

NEWTON & NOSS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Electors held on 18th March 2008 in the W.I.C. Hall

PRESENT: Nine Parish Councillors and approximately forty-five parishioners
District Councillor Suzie Cooper
County Councillor William Mumford
Devon & Cornwall Constabulary:
P.C. John Nolan, Neighbourhood Beat Manager
Guest speaker: Robin Toogood, Manager of the South Devon Area of Outstanding
Natural Beauty

APOLOGIES: Parish Councillors: Rodney Carter, Sue Hinchliffe and Peter Stitson.

1. PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 24th April 2007 were confirmed and signed.

2. DEVON & CORNWALL CONSTABULARY

The full written Report presented by P.C. Nolan is appended to the Minutes (file copy only).

The main items to note were as follows:-

P.C. Nolan had been appointed in October 2007 as Neighbourhood Beat Manager for Newton & Noss. The other officer responsible for the Parish was PCSO Sid Lawrence.

Referring to his written Report, P.C. Nolan highlighted a reduction in the crime figures for the Parish and explained how they were recorded. 49 crimes had been reported in the twelve months to date compared with 61 in the previous year. The typical crimes involved thefts from vehicles and criminal damage to property – it was very important not to leave property or vehicles unlocked when unattended. The Boatwatch scheme was very successful and the Police were aware of the logged reports. P.C. Nolan was able to offer crime prevention advice, especially to owners of vulnerable properties.

P.C. Nolan was thanked for his conscientious approach to local issues and for reporting to the meeting.
(Particular praise is referred to in the Chairman's Report.)

3. SOUTH DEVON AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

As Manager of the South Devon AONB, Mr Toogood gave a very interesting presentation about his work in what was considered to be one of the most priceless landscapes in the country. In order to be able to protect the landscape for the future, he explained that every five years a plan was produced which plotted particular actions, policies and targets. Other designations had been introduced to strengthen the protection policies – Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Heritage Coast and European Special Area of Conservation – but there were continual threats to the countryside from urban development to meet housing needs, which in turn increased light pollution, drainage problems, and pressures from increased traffic and recreational needs. Other areas of Mr Toogood's work concerned liaison with farmers to monitor issues such as soil erosion, use of chemicals, wildlife protection, etc. The damaging effects of climate change, protection of trees, hedges (4,000km) and historic features - some of which had been neglected – all played their part and because rural skills were vital, the area had to support the living/working environment.

Looking to the future, Mr Toogood outlined a number of probable threats such as food shortages, oil costs, population migration and a downturn in the economy. There were “green” measures which everyone could adopt in order to reduce the harmful effects of chemical use; support for conservation organisations was also helpful.

There were questions concerning the following:-

- i) The Yealm mill, weir and non-functional fish steps - no salmon were spawning. The Environment Agency had a Salmon Action Plan; the query would be referred to them.
- ii) Offshore wind farms were outside the AONB. The draft Marine Bill would consider offshore planning.
- iii) The AONB designation was significant in determining certain planning applications.
- iv) How had the AONB contributed to preserving coastal villages as places to work? This was a difficult question to answer – the National Parks had attempted to redress the balance via planning controls but had not succeeded. The development of “affordable” homes might help to redress the balance.

4. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

The full written Report presented by the Chairman is appended to the Minutes (file copy only); the main points of the Report concerned:-

- i) Praise for the reforms to the neighbourhood policing arrangements.
- ii) Improvements undertaken by Devon County Council (DCC): Church Steps in Noss, highway resurfacing, and yellow lines to restrict parking.
- iii) Concern about road safety and drivers exceeding the speed limits; the Parish Council was negotiating with DCC for traffic calming measures at Butts Park in particular.
- iv) Footpaths: Hard surfacing had been laid at the lower end of the Donkey Path and plans were in hand to create a safe permissive footpath to link Collaton with Butts Park.
- v) A crack had appeared in the wall of Pope’s Quay and was due to be repaired and repointed.
- vi) Parish Plan 2004: Two major issues were ongoing – affordable housing and business prosperity, both of which were supported by the Parish Council. The future of the Post Office would be announced shortly. Redevelopment of the Co-op had been announced but the scheme was still at the draft stage.
- vii) Affordable Housing: Behind the scenes, the Parish Council continued to work hard to secure the provision of a modest housing scheme to benefit local people. The Chairman outlined the difficulties encountered, the details of which were contained in his written Report. The inefficiencies in the District Council’s Planning Department had compounded the problems and another Housing Needs Survey was required to “prove” the level of current housing need.
- viii) The Boundary Review would determine how Devon was to be governed in future. The final announcement was expected in February 2009.
- ix) The Primary School was thriving under the leadership of Claire Sealey. The Newton & Noss Network was providing some excellent learning opportunities, thanks to Colin Smith and his team.

Affordable Housing

A detailed discussion followed concerning the provision of affordable housing in the Parish, the scale of the development which was most likely to be acceptable to both the SHDC Planning Department and the local community as a whole, and the background processes which had led to the current situation.

The accuracy of the Chairman's Report was questioned and a detailed discussion ensued concerning the landowner's proposals to develop Briar Hill Farm and the extent to which the Parish Council had encouraged that development. The Chairman stood by his Report but Mr McCready expressed his dissatisfaction and felt he had been misled. He hoped that he and the Parish Council would be able to reach an amicable agreement so he could feel confident about proceeding with his development plans.

5. COUNCILLOR SUZIE COOPER [South Hams District Councillor and Parish Councillor]

Cllr Cooper thanked parishioners for their support at the previous Election. She was concerned about the number of planning applications submitted annually in the Parish which added significantly to the Council's workload. As a comparison there had been 79 applications in the previous twelve months compared with 155 in Ivybridge and 47 in Yealmpton. Conservation Area Appraisals had been undertaken but because SHDC had been less than diligent, the outcomes had been disappointing. Two additional planning officers had been appointed. The challenges of the current Boundary Review had resulted in greater partnership working with Teignbridge and West Devon Councils.

6. COUNCILLOR WILLIAM MUMFORD [Devon County Council]

Cllr Mumford was pleased to report that several schemes had been completed in the Parish, including a significant amount of road surfacing. A reduction in vehicle speeding by locals was a top concern and P.C. Nolan had been very supportive in trying to tackle this ongoing problem. DCC was investigating the pros and cons of a unitary authority structure in view of the current Boundary Review process; the implications were unknown but a decision was expected in February 2009. The responsibility for civil parking enforcement would soon pass from the Police to the District Council.

In answer to a question about the budget for schools and social care, Cllr Mumford explained that Devon was the third worst authority in the country for Government funding for schools. Referring to the S.W. Regional Assembly, Cllr Mumford supported the view that local councils needed more authority to act and take control of local issues.

7. OPEN FORUM

There were no additional questions raised.

The Meeting closed at 9.00pm

Signed.....John Young, Chairman