

Spreyton Parish Annual Meeting 26th March 2014

– Chairman's Report

The Parish Council has continued intact this past year retaining all its councillors and re-elected officers at the last Annual General Meeting held on 15 May 2013. This has been good for continuity of effort on various activities in yet another particularly challenging year that has required a great deal of time and attention being given to planning matters associated with wind turbines – more on this later.

On community matters, the Parish Council has been working closely with Spreyton Village Trust who have identified ways of improving local facilities. Progress has been made this year in formulating a multi-component proposal for funding from WDBC's Section 106 Grant Scheme, involving a new path from the village hall to the community shop, drainage of the existing car park near the shop, and refurbishing the playground area with a new swing.

To further awareness of both Parish Council activities and local government influences, "Parish Council News" articles appear regularly in the Village Trust 'Spreyton Flyer' newsletter. A newly erected replacement Parish Council noticeboard is also intended to display news from village interest groups and organisations, as well as Parish and local Council activities. The village website, hosted by the Parish Council (and presently in need of updating), is a further important means of disseminating information, and we shall shortly hear Lucy Cudlip from our parish talk on this subject.

The Council endeavours to promote awareness of topical issues of interest through inviting specialist speakers to address its meetings. This is the case this evening, and we welcome Karen Bridgeford, DCC Economic Development Officer associated with the "Connecting Devon & Somerset Broadband" project, who will be talking about the roll-out of superfast broadband in this area.

A presentation and Q&A session on Affordable Housing policy has also been arranged in association with the Parish Council's forthcoming Annual General Meeting on 21st May, when Alex Rehaag, WDBC's Affordable Housing Strategy & Enabling Officer, will be the invited speaker. This is the start of a process by which Spreyton Parish Council is working with WDBC to improve the exchange of information about upcoming available affordable housing and potential interested applicants from within the parish and immediate locality.

As regards highway matters, the parish continues to be well served by our Devon Highways officer (Steve Dawe) who makes regular visits to prioritise work with the Parish Council within the limitations of available funding. A particular persistent problem during the very wet winter has been the flooding in the centre of the village caused by a malfunctioning drain. After several attempts at jetting the drain, more

intrusive work is now needed to replace the apparent blocked/collapsed section of this drain.

There has been positive feedback from parishioners using Devon Highways 'pot-holes' hotline, and parishioners are being reminded to report serious erosions of our roads, given the extra government funding now made available.

The position on wind turbines is as follows:

North Beer Farm Turbine:

The Appeal by Powerhawk Ltd against WDBC's decision to refuse planning permission for this turbine has recently been dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate (Appeal Decision 18 March 2014, ref. APP/Q1153/A/13/2195838). This is in line with our Parish Council's objections to both the original planning application and Powerhawk's grounds for appeal.

Den Brook Wind Farm:

The developers, Renewable Energy Systems (RES), have submitted a further revised scheme to WDBC Planning/Environmental Health to support planning conditions on noise, especially Amplitude Modulation (AM). The Parish Council, through our Ward Councillor Paul Ridges, is endeavouring to ensure the Den Brook Judicial Review Group and Den Brook Community Liaison Group (representing all five parishes affected) continue to be represented in these ongoing consultations to ensure balance and transparency.

Finally, ending on a lighter note, we again entered the Best Kept Village Competition and achieved a 90+ banding in the 'Small Villages' category. The judges made many favourable comments in their report about the well maintained public areas of Spreyton and abundance of community spirit as evidenced by our thriving village hall, play and sports area, community shop, and not least our friendly and inviting Tom Copley Pub. In addition, we now have the recently opened "Country Cuts" hairdressing saloon as a welcome new business venture in our community.

Ken Whitaker