

## **Stow Parish Council – Report of the outgoing Chair 2022-2023**

Over the last year, the Parish Council has had a full complement of seven volunteers from the local community supported by a part time professional clerk endeavouring to maintain and, where possible within a limited budget, improve the facilities of the area. Our Parish Clerk, Louise Gibbs, has been a tremendous support to the Council and, in March, stepped down after nine years service. My thanks to Louise and to my fellow councillors, in particular to my Vice Chairman, Chris Turner, for their support and advice. We welcomed Mandy Cotterill as our new Clerk on 1<sup>st</sup> March.

Three councillors actively participated in the joint Sturton and Stow Neighbourhood Planning Group. This culminated in the referendum on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2022, which supported the adoption of the Plan. It was, therefore, on 10<sup>th</sup> August that West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) ‘made’ the Plan. The Plan, and supporting documents, can be viewed on WLDC website. Given the revised Central Lincolnshire Plan we will need, along with Sturton, to review our Plan to identify any modifications that should be made. It would also be appropriate to review the Cottam solar farm proposals against the Neighbourhood Plan policies. Sturton by Stow and Stow Councils have, therefore, commissioned the joint Neighbourhood Planning Group to reconvene to do these pieces of work.

As a Council we have looked at the Community Aspirations, which were identified during the neighbourhood planning process, but were non-planning issues. We have published our position statement in the Bugle asking for people’s comments and, having received some, have consulted upon their suggestions in the latest edition of the Bugle.

Planning Applications have continued to require the Council’s consideration throughout the year.

In March 2021 the Council adopted a number of Objectives and has monitored progress since. Significant progress has been made in some areas, but in others we have some way to go. It is clear that in order to move forward, the Council needs not only the time and commitment of its councillors, but also that of local volunteers and the expertise they bring. We cannot function without volunteers.

A significant piece of work was undertaken by David Justham on our behalf looking at the various pieces of land we own as it had not always been recorded at the land registry. The work he has done is invaluable in tracing the transfer of the parcels of land to the Parish Council. On that basis the Clerk will be pursuing the submission on the Play Park, but, at some time in the future, the Council will need to employ solicitors to undertake the other work, which will obviously be at a cost.

With a further grant from Stow Recreation Fund (SRF) we have been able to purchase the net swing, a piece from the accessible range, which was installed in 2022. In last year’s report I indicated that we were in negotiation with Northern Power regarding the electricity cabling and the removal of the pole and cabling from the play park. Further to meetings between ourselves, Northern Power and a local farmer, the pole and cabling will be moved from the play park. This frees up quite a bit of space. We are still waiting for confirmation of the date for the move. Paula Justham keeps an eye on the play park for us, for which we are grateful.

Charles Hewitt, with assistance from Paula Justham, continues to have oversight of the cemetery. Our thanks to Jonty Waudby for the work he has also done. We have an on-going contract for grass cutting there, in the play park and the Village Green. The Parish Field on Fleets Lane is rented out and maintained by the tenant for wildlife.

We are very appreciative of the work put in by numerous local residents to maintain and improve the area and at present we are enjoying the Spring bulbs that were planted by volunteers around the new village signs and the extra bulbs funded by Stow Fun Raisers and planted by Janet Davies, at the crossroads. The herbaceous borders on Church Road have also been maintained by volunteers. West Lindsey green waste bins continue to be well used.

There are twice yearly Community Litter Picks organised by Clare Ella and Stow Fun Raisers, the most recent being on 26<sup>th</sup> March and many local residents also regularly collect litter while out walking. In addition, for example, a resident supplies emergency dog poo bags; volunteers also keep the various benches clean; Mike and Sue, who refurbished the seats at the crossroads and the end of South Drive and

added planters, keep an eye on them; and Andrew maintains the batteries powering the speed signs. All of which keeps the village and surrounding area more attractive and, hopefully, safer.

I would also like to thank those who have organised events in the village such as the carol singing, the Living Advent windows, Sturton and Stow walking Christmas Market and the Macmillan Coffee morning and Craft Fair at the Cross Keys, the latter two of which also provided an outlet for local crafts people. Limestone Farming once again donated a Christmas tree, which was put up and decorated by Doug Garner, this year with the help of John Martinson and Mark Rose and it was an excellent display as usual.

Mention must also be made of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations. Stow Parish Council applied for funding from WLDC and the festivities were then organised by Stow Fun Raisers and by the Cross Keys with a charity quiz on the Thursday; a bike ride, bbq and cakes on Saturday with songs from Kate and Pete and organised by Stow Fun Raisers plus, on the Village Green, the planting of the Jubilee tree as well as the unveiling of the bench donated by the Martinson family; and the ‘street party’ on Sunday in the marquee at the Cross Keys entertained by Willingham Band. In addition there was bell ringing, a Service of Thanksgiving organised by St Mary’s and the flower displays in the church organised by Shirley Hanhahan and Sheila Garner of Stow Fun Raisers.

We have successfully applied to the West Lindsey Councillor Initiative Fund to replace the flagpole, which had to be taken down as it had rusted, and to provide another seat for the Village Green. These should be in place in time for the Coronation. Sturton and Stow Agricultural Association has also donated planters to both Sturton and Stow and ours will be located on the village green near the crossroads.

The Parish Council responded to the consultation on the solar farm proposals regarding Cottam 1 last year and we have now registered our interest in responding to the Planning Inspectorate during their Examination. We have already joined with a number of local parishes and the group 7000 Acres in raising our objections. While we would be supportive of solar development in principle these proposals will have a major impact on many residents of Stow Parish given the intention to site solar panels and their infrastructure at Normanby, Coates and off Ingham Road; there would be a loss of good agricultural land and consequent loss of jobs; and there is also a significant impact from the construction phase, not just the ultimate positioning and running of the panels.

We have been encouraged, as mentioned above, by the active role played by volunteers in the Parish, but want to promote even greater participation. To this end and to keep people informed, we have maintained the publication of the online Bugle on a regular basis. Between Bugles there are periodic village emails to keep people informed. My thanks to Clare Ella for maintaining the circulation list and doing the updates. A small number of hard copies are delivered to those we know who are not on the internet. If the Bugle is to continue, one of the tasks for the incoming administration will be to look at how we can broaden the circulation of the Bugle and this may require identifying the areas not served well by the current circulation list and delivering a flyer or hard copy to encourage signing up.

We have delivered 33 Welcome Packs to newcomers, mainly in the village itself, since delivering our first packs to Post Office Court in March 2021. We are dependent upon residents letting us know someone new has moved in, so apologies if we missed you – do get in touch and we can make a pack available.

Pam Duncan

March 2023