



Rural Review

The Newsletter of Wem Rural Parish Council
Issue 33 Winter 2021

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Rural Review

is produced by
Wem Rural Parish Council
Orchard Cottage
Rowe Lane
Welshampton
SY12 0QB

For further
information
please contact
Carole Warner on
01948 710672
email:
clerk@wemrural-pc.gov.uk
www.wemrural-pc.gov.uk

WELCOME....

During the past year, a huge local and national effort has been made! This third lockdown has been a harder slog hasn't it? However, there is daily better news, especially regarding vaccinations so we all cling onto hope of a better time in the summer, though I expect we will all still be taking care for a considerable time.

Many people have again been taking advantage of the local walking and cycling opportunities. Perhaps like me, you are shocked at the litter on the roadsides in Wem Rural Parish. I understand that a lady and her children (possibly from Wem) collected litter, in particular, bottles and cans. There are others who are collecting litter and we thank you. Just to mind you, the Parish Council has litter picking equipment which residents can borrow which will help keep you safe. Contact the Clerk if you wish to borrow some. Last year our litter pick was cancelled. Hopefully we can possibly arrange a litter pick in April (restrictions permitting). Watch the WRPC Facebook page for news on this.

There seem to be other frustrations – flooding and potholes. Following heavy rain the water levels rise quickly. Please inform the Clerk if you have been affected. Land owners can help to improve the situation by ensuring drains, ditches and streams are cleared so water runs freely. Wem Rural Parish Council would like to discuss the situation with Shropshire Council and the NFU in the future.

Two notes of caution – watch out for the dreaded potholes! We seem to have to pick our way along the roads these days. The deep holes are a concern for damage to vehicles and road safety. Let's hope good quality repairs can take place in the Spring. Mentioning safety again - I am asked to continue to remind people to wear High Visibility clothing when walking or cycling. Most horse riders now wear seem to follow this advice for their own personal safety. Remember – BE SEEN!

2021 is planned to be election year for Shropshire Council and local authorities and we have taken the opportunity to look back over the past 4 years. When you read what the Council has done, I hope you will agree the Council has been active, although 2020 less so for obvious reasons.

We hope you all enjoy reading the articles from the organisations who have received grants from the Parish Council.

Liz Vernon,
Chair, Wem Rural Parish Council

COVID-19 Vaccines

As the government's vaccination programme gathers pace, letters inviting residents for a vaccine jab are now coming through swift and fast. Shropshire Council has a comprehensive guide to the vaccines programme on its website:

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/coronavirus/information-for-the-public/vaccination-faqs/>

Please take a look, especially if you need help to get to a vaccine centre.



News from Newtown C of E School

National Lockdown and Remote Learning

As you will be aware all children were due to return at the beginning of term however at 8pm on 4th January a National Lockdown was announced and our schools are once again only open to the children of key workers and those children deemed vulnerable. In just 24 hours our fantastic team at Newtown then switched to remote learning for the whole of the school as well as supporting key worker children on site by creating key worker bubbles and staff rotas.

It is safe to say that we have learnt so much from the first National Lockdown in 2020. This time around we are able offer much more support with remote learning with both online and paper-based packs as well as loan laptops to those who need them. Of course, nothing beats the children being in school though!

A massive thank you to the team at Newtown School for their continued focus to educate and support the children and families of our Parish and beyond.

Staff Changes at Newtown School

In the Autumn term we welcomed the arrival of Miss Genny Truswell to our teaching team in Class 1. Genny has previous experience teaching Early Years classes at schools in Shrewsbury and Leicester and she worked for Shropshire Council's Early Years Team for three years in training and supporting teachers in Child Care and Sure Start Centres in north Shropshire.

Later this year Mr Andrew Hodson our Executive Head Teacher will be retiring from his role. During his thirteen years with Newtown Andrew has led the school from strength to strength. Since 2016, following the Federation with Welshampton, he was appointed Executive Head of the two schools. Andrew was due to retire in April however due to the National Lockdown Andrew has agreed to stay in his role until the end of the summer term. This will ensure a stable handover to his replacement. The recruitment process has been postponed until later this term and all of the details are on the school website www.newtown.shropshire.sch.uk

We are delighted to let you know that Mrs Lench is now restored to full health and has returned to her teaching position in Class 3. Huge thanks go to Miss Gwilliam who did an outstanding job covering the teaching of Class 3 last term and we wish Miss Gwilliam all the very best for the future.

Governor Vacancy

We currently have a vacancy for a co-opted Governor. If you or any member of the community would be interested in a role within our Governing Body then please contact Andrew Hodson or myself via school for further information.

I would like to thank the whole of the school community, pupils, staff, governors and parents for their resilience and energy they have shown at this challenging time.

Clare Mainwaring
Chair of Governors

census 2021

What is the census?

The census is a survey that happens every 10 years and gives a picture of all the people and households in England and Wales. Local councils, charities and many other organisations use census information to decide how to spend billions of pounds on services every year. This includes spending on transport, education and healthcare. To make sure this money is spent where it's most needed, it's important that the census counts everyone.

Your support matters.

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) understand that building good relationships with communities means more people will want to take part in the census. They also understand that no one knows your community better than

you. Support from trusted local leaders and community representatives will be vital in helping people take part.

Building community links

Everyone should have the support they need to fill in the census. ONS local community engagement staff will be on hand throughout the census with resources, advice and practical support that helps everyone to take part.

When should I fill in my census questionnaire?

Census Day is Sunday 21 March, but you can fill yours in as soon as you get your access code in the post. Your answers should be about the people who usually live in your household on this date, even if you're filling it in before then. If your household circumstances change on Census Day, you can let ONS know.

Read more about the census at www.census.gov.uk
Follow the census @Census2021

Broadband

Thank you to those who replied to the Gigabit survey. We had very good response and have forwarded the data to both Openreach and Airband. These companies are the two infrastructure providers in the parish. We will update you as soon as we have feedback from them.

But what about the current situation?

Some residents in the Edstaston area of the Parish will already be aware of Airband as the provider of wireless broadband through the Edstaston transmitter mast. Unfortunately, the wireless solution for this area has not been without problems. Local Councillors have received many dissatisfied comments from residents and have experienced problems themselves. To try to resolve these problems, local Councillors asked Shropshire Councillor Chris Mellings to facilitate a meeting with Connecting Shropshire Programme Manager, Chris Taylor and Steve Holford, Airband's Commercial Director. The meeting took place during the last week of January.

Chris Taylor explained, that Connecting Shropshire was committed to providing faster broadband to the parts of the Shropshire Council area where properties were too far from the fibreoptic cabinet, in these areas a wireless solution was considered the right option. The transmitter at Edstaston is only one of many that Airband was commissioned to install. It was agreed that a wireless solution is not without problems; obstacles appearing in the line of sight between the transmitter and receiver and severe weather to name just two. Steve Holford acknowledged that Airband also had technical problems with certain masts, for example they were increasing power supplies to make the transmitter more resilient. Parish Councillors made clear to both Connecting Shropshire and Airband that the main issues were:

- Intermittent connection at varying times of the day
- Poor and variable broadband speeds
- Being unable to get a response from Airband either by email or via the telephone both within working hours and out of working hours.
- No notification by Airband to consumers if Airband are to undertake maintenance.
- Poor equipment standards.

Steve Holford advised that in his few months since joining Airband, he had identified several areas that needed improvement and this included customer service. He asked if he could work with the Parish Council to monitor performance of the mast, which all agreed. Steve Holford stressed that although Airband no longer installing new transmitters, the company is now focussing on fibre, Airband is committing to investing in and servicing the transmitters for at least 5 years.

A follow up meeting has been set for early March. We will keep you all posted of progress.

Wem Area Climate Forum Update

Wem Area Climate Forum continues to meet weekly via Zoom under the guidance of Malcolm Adkins. Understandably, like many organisations, there are limits to what can be done at the moment, but good progress is being made by sharing ideas and planning for the future. Focus is particularly on three areas.

Food. Thinking more carefully about what we eat, and where we get it from, to reduce carbon dioxide pollution. Dietary and agricultural changes are important, and encouraging local shopping. Sourcing produce locally and seasonally wherever possible can also help by reducing food miles. Also, it is estimated that about one-third of our food goes to waste; how can we tackle this big problem? The Forum has a Facebook page, and there is a very informative Food Leaflet to be found there. A free digital copy is also available by emailing the Forum:

(wemclimateforum2@gmail.com).

Footpaths. Previous reports announced the formation of a P3 group (Parish Paths Partnership) for Wem Area with Shropshire Council. However, a step in the right direction still needs to be taken because face to face meetings are needed to kick things off, deciding and surveying which routes to prioritise. The winter weather hasn't helped either. However, it will be best foot forward as soon as conditions allow. As well as planting trees and shrubs, footpaths are a means to develop wildlife and environmental corridors to link areas of high quality such as Wem Moss, the river Roden, the railway, and the old Prees Canal.

Outdoor Recreation Areas. Unfortunately, current rules inhibit tree planting and ground works, which are best carried out around now. However, identifying areas continues, continuing the plan for Ranford Way in Wem Town. When appropriate, local residents and Shropshire Council will be consulted, considering access, seating, planting a mixture of native trees and fruit trees, and maintenance. This could also be a model for other such projects in the future in the Wem area.

For further information, please contact Malcolm Adkins mal10@mac.com and 01939 235559. If you feel like joining in on the forum, contact him, there are plenty more spaces on the Zoom screen. Also look for the Forum's Facebook page.

Active at Home

is the latest initiative by Energize, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Active Partnership.

Follow this link to find ideas which are ideal for people of any age who want to get started or remain active whilst at home: <https://www.energizestw.org.uk/active-at-home>

Parish Council Grants

Each year, the Parish Council allocates an element of its precept to help community groups and projects. 2020 and so far into 2021 have seen difficult times for some groups and the Council is pleased to support them financially and to promote their activities. In the following pages some of our groups outline their activities during these pandemic times.



Newtown Community and Recreation Association

On behalf of the NCRA, I would like to formally record our appreciation to Wem Rural Parish Council for the extremely generous grant funding of £7,099.

This grant is beyond any of our wildest expectations and will allow us to accomplish in only a few months what traditional fundraising would probably have taken us years!

This funding will allow us to carry out the following works:

- * Replace the children's swing with a fully galvanised unit (*this will have an anticipated lifespan of at least 15 years*)
- * Replace the baby swing with a fully galvanised unit (*this will have an anticipated lifespan of at least 15 years*)
- * Replace the A Frame (*this will have an anticipated lifespan of at least 15 years*)

We are in the process of organising these works which are likely to take place in March 2021 and at the same time we will undertake a full overhaul of the zip wire and install new woodchip.

Thank you again for all of your support, encouragement and excellent advice over the past few months.

Andy Black
Chairman, NCRA
Registered Charity Number 108395

Summer and Leah Davies by the area



1st Wem Scouts



2020 was, of course, a difficult one for 1st Wem Scouts – both individually and collectively! We did, however, start well into the year with a sponsored sleep out with the Scouts, where they built their home for the night out of cardboard boxes and raised money for The Ark Shrewsbury. This is typical of the way Scouts give back to others in the community. The Cubs also managed to do one of their favourite activities :- a stay awake.

We very quickly adapted to online Scouting once the first lock down came and we have carried this on until now and have been offering each section a weekly meeting online and have achieved a lot. In many cases, this provides light relief and some “normality” for all involved. We have even had virtual camps where we spent the nights either in a tent in the garden or a shelter built inside.

It has not been easy and for a lot of the children the online meetings have been really tough, with concentration and exhaustion from home schooling taking its toll, so we are working on a socially distant programme that we can run outside once lock down is over. Getting hands on with things is what we have all really missed. The children and leaders have done such a great job, keeping going every week even when things for them were difficult.

We have been very restricted in our ability to fund raise this year, with many of our fixed costs (census subscriptions, building rent etc.) still being payable, and so have had to draw on reserves. WRPC's grants to Scouts have been absolutely fundamental in keeping the provision going of as many activities as possible over recent years – and no more so than in the challenging circumstance of 2020. Scouting in Wem wouldn't exist if it weren't for the generous consideration of Wem Rural PC and others.

Pete Slack, Treasurer

If you've been past Edstaston Village Hall lately you'll have seen some changes. Since October 2020 members of the community and local businesses have generously given their skills, machinery and labour to dig footings, spread concrete and stone, lay foundations and bricks demolish walls and start on the internal renovations.

None of this would have been possible without a generous Community-Led Housing Grant of £25,000 plus £4,533.95 of reserved funds from Wem Rural Parish Council. Together with grants from the Garfield Weston Foundation, Bernard Sunley Foundation, Defra/Village Halls Improvement Fund and other donations and fundraising we have achieved full funding for the first phase of the project :

- new disabled/pushchair-friendly entrance lobby through to a multi-purpose room open to the existing hall
- new kitchen
- internal renovation to create a new disabled toilet and extra space for built-in storage in the bar, which will move to the old kitchen

With Covid-19 space restrictions likely to continue for some time we consulted various users of the hall and decided it would benefit the community most to accelerate the project by concentrating on the larger extension. Once the messy building work is done, we will get the rest of the land donated by the Price family into use for outdoor events as soon as possible.

The second extension, a stage area with dressing rooms/storage on the opposite side of the hall will be started as soon as funds allow.

♥ There are too many people to thank individually but special mention must go to Trev Gough for his enthusiasm and many talents. A huge thank you to ALL helpers - your determination and commitment are inspiring! ♥

Follow progress on our website www.edstaston.org.uk or on our Facebook page. If you have skills, time, machinery or materials to offer please contact Liz Vernon 01939 234896 or Bev Horsley 01939 232956 or any other member of the committee





Friends of Whitchurch Road Cemetery, Wem

The Friends Group was formed in 2008 with the aim of improving and maintaining the previously neglected and historically important cemetery.

Our principal financial supporters on an annual basis are Wem Parish Church, Wem Town Council, Wem Rural Council and the War Graves Commission. Other local churches also donate. In addition, we hold several fundraising events every year. Wem Rural PC granted the Friends £400 this year. These funds allow us to employ a grass cutting contractor and carry out other maintenance.

The Chapel



Conservation of the woven wall panels in the Chapel

The Friends' latest project is to preserve the fifteen beautiful woven wall panels within the Chapel. Prior to the first lockdown, some tentative steps had been taken: we had started to publicise our project locally and had made contact with National Trust staff from Wightwick Manor (where there are other loom woven rush panels). In addition, we had approached a few suitably qualified and ethnographic conservators to see if they would be interested in doing the work.



Although local conservators with this type of experience are thin on the ground, we are pleased that we have now found an accredited and experienced specialist who has visited the chapel and is happy to take on the project at a competitive cost.

The necessary conservation work will be carried by Drakon Heritage and Conservation at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery where they rent studio space. The Conservator has

over 15 years' experience and has recently worked as the conservation manager for the Staffordshire Hoard. Trained museum volunteers will be used (under supervision) for some of the more labour intensive parts of the work and this would significantly reduce the project costs. A full quote has been provided and the cost will be £6,400. This compares favourably to that indicated by another specialist.

Panel construction and history.

Several specialists have viewed the panels, either on site or through photographs. All agree how rare, beautifully constructed and unusual they are. However, the material used for construction, the age of the panels or how they came to be in the chapel are not clear. It has been suggested that the panels could have been made for a different purpose e.g. floor coverings, and eventually placed on the walls of the chapel as decorative pieces. The V&A in London have been contacted on our behalf by National Trust at Wightwick and they are the opinion that our panels may be Indian in origin. The Wightwick panels are currently being restored and those doing the work believe them to be Flemish, Northern French or North American.



A rush weaver from the Basketmakers Association has carried out extensive research on our behalf and has suggested that our panels may be made from a plant called korai, which is loom woven in India to make sleeping mats.

An initial trawl of the Shropshire Archives has not yet uncovered any historical details but it is assumed that the panels are contemporary with the build of the chapel in 1892. It may be of note that just before that time it had been fashionable to decorate grand houses using elaborate wall coverings. During the conservation work more details should emerge and it is hoped that the fibres can be analysed to determine the plant type.



Fundraising

We have now begun our fundraising efforts and although we on our way towards raising the necessary funds we still have some way to go. We thank Wem Rural PC for donating £250. We hope that the work will be able to start in 2021.

Make A Change, Become a Councillor

Are you passionate about your community? Do you want to help make a long-lasting change? Do you have innovative ideas for the council? Do you have concerns about a specific issue and want to do something about it? If this is you, then we need you. We need people from all backgrounds and experiences who reflect their community to put themselves forward for election. Make a change and become a councillor.

What Do Local Councils Do?

Your local council has overall responsibility for the wellbeing of your local community. Their work falls into three main categories:

- Delivery of services;
- Improve quality of life for residents;
- Give communities a democratic voice.

Becoming a Local Councillor

As a local councillor you can become a voice for your community and make real change. Councillors are community leaders and represent the interests of the communities they serve. Local councillors have three main responsibilities:

- Decision-making;
- Monitoring;
- Getting involved locally.

Getting Elected

To stand for election to a local council you must be:

- a UK or Commonwealth citizen or the European Union;
- at least 18 years old;
- an elector of the local council; or in the past 12 months occupied land or other premises in the area the local council serves (as owner or tenant); or work in the area local council serves (as your principal or only place of work); or live within three miles of the local council boundary

What has your Parish Council done?

An election year is a good time to review what the Parish Council has achieved. Below are the main achievements since the elections in May 2017.

- Safer Roads Partnership speed monitoring at Quina Brook.
- Parish Consultation on Future Development in the parish.
- Community Plan 2019.
- Social media presence.
- Progression through the Local Council Award Scheme from Foundation to the second Council in Shropshire to be awarded the highest level, Quality Gold.
- Partner in Wem Economic Forum
- Partner in Wem Area Emergency Plan.
- Partner in Dementia Friendly Wem.
- Installation of 4 Community Public Access Defibrillators.
- Traffic Calming Measures including promoting Community Speed Watch.
- COVID-19 Community Support Group
- Free SmartWater kits for residents
- Community Litter Picks
- Gigabit Broadband Project.

A long list and many could not have been achieved without parishioners' help. Thank you!



COVID-19 Support Update

Shropshire Council now has a range of funding available to help the most vulnerable of Shropshire's households to manage over the winter months.

The Council has been granted an **Emergency Fund** through DEFRA and funding through a **Winter Grant Scheme** through the Department for Work & Pensions to help those residents in Shropshire that are most in need. Between them, these funds will be able to help the most vulnerable with the cost of food, energy and water bills and other essential outgoings.

There is one application process which can be done over the phone (a paper form is available on request). Advisers will go through the person's circumstances and will complete an initial application, at the same time they will be able to point people in the direction of other help and advice available. After that, a specialist adviser will deal with the application, including any supporting information we may need to help us decide.

These awards are aimed at people in hardship and who are struggling to manage during the Covid pandemic. A person does not need to be getting benefits in order to qualify, each application will be looked at on its merits and will take all circumstances into account, including any other money that the person might have available to help.

So, if you, or someone you know, is having difficulty meeting essential outgoings, call Shropshire Council on **0345 678 9078**.

NEW TOWN



ED STASTON

RODEN

Wem Rural Parish Council

www.wemrural-pc.gov.uk
www.facebook.com/wemruralPC

Councillors invite members of their ward to contact them to discuss any issues or matters of concern.

You can also contact the Parish Clerk, Carole Warner, Orchard Cottage, Rowe Lane, Welshampton, SY12 0QB 01948 710672 or email clerk@wemrural-pc.gov.uk

PARISH COUNCILLORS

12 Councillors represent the 3 wards

EDSTASTON

Huw Edwards	07834 252412	Bank House Farm, Paddol Green, Wem, SY4 5QZ
Glynis Nicholls	01939 234371	Pool Head Farm, Pool Head, Wem, SY4 5QY
Pete Slack	01939 236990	Fairview, 7 Paddol Green, Wem, SY4 5QZ
Liz Vernon	01939 234896	The Park, Edstaston, Wem, SY4 5RF
Ruth Williams	01939 233389	Pool Cottage, Pool Head, Wem SY4 5QY

NEWTOWN

Julia Goode	07971 102569	3 Oakhurst Villas, Newtown, SY4 5NT
Stella Whyte	01948 710302	Grange Villa, Northwood, Wem, SY4 5NP

RODEN

Peter Broomhall	01939 232573	3 Swains Close, Wem, SY4 5NZ
Peter Marsh	01939 232498	Aston Hall, Wem, SY4 5JQ
Vacancy		
Len Staines	01939 234415	The Hawthorns, Barkers Green, Wem, SY4 5JW
Tim Wilton-Morgan	01939 235703	Palms Hill House, Palms Hill, Wem, SY4 5PQ

Covid-19 Helpline and on-line information

For non-medical support and enquires call direct Covid-19 Helpline 0345 6789028 or email customerfirst@shropshire.gov.uk

On the Shropshire Council website, there is a wide range of information available to help you support the people in your neighbourhoods and beyond. Find the full range of information through this link: <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/coronavirus/information-for-the-public/>

M E E T I N G S

The Parish Council normally meet on the first Tuesday of the month . Please refer to the Council's website.

Agendas for all meetings are available on the website at least 3 days before the meeting.

Members of the community are welcome to attend all meetings and there is time set by at the start to allow you to address the Council.



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LOCAL COUNCIL
AWARD SCHEME
QUALITY GOLD

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