

Feckenham Parish Council **NEWSLETTER**

Number 2
APRIL 2009



The processes of local government can be a mystery to many people, not least those involved with the Parish Council.

So welcome to the second edition of our Newsletter where we'll attempt to throw some light on what is being done on your behalf and invite you to tell us whether you feel they are the right things

IT'S OFFICIAL - IT'S OPEN!



Home Secretary Jacqui Smith MP discusses the virtues of the genuine Fecken-Ham with Rosemary Wormington at the official opening of The Village Shop - more on page 4

Inside this edition:

Welcome...

What the Parish Council does and how it does it. **Page 2**

Flood Club...

What's being done to get things flowing **Page 3**

Open All Hours:

A local shop for local people at last! **Page 4**

Calming Down:

Flashing signs and safer roads on the horizon **Page 5**

The Nitty Gritty

Where the money comes from & how it's used for Feckenham **Page 6**

Goings on

What's new and what's changing **Page 7**

Council Contacts **Page 8**

From The Chair

Andrew Henson



Dear Parishioner

It has been 12 months since our initial Feckenham Parish Council Newsletter and time for the second edition. As a group of Councillors, we feel it is now time to give you a further update on what has been achieved so far, and our intentions for the near future.

We hope that you find this short Newsletter informative, and would once again welcome feedback on the content and issues raised.

You can provide your comments in a variety of ways:

- Via the website: www.feckenham.com
- Contact the Chair, Andrew Henson, at 7 Turton Gardens, Feckenham or on 01527 894044
- Through any of the other Councillors – names and contact details on page 8
- By getting involved with any of the Parish Groups – existing or new.

A Reminder ... What is the Parish Council?

- The Parish Council consists of a group of community representatives – Councillors – elected every 4 years.
- The role is voluntary, with responsibilities governed carefully by statute.
- Regular meetings are held to which the public are invited.
- Feckenham Parish Council tends to maintain a comparatively low profile, representing the Parish in a variety of regional forums; through liaison with Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council; and supporting autonomous groups within the Parish focused upon particular activities

The Parish Plan and the Parish Council

The inaugural Feckenham Parish Plan was produced in 2006/7. A number of Parish action groups emerged from the Plan, focused on key concerns raised following consultation with Parishioners

- Flood prevention
- Creation of a Village Shop
- Impact of Traffic and Parking

An update on the work of each of the groups can be found on the following pages. We will need to consider a review of the Parish Plan in the near future (2010?) to keep it up to date with changing events. If you would like to participate in this process, please contact a member of the Council.

We hope you find the following pages of interest, and look forward to any feedback you care to provide.

Yours sincerely,

Feckenham Parish Council,

Andrew Henson

Chair

Open all hours!

Community Shop Group

The Village Shop opened for business on 31st January 2009, and was officially opened by Jacqui Smith MP on 21st March. It seems to be doing well in its first weeks of trading.

Staffed entirely by volunteers, some 60 villagers have committed from 2 hours per week and more to operate a shop which is open 7 days per week. However, we still need more help, so if you're in a position to offer a couple of hours per week you'd be very welcome. It need not be counter work, there are jobs in the store room and in the "back room" which would benefit from your help.

The shop's purpose is to provide an outlet for local produce, ideally organic and wherever possible, fairly traded. We hope to become another centre of community activity, with plans to open a café, with any luck, later this year.

The shop is set up as a Mutual Society, which means any profit made, will be ploughed back into projects for the Parish and community. At the moment, any surplus is being re-invested in the business, but we hope to make a surplus in years to come. This is one of the reasons why becoming a shareholder is so very important. Over 280 parishioners have done so already, buying a £10 share that gives them a say in what happens.

Emerging originally from the Parish Plan, the shop is more proof of what this community can do when it puts its mind to it!



Goodbye to all of this?

Flood Prevention Group



The Flood Prevention Group, known to its members as “Flood Club”, has been working with Redditch Borough Council, Worcester County Council and local land owners to reduce the risk of flooding in and around Feckenham.

Progress

Since the last Newsletter in April 2008 there’s been some progress:

- A survey of the Astwood Lane culvert revealed that it had been damaged by tree roots near Poplars Lane. This has been repaired to enable the pipe to once again take full flow. A new culvert has been installed under Poplars Lane to allow water to flow freely from the Plack Brook. There are also new header walls and metal grilles to protect the entrance to the culvert.
- Two new road drains have been installed in Droitwich Road by The Old Cider Mill (where the July 2007 flood closed the road). These drains empty into a nearby ditch (that has been cleared), the water then flows freely into The Bow Brook.

What’s next?

- A new drainage scheme has been confirmed for gullies and surface water drains and will be installed from the junction of Astwood Lane and Swansbrook Lane, running along Swansbrook Lane and flowing out into The Plack Brook behind Winfields (Barretts). Work is planned to start early July coinciding with the school summer holidays, and is expected to last 4-6 weeks.
- We’re continuing to work with land owners and Redditch Borough Council to improve the standard of local ditches and therefore increase their flow rate and capacity.

Our Parish Lengthsman (see Page 6) has also been active around the Parish clearing drains, keeping culvert entrances clear of debris and cutting grips (channels in the grass verge at the side of the road) to allow water to flow away from the road and into fields or ditches.



Calming it down

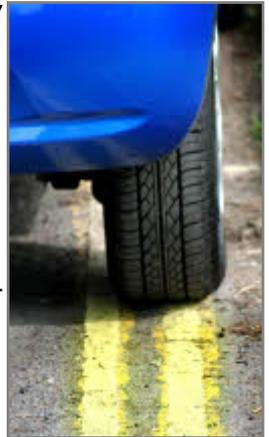
**Feckenham Parish Plan
Traffic Management Group**

Speeding

Developments to date have focused on the acquisition of a Vehicle Activated Speeding (VAS) sign

for use within the Parish. It is hoped that the Parish Council will take ownership of this asset, and we are currently working through a checklist of requirements raised by the Highways Department.

A 'bigger picture' proposal encompassing build-outs, mini-roundabout, extension to the 30mph zone on Droitwich Road and Rock Hill Lane diversion – see below – has also been put forward. No further news at this stage.



Parking

From April 2009 Civil Parking Enforcement will transfer from the Police to Redditch Borough Council. They will employ traffic wardens to enforce existing parking regulations. Leaflets and posters have been distributed to raise awareness across the Borough.



HGVs

A proposal has been made to divert HGV traffic via Rock Hill Lane to avoid heavy lorries driving through the village. So far the reception from the various authorities involved has been negative. However, we will continue to lobby for action, supported by our County Council representatives and our local MP, Jacqui Smith

Other Council work



Budget & Precept

The Parish Council is funded through a small charge included within the Council Tax for each household within the Parish – this is the Council's "Precept". In advance of each financial year, running from April to March, the Council debates what it needs to spend to achieve its aims balanced with what would be deemed a reasonable request as a Precept.

For 2009/10, the Council's budget includes:

- Salary of a part-time clerk who acts as the responsible Financial Officer and manages the administrative aspects of the Council
- Grants to various Parish groups
- Communication via newsletter, noticeboard and website
- Insurance and training
- Maintenance and replanting of flower tubs
- Audit and local association fees
- Hire of Village Hall for Parish Council Meetings
- Financial reserves to reduce and mitigate potential risks

In 2008/09 the Council received a precept of £7,990. For 2009/10 this will increase to £8,200 (+2.6%), representing an average of around £24 per household.

Planning – the Council has an input into the planning process. A small Planning Committee provides feedback from a Parish perspective on any planning applications submitted.



Parish Lengthsman – we appointed a Parish Lengthsman, Allen Farnsworth, last summer

to enhance the community environment through maintenance of roadside verges and drainage, and other small scale maintenance work. We are able to reclaim money from the County Council to fund such work, and a budget of £2,100 (~15 hours per month) will be available in 2009/10.

Grants – the Council has allocated a budget of £1,100 to offer grants to various Parish groups. Application forms can be obtained from the Clerk, and the deadline for final submissions is 31st August, 2009.

What's Happening?

Changes and improvements

Affordable Housing

The new development – Yeates' Acre – was formally opened by the Mayor of Redditch, Councillor Jack Field, in October 2008. It is good to see an influx of people with close connection to the Parish adding further vibrancy to the community



From Barretts to Winfields

The poor economic climate has captured another victim in the form of Barretts, a venerable organisation close to home. Fortunately, the business has not lain idle for too long with Winfields moving in and offering a very similar product range. We wish the business well for the future.



Allotments

As many of you will know the land off Moors Lane, currently rented out as allotments by Redditch Borough Council, is up for sale. Members of the Parish have leaped into action to explore alternatives to retain the current use of this land. The Parish Council is fully supportive and maintains a watching brief subject to any specific requests to act. More details will no doubt be forthcoming in future weeks.



Footpaths

Feckenham has been selected for a Footpaths review by the County Council over the next 12 months. This should hopefully lead to further improvement works.





Keeping in touch

Council Contacts

For more information, and to keep up with Parish matters please refer to our new **Parish Council Noticeboard**, which will soon be erected near to the post box at the corner of High Street and Turton Gardens, or you can visit our website at **www.feckenham.com**

Future **2009 Parish Council Meeting Dates** (all starting at 7.30pm):-

21st May (including Annual Parish Meeting)

16th July (followed by Amenity Trust Meeting)

17th September

19th November (followed by Amenity Trust Meeting)

17th December

Any organisation or Parishioner who wishes to make a report or raise an issue at the Annual Parish Meeting on 21st May should contact the Clerk, who will ensure you are included on the agenda

If you would like to raise any issue concerning the work of the Parish Council, please contact any of the Councillors (contact numbers below) or come along to the meeting in person.

If you would like to get more directly involved, we currently have a **vacancy for a Parish Councillor**. Please contact the Clerk or any Councillor if you wish to learn more.

Feckenham Parish Council

Andrew Henson, Chair	894044
Jessica James, Vice Chair	894674
Jeff Matthews, Councillor	894801
Tim Smith, Councillor	892834
John Roundell, Councillor	893445
Louisa Venables, Councillor	01386 793164
Sean Arble, Clerk	01789 490501
sean.arble@gmail.com	