

Bodenham Parish Council

Chairman's Report – 2010/2011

Once again Parish Councillors have worked to improve the quality of life of our community by striving to introduce some simple measures. The Parish Council had unsuccessfully sought assistance from Herefordshire Council/Amey to protect the green by the War Memorial from damage that was being caused by the inconsiderate parking in **Church Road**. The introduction of dwarf **oak posts** and discrete **signage** by the Parish Council seems to be having the desired effect and the resurfacing has also improved matters, also a new **hand rail** has been installed on the village green along **The Moor** to assist the safety of pedestrians. We now also have new **bus shelters**, which we hope are an improvement on the old ones. We hope the **SID** will remind everyone to keep to the speed limits and drive with care.

I am most grateful to those Parish Councillors that have spent not inconsiderable time and energy on these mundane quality-of-life matters like the limiting of **speeding** in the village by moving the Speeding Indicating Device to various locations. Councillors have also followed-up **littering** incidents and tried to limit that "old chestnut" - **dog fouling**. On a more optimistic note - although we are all relieved that there has been no repeat of the terrible effect of property **flooding** in the village since the July 2007 severe weather event, we are really fortunate to have a hardy group of volunteers that don't just complain but take positive steps to raise awareness of the issue and roll up their sleeves to keep watercourses and drains etc. maintained. It's so easy for the subject of flooding to slip under the radar when local watercourses are benign as at present. However, I'm convinced that an active and thriving Bodenham Flood Protection Group is absolutely vital to the wellbeing of the whole village community. I know that continued Parish Council support in this area will be greatly appreciated.

I mentioned in last year's report that the Parish Council always looks to the future and in this vein has embarked on the task of creating a **Parish website** and a **Bodenham Community-Led Parish Plan**. There is anecdotal evidence that the website that has been running for several months is having a real impact in helping to promote various village organisations and assisting local residents and visitors in the provision of vital information. Thanks again for the many hours devoted by a Parish Council volunteer. A phase 2 revision to further enhance the website is likely to be introduced shortly. I would make a plea for all to use the full potential of the website (www.bodenhamparish.org.uk) to promote your organisation by sending items for publishing to Tony Mitcheson. This is of great value for late items of news. The monthly Bodenham Newsletter is included on the website. This aspect is of inestimable value.

After successful public participation events last summer progress with the preparation of the **Parish Community Led Plan** may appear to have slowed but considerable effort has in fact gone into the detailed analysis of the many hundreds of suggestions to ensure that Plan will truly reflect the hopes and aspirations of the whole Bodenham community and guide the Parish Council in its future areas of activity. Again I pay tribute to all the willing volunteers both Parish Councillors and others who have spent many hours in taking this project forward.

Roads and Highway matters occupy much time and effort of Parish Councillors. The provision of additional **salt bins** has again been sought. In recent months bins have been placed along Dunfield Lane on "God Almighty" Hill and near the junction of Hollybush Lane and the A417. We have also approached Herefordshire Council/Amey to stress the importance of gritting roads to ensure that vital services are accessible in periods of severe weather. A and B class roads and bus routes are gritting priorities as are roads accessing schools, however, following several

approaches by residents we have drawn attention to the fact that roads leading to the primary school were on occasion left untreated.

The Parish Council has continued to press for the renewing of the **white lines** at road junctions and have been disappointed that obvious danger spots like the Ketch Lane /Millcroft Road have still not received attention. The dangers posed when emerging from **Woodhouse Lane** onto the A417 have also received much attention and the issue has been brought into closer focus by the recent planning consent for the erection of two “affordable” dwellings in the lane. The Parish Council objected to this development on highway danger grounds. The new convex mirror erected opposite Woodhouse Lane is an improvement but we accept that egress onto the A417 still requires utmost care by drivers.

Members of the Parish Council have recently met with S&A Produce staff to ask them to enforce the routing of, mainly foreign, HGV vehicles to avoid **Chapel Lane**. S&A have taken on board our complaints and have promised firm steps with their hauliers to cease the practice. Other highway topics have included the closure of Millcroft Road for retaining wall re-building, the provision of a footway from the A417 pavement towards the entrance to Englands Gate, speeding traffic on the A417, unauthorised signage along roads, sewage problems in Berrington Drive, a new 40mph speed limit for Bowley Lane, etc.

There have been three important, as yet unresolved, developments concerning **Public Rights of Way** in the Parish during the past year. These concerned **footpaths** in The Moor area and the proposed closure (extinguishment) of a long-disused footpath. This is likely to be resolved at a yet to be announced public inquiry.

A proposal to restore a historic and much need **bridleway** routed from the Bodenham/Sutton road just north of Rowberry Lane across a field to Vennwood and then over Holbatch Lane and on through part of Marden parish to Preston Wynne is also due to be settled at another public inquiry scheduled for June 2011.

We were most fortunate in securing the services of Dr Chris Smith as our Parish Clerk from July last. Financial control is a pretty unglamorous but most important part of Parish Council activity and I would like to pay tribute to Chris and those Parish Councillors that have given time in monitoring our finances to ensure we operate efficiently. Amongst other things this has continued to ensure that the Bodenham Newsletter is largely self-financing and has kept the parish precept towards the low side of average for the County during this difficult time for many families.

I am indebted once more to Paul Hemmings (Internal Auditor), Sue Hack (Parish Footpaths Officer) and Susan Hayworth (Editor, Bodenham Newsletter) for all they do on behalf of parishioners. I'd again like to thank our Community Support Officer, Steph Annette and members of the community who have contacted the Parish Council with their concerns. I am also most grateful for those volunteers that help to ensure we have a thriving Parish Hall. Last but not least I wish to express my appreciation for all the help and support I have received from Cllr. Keith Grumbley and my fellow Parish Councillors during my tenure as Chairman. I wish you all well for the future.

David Tilford
9th May 2011