

## **Hilderstone Parish Council Chairman's Annual Report 2012 – 2013**

Over the last 12 months we have seen many areas of success in the village.

Following on from last year's AGM we started with a number of objectives for the year, these being

- To see Horseshoe Cottages occupied.
- Building work at the 'Bird in Hand' completed.
- Local farmers reinstating hedges and trees.
- Commencement of Speedwatch.
- Residents of Hilderstone running the Best Kept Village competition.
- More activities for children.
- Additional traffic calming measures being introduced.
- Complete Conservation Appraisal.
- Complete LDF for the Parish.

In addition to these we had other National and Local events to participate in:

- Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations
- Scarecrow Weekend
- Christ Church Summer Fair.

### **What have we achieved from the list?**

#### **Horseshoe Cottages**

At last considerable progress has been made to bring these cottages back to life, with planning being approved for access and extensions to the rear of the properties. It is hoped this work will be completed by this time next year and for them to be occupied.

#### **Bird In Hand**

To date the news is not so good regarding the redevelopment of this site and only limited external walls have been erected on the road side.

#### **Better co-operation with local farmers**

Again not such good news as some local farmers continually erode the road sides in both the lanes and local main roads with very heavy tractors etc, possibly mainly by contractors who do not consider the local environment. Dingle Lane and Cotwalton Road from Hilderstone are receiving Highways attention due to the breaking up of the road surface and flooding.

#### **Speedwatch & Traffic Calming**

Speedwatch is up and running in the village and organised by Richard Pilcher and his Team. After a detailed survey by Highways over a 24/7 period in September 2012 it was found that the village was having anything up to 800 vehicles per hour passing the Dingle Lane junction at peak times and some of the speeds at times were in excess of 40mph in a 30mph section of the village and this is in an area where there is not a pavement.

In gaining the evidence provided by this Team has justified to Staffordshire County Council – Highways Department - that new Traffic Calming measures have to be introduced to slow the traffic down in the area around Dingle Lane Junction. As part of the Village Consultation process, in March 2013, the County Council staged a display in the Village Hall for village residents to view and to give their opinions prior to the Consultation Meeting and they unanimously agree on the option to introduce two chicanes, one on Roebuck Hill and the other in Cresswell Road adjacent to Church Farm. It is hoped these will be installed in late Summer 2013.

#### **Residents' involvement in Best Kept Village Competition**

In 2012 Hilderstone came 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Small Village category. This was really good news for those who put the effort in – and a big thank you goes to Bill Holmes for his involvement. Tim Kitchen and Michael Dix also helped in keeping the village free of litter and Green Lea School helped with their paintings displayed in both bus shelters. All this contributed significantly to collecting 2<sup>nd</sup> place.

We have had a very good start to the competition this year and as a result of the Village Consultation in March a BKV group has been formed from the residents to improve the appearance of the village with the potential to improve Hilderstone's standing in the County.

### **Support for the Youth Club**

Unfortunately the village has not been successful in getting a youth club started but again, resulting from the Village Consultation, a younger group for small children was started at Easter. This group received funding from the Parish Council and, as a consequence, has now gained further funding to sustain a monthly programme in the Village Hall for a whole year. Congratulations to Kate Murray and a small number of parents for getting this off the ground.

### **Complete a Village Plan**

This exercise has taken the place of the previous LDF which has now been disbanded by Government. However, we are now undertaking the writing of a Village Plan that involves consulting with the village residents to see how they want the village to develop over the next 5-10 years. The outcome of the exercise will help the Borough and County Council to take into account the residents' wishes when talking to developers etc.

### **Village Consultation**

As can be seen there has been much reference to the Village Consultation. This initiative came from the Parish Council who, for some time, have been concerned about the future of Hilderstone Village and its assets i.e.:

- Christ Church
- The Roebuck
- Village Hall

This was accelerated in November 2012 when the Roebuck Pub was under threat of closure and was reprieved at the *eleventh hour* by Phil Dale, a resident of the village, putting up a sum of money to keep it open until an alternative solution could be found. In addition to this the Church was reporting a debt of £8,000 and a fall in attendance. The Village Hall was financially sound but could do with more events.

In January 2013 the first pamphlet was produced and circulated throughout the village highlighting issues that the village faced. Pamphlet No 2 was circulated and on the 30<sup>th</sup> January 2013 people in the village were invited to attend the meeting and complete a questionnaire – 70 people attended and 50 questionnaires were returned with some very good findings.

Pamphlet No 3 was issued and a further meeting was convened to explain the content of the initial meeting and questionnaire. The findings were summarised in Pamphlet 4 circulated week commencing 8 April 2013. From Pamphlet No 4 it stated that the outcome was such that it could be used as a guide and blue print for taking the village forward for the next 5 years.

Many of the outcomes have been mentioned under earlier headings. There will be a follow-up Consultation meeting on **Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2014** to evaluate progress.

Another significant problem was the lack of **communication** throughout the village. It was agreed that the Church Newsletter should be maintained but must be relevant and produced on time and cost of production was also another consideration.

A new Village Web Site is in the process of being constructed. It is planned this should keep most people up-to-date with latest events in the village and be interactive with all the new groups.

## Items not reported on so far:

### **Queen's Diamond Jubilee** celebrated in June 2012

The village took part in this celebration with a dedication service in church and party afterwards. Parties were also organised in other parts of the village. The village planted three trees in the children's play area and one in the church yard to celebrate the occasion.

This was quickly followed by the bi-annual **Scarecrow Week-End June 2012** which again was another great success with 50+ scarecrows on display, a service in Church plus Art and Photographic exhibitions provided by Stone U3A and prizes presented in the village hall.

Prior to Christmas, Hazel Woodward and Jean Jones put on the annual **Village Christmas Party** and entertainment, with approximately a hundred people attending.

**Footpaths and Walkways.** Philip Davies continues to gain support from Staffordshire Council for improvement in the village footpaths and styles. A further outcome from the Consultation was to prepare maps for walkers to enable them to use the local countryside footpaths.

### **Other Items:**

Accounts for 2012-2013 have been completed and approved by the Internal Auditor and will be submitted to the Audit Commission in June 2013.

Dog Fouling has been a serious issue during year and the Dog Warden had to be involved to reduce the number of anti-social incidents especially in the Play Area and Footpath 14

### **Objectives for 2013/14 include:**

- Occupation of Horseshoe Cottages
- Progress on the building work on the site of the 'Bird in Hand'
- More involvement with local farmers
- Complete the Conservation Appraisal Project
- Complete the Village Local Plan
- Progress on all outcomes of the Village Consultation and review the following in March 2014:
  - Best Kept Village BKV
  - New website
  - Delivery of Parish Newsletter
  - New Traffic Calming Measures introduced
  - Continuation of the Roebuck Pub

### **Finally**

I would like to thank all the Parish Councillors for their support and a special thank you to Helen, our Parish Clerk, because, without her involvement and enthusiasm, much of this past year's success would not have been achieved.

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Prepared by Roy Clark, Chairman, Hilderstone Parish Council

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