussion

Cllr Hewson thanked the speakers and opened floor to questions.

Question: Cllr Hewson asked if there are any criteria for the 30 by 30?<sup>5</sup>

A: there are large parcels of land registered by Wildlife Trustees but on a smaller scale anyone can do it.

It was noted that the verges around the village have a wide range of wildflowers in the summer.

Q: Cllr Hitchman – which four countries are meeting their carbon emissions reduction targets?

A: Mostly small countries that are already being impacted by climate change – The Gambia, India, Costa Rica and Morocco,

A resident commented that the speakers are preaching to converted in rural South Warwickshire. However the threat of development may make it difficult to meet net biodiversity gain. An observation is the new housing development in and around Wariwck where there is very poor planting etc. What is government doing?

Cllr Seccombe: Local Plans cannot mandate biodiversity action. Although it would be good to see in Local Plan there is no legislation in place for this. It is an extra cost to developers.

It was noted that the planning authority can require something, but there needs to be pressure on policy makers. There are different ways people can do this but there is a lot of apathy because it is seen as difficult.

Question: What is WCC doing?

A: Cllr Seccombe: Air source heat pumps are an option, there is activity in Arlescote to offset BNG but ideally don't do it as an offset.

There was wide agreement from residents that houses should be built as low impact housing.

For many years, farming has been homogenous and has had a negative impact on the landscape. It is important to consider how to maintain food production but also support biodiversity and reduce negative impact. The country is currently ~60% self-sufficient as nation but sources of imports are often climate stressed areas.

One option is to use low grade agriculture land could be used for BNG.

A resident commented that it would be a useful exercise to overlay modern maps with maps from 50 years ago to see where there are/were ponds, hedges etc. This can clearly demonstrate what has happened. This can also be done with old photos. Maps may show some information of what is present but not how it is/was managed. (note not all maps show hedges).

A resident mentioned that land still needs to be managed otherwise get scrub and brambles. However, the speakers outlines that we need more scrub and brambles. These are important for birds and other biodiversity. Brambles are a rich source of nectar and bird food. Another resident said brambles are a recovery species.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/delivering-30by30-on-land-in-england>

In terms of mowing, it is possible to use a prevention mow – if only left a month then not too difficult mow. Can leave things as a hay meadow – cut late summer and things can start again.

Gardeners have been part of the problem in terms of biodiversity with invasive species – buddleia, rhododendrons

Plant Life is a charity with information about different types of planting and for different grass type planting and what the mowing pattern is needed.

Local verges – good, Warwickshire Highways mows the 1 m verge but often farmers cut before harvest. This may be for hay but this is a relatively late cut. The local area also gets travellers occasionally and the horses graze and doesn't seem to impact it – flower meadows were historically grazed.

Highways try and leave verges if requested unless it is for safety e.g. visibility splays. The parish council has asked them to observe No Mow May around the parish unless required for safety.

Another resident mentioned that blackthorn is something that needs to be cut to avoid solid thicket. Prof Collier commented that this can be treated like a late cut hay meadow. Let it flower and drop seed then cut back before winter.

Prof Collier said there are two sites – Radway Meadows and SSSI near Butlers Marston – that are good examples of meadows that are well managed. Cut down maybe with sheep later in season.

The loss of birds due to reduction in cattle numbers was also reflected on. Cattle brought flies which were a food source for birds, particularly swallows, swifts and house martins.

In terms of Flooding, a resident asked about the Wellesbourne and Walton Flood Action Group,<sup>6</sup> set up by retired engineer Anthony White.

Shipston floods due to run off from higher areas. This is the same problem faced by Pillerton Priors. However, Ilmington is very different – there are three streets that flood and run down to the other road which no bigger sewer. Then there is the Armscote Severn Trent pumping station (which is almost at capacity in dry weather) so the water then goes into streams that feed into Stour. Different types of flooding all compounded – they have the same impact but need treating differently.

## 10. Closing remarks and refreshments

Cllr Hewson drew the discussion to a close thanking the speakers for an interesting presentation and discussion and thanking residents for joining the meeting. Everyone was invited to stay for refreshments.

Meeting closed 20:34

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/WWFAG/>