

Chairman's Annual report year ending 31.03.2023

I wish to first thank all my fellow Parish Councillors, our Clerk Ursula Deighton, the District Councillors, Nicky Packer, Richard Boyles and our County Councillor Becki Hoyland for their hard work, enthusiasm and support in the last 12 months. I also welcome the support given at this time from the co-opted Parish Councillors Becki Hoyland and Will Harley.

The Parish Council along with other Town and Parish Councils within this County have been proactive in supporting the public awareness of their role. The Parish Council's role has been that of a voluntary, non-political, professional one communicating and engaging with the community of our Parish residents over their needs and concerns.

A number of items throughout the year are worth highlighting:

It was with great sadness that our late **Queen Elizabeth passed away** in September 2022. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Parish Clerk, Reverend Rachael Saum, the Committees of the Awre Village Hall and the Royal British Legion, Blakeney in their assistance at that difficult time in marking the event with sensitivity and for the production of the books of remembrance. These books of remembrance have now been stored for posterity with the Forest of Dean District Council. The Parish Council was then represented at the proclamation of accession of King Charles III at the offices of the Forest of Dean District Council, which was also attended by a number of District Councillors and Mark Harper MP.

Flower Baskets, planters and Wildflower Meadows: Following the request of parishioners some of the poles for the raised flower baskets have been removed with an intention to enrich the village with ground level flowering planters in preference. Wildflower Meadows have been created also following parishioners requests and maintained on Nibley Green and Collins Garden supporting the biodiversity and pollinators in the area.

The Blakeney Eel and Lamprey Pass was transferred to the Parish Council for its stewardship with the cessation of the Foresters Forest Group in March 2022. Subsequently, the Parish Council has arranged the scheduled annual maintenance of the Eel pass area. A group of Volunteers supported by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust continue to maintain the routine clearance and eel monitoring as before.

Blakeney Cemetery: The ongoing maintenance of the grounds including removal of Knot weed and the restoration of the hedging continues with the planting of hedging whips. The cemetery sign replacement has been planned and approved by the Council.

One of the **Oak saplings** received from the "Honourable Company of Gloucestershire" as part of the "**Plant a Tree for The Queen's Platinum Jubilee**" located in Blakeney was stolen. There was a huge amount of support expressed on Blakeney Residents Facebook page for the tree to be replaced. The Parish Council agreed to replace the Oak sapling with a similar one on the recreational ground in Blakeney.

Highways: The Parish Council have engaged with the Gloucestershire Highway Department on various issues in regard to road closures, hedge cutting, verge cutting and repairs, which included the land slip on New Road. The previous diversion route via Furnace Valley was a great concern by the residents of that route. The repairs to the New Road landslip now finally being completed has allowed the road to be open to traffic after a period of over 3 years.

Telephone Boxes : The Telephone boxes in the Parish are assets of the Parish Council and have been considered for renovation and used for the community benefit in a variety of uses. A Parish Council working party was considering a rolling programme of renovation prior to the pandemic. This review is an ongoing project for the Parish Council.

A group of parishioners in the New Road, Blakeney area sought permission to restore and use the telephone box in that location for a book exchange project. This idea was welcomed and it was pointed out that the telephone box would remain the property of the Parish Council. The Parish Council gave its approval to the project. The progress of this project will be reviewed by the Parish Council in the forthcoming year.

Dog waste bins, have been located within the village area of Blakeney responding to residents requests following a spate of dog fouling. The dog waste bin sited on the public highway near Clarkes Pool Meadow was removed by Gloucestershire Wildlife trust without consultation of the Parish Council. This waste bin has been recovered and resited in the centre of Blakeney for the use of the residents.

Donations: A number of requests have been received from charities and organisations with direct involvement with the Parish. This included a donation towards the Blakeney Recreation Playground equipment project. All of these requests were considered and payments made.

The precept : This again remains at £16660, which in this time of "a cost of living crisis", indicates the Council's careful management of public monies for the Parish.

Finally, I wish to thank all the Parishioners who have supported and contributed to the Parish in various activities making this Parish a better place to live and work.

On behalf of the Council as a whole, we look forward to a positive year ahead in our community.

Ray Cotton

Chairman,

Awre Parish Council 22nd May 2023