



# Toppesfield Parish Council



## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at Toppesfield Village Hall at 7.30pm

### 23/75. Welcome

Councillor Neale welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### 23/76. Attendance and Apologies for Absence:

#### The following Councillors were in attendance:

Councillor Chris Neale

Councillor Trisha Roberts

#### Also in attendance were:

District Councillor Richard van Dulken

County Councillor Peter Schwier

Jeremy Graves

David Bagnall

Jean Bagnall – Village Hall

David Winter

Frances Winter – Village Hall

Victoria Wallis – Little Chestnuts

Brian Moody – Toppesfield Community Pub and St Margarets Church

Richard Evers – Pumphouse Community Brewery

Kaaren Berry – Clerk to the Parish Council

#### Apologies were received from:

Nick Hasler

Zoe Hughes

Councillor Kitty Bourlet

Councillor Alan Collard

Councillor Amanda Smith

### 23/77. Approval of Annual Parish Meeting Minutes 2022

The minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022 were approved and signed. This was proposed by Councillor Neale and Seconded by Frances Winter.

### 23/78. Reports From Village Organisations / Groups

Reports were received from various organisations and groups.

County Councillor Schwier highlighted several parts of his report – see Appendix A

District Councillor van Dulken highlighted areas from his report – see Appendix B. Councillor Neale thanked Richard van Dulken for providing funds to help towards the cost of the circus last year and for attending the parish meetings.

Victoria Wallis reported that there is a misconception in the village regarding the preschool. It is not privately owned but is a charity and all fundraising money is used for the benefit of the preschool with items such as equipment or trips out for the children. There is a committee of four who help run the preschool, look after the finances and welfare of the children. The preschool is looking into the possibility of their own building and are

researching this. A separate building would be more tailored to the children's needs and more attractive to new parents. The preschool are struggling with support for fundraising events and 2 events were cancelled this year due to lack of support from parents. There is also a struggle to recruit committee members.

Little Chestnuts report can be found in Appendix C.

The potential new building was discussed – the village hall committee can see why a separate building is needed but closer working together on this project is required due to the legalities that would need to be considered if this went ahead. Joint funding could be sought for this and other projects the village hall have in mind. It was suggested the village hall let Little Chestnuts know of their ideas regarding storage and other projects and a meeting be arranged between the two committees.

Jean Bagnall read out the report for the village hall which can be found in Appendix D.

Frances Winter also added that the village hall have had the roof repaired on the hall and the shop, upgrading the power and the insurance for the building is now under the parish council. The village hall have expressed an interest in being part of the new insurance search. It was also mentioned that an electrical report needs to be carried out every 5 years and questioned if this is now the parish council's responsibility.

Future projects include the kitchen flat roof, gates to the hall and the gates to the green area at the back of the hall and improve storage areas. 7 members are on the committee but new members are welcomed.

Councillors Neale and Roberts both agreed volunteering is an issue throughout the village and surrounding areas. It was felt this maybe due to an aging population, more after school activities for the children and both parents working.

It was suggested that a list of events for the year is drawn up for all the groups so people can sign up in advance of each event to help. An article will be placed in the parish newsletter.

Richard Evers report for the brewery can be found in Appendix E. Richard reported that the brewery has seen the biggest change in its finances with grants received £28,000 reducing to zero and the brewery is still operating. Turnover doubled from the previous year but this is not sufficient now due to rising fuel costs. He asked everyone to promote the brewery to new outlets. New equipment will need to be purchased in the next couple of years as the current equipment is 10 years old. The possibility of solar power is being looked at as a scheme for each of the community groups i.e. shop, village hall, brewery, pub, church, pavilion and school. This is in the initial stages – a surveyor has looked at each of the buildings and his report is expected in the next few weeks.

Brian Moody gave the report for the Church – See Appendix F and the report for Toppesfield Community Pub which can be read in Appendix G.

Councillor Roberts who is the parish council representative for WASC and The Fields Association gave an update on what they have been doing. These reports can be read in Appendix H. Councillor Roberts also reported that Braintree District Council had requested an injunction to the High Court regarding the proposal to house a large number of asylum seekers at Wethersfield Airbase. The injunction was denied but leave was given to appeal on 'what constitutes a national emergency'. A member of the Fields Association is taking separate legal action and papers are being filed at the High Court this week.

Other reports received were:

Toppesfield Community Shop – see Appendix I

St Margarets School – see Appendix J

Village bowls/petique – see Appendix K

Toppesfield and Gainsford End Allotment Society – see Appendix L

Parish Charities report can be found in Appendix M.

Toppesfield Village Show – see Appendix N.

Parish Path Partnership (P3) report is in Appendix O.

### **23/79. Questions or comments**

Questions and comments were raised as the meeting progressed. No other comments were raised.

## **23/80. AOB**

No other business was discussed.

## **23/81. Close**

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.40pm

Signed:

Dated:

## **Appendix A**

### **Essex County Council - Hedingham Division**

#### **Cllr Peter Schwier – 2022/23 Annual Report**

It is now almost two years since I was elected to Essex County Council; serving the residents of all the villages – and 33 parish councils - that make up the Hedingham division has been a real privilege. The year that has passed since your last annual meeting has gone very quickly but has proved extremely busy and filled with activity and achievement.

The passing of those two years also means we are half-way through the current four-year term, and we are starting to see many positive outcomes from the ambitious work the county council set in train back in May 2021.

The following is a small sample of the key numbers, landmarks and achievements from a busy year – many are necessarily Essex-wide but, where possible, I have tried to focus purely on issues relevant to our local communities.

#### **Budget / Council Tax 23/24**

In the toughest and most uncertain and inflationary financial climate the county has known for many years, ECC agreed a budget which prioritised support for adults' and children's social care, road maintenance, improving infrastructure and helping people with the cost of living.

Over the course of the next year, the county council will spend a total of £2,281m (gross) and £1,164m (net) through its revenue budget – 7% higher than had been planned last year, as a result of inflationary pressures

There will also be £275m of capital spending in 23/24.

Budget points of note include:

- £58m increase in the adult social care budget
- £7.5m extra to deliver 340 additional school places
- 9% increase in fees for foster carers
- Community supermarkets to be rolled-out – providing essential household goods at lower cost for hard-pressed families
- £200m spending on climate change remains in place, with new and existing cycle routes and active travel schemes are also being built and maintained to enable people to walk and cycle.

## Highways

The council will be spending nearly £145m on highways maintenance and sustainable transport over the coming year and, as ever, will prioritise the areas by severity of need.

By way of context, the county looks after:

- 5,100 miles of carriageway;
- 4,000 miles of footways / cyclepaths;
- 130 miles of safety barriers;
- 131,000 street lights;
- 14,000 illuminated highway signs;
- 80,000 non-illuminated signs;
- 36,000 items of Public Rights of Way infrastructure.
- **7,002 – the number of potholes repaired in Essex over the course of 22/23 so far.**

Over the last year, in terms of calls to our contact centre around highways issues, we received the following numbers:

- 1,899 – average daily number of calls to the Contact Centre in January 2023;
- 432,711 - total calls to Contact Centre;
- 47,904 - total calls to Highways (new faults and general) service.

Meanwhile, the average answer waiting time for highways calls was 03:10.

## Levelling Up

In late 2021, ECC launched its own Levelling Up White Paper, aimed at raising living standards for people in particular cohorts and locations. One year on, a great deal has already been achieved. This includes:

- 12,000 more homes and businesses connect to Superfast Broadband
- Over 6,600 devices donated to schools across Essex, to support students with getting online and enhancing their learning.
- 250 new entry level jobs created through our social value scheme.
- The Essex Opportunities website launched to provide access to more flexible job roles. In its first year the website has had more than 90,000 visits and 6,500 clicks to apply for jobs
- The Essex Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Service supported creating 240 new apprenticeships across Essex Businesses. Expanded our completely free holiday activity and food programme, ActivAte, which over the last two years has provided over 500,000 free meals and supported over 30,000 young people
- An almost £2million boost provided to social care in Essex under our Nightingale Care Bursary, which will support people from the most deprived communities in Essex to achieve social care qualifications or support existing care workers to achieve further qualifications.
- Our working families programme has been in contact with 960 families to provide support to those seeking information on upskilling or retraining for a new career
- Parkplay has now been launched in 16 areas across Essex and had over 2,000 unique people attend, with 16,000 attendances in total so far! Parkplay will be launched in more areas throughout 2023.
- The physical and mental wellbeing of 130,000 school children and young people supported at Essex Outdoors sites, where they learn a range of skills through outdoor pursuits.
- 60,000 new library members have signed up since Jan 2022
- 150,000 new recyclable library cards distributed to every primary school child in the county as part of the 'Essex Year of Reading' celebration. 74 new literacy areas have been created across Essex (one in every library).
- Almost 24,000 children took part in this year's Summer Reading Challenge. This is an increase of 36.4% on 2021.
- 'Multiply' launched - a new initiative that will offer over 14,000 Essex residents free access to maths and finance training

## The environment and climate action

As the county council's Climate Czar, I've been front and centre with much of the work around our support for the environment and the drive towards net zero. I am delighted that it remains a central ambition of the council's work, despite the financial pressure. Progress has been made, along with our partners, over the last year, and key achievements include:

- 138,349 trees planted across Essex on our way to target of 375,000 by 2025. This amounts to 52.73 hectares of trees, and 16,492m of hedgerows
- 36,681 LED streetlamps now installed across the county.
- 1,222 fuel-poor households receiving support, helping them claim an additional £2.4 million in benefits via our Warm Homes Essex project
- £100,000 awarded in the last 12 months to local cycling groups and charities
- SuDS advice provided on 850 major planning applications a year
- 62,500 new properties receiving flood reduction expertise
- Green Flag award status retained across seven country parks welcoming one million visitors during the year
- £500,000 awarded from the Climate Action Challenge Fund to more than 30 local organisations and schools taking action on key climate change issues
- Several retrofit projects completed on the ECC estate
- £17.2m secured jointly with partners to provide fuel-poor households with grant funding of up to £10,000 to improve energy efficiency and heating systems in their homes
- A new North Essex Farming Cluster supported, which will help with information-sharing across the farming community, helping farmers move to more sustainable farming methods and protect sustainable agriculture
- Through Solar Together Essex, we have led a scheme enabling Essex residents to benefit from a significant discount on solar panels and battery storage from a reliable supplier. The scheme in Essex has now delivered over 1,300 installations and enabled over 1,100 tonnes of avoided carbon emissions annually. There have been 6,600 registrations over this year, more than any other year. The deadline to apply has been extended so people can register until 21/4/23.

## Waste and recycling

We continue to work closely with district councils to promote recycling and efficient waste management that minimises the harm to the environment:



**52% of household waste in Essex was recycled in 2020/21** – higher than the national average of 44%



The household **recycling rate varies from 40% - 58%** across the different district, borough and city areas



On average, each resident in Essex produces around 463kg of waste per year, that's **16% more waste than the national average.**



Approx 700,000 tonnes of household waste are generated in Essex per year – with a recycling rate of 52%, that means **circa 330,000 tonnes of general rubbish to landfill each year**



**Over £100m is spent each year** on the cost of collecting, treating and disposing of household waste in Essex



There are around **1.5 million visits to our 21 Recycling Centres each year**

## Locality Fund

Once again, it has been a pleasure to support local communities through my Locality Fund. The details of schemes supported are as follows:

Organisation	Amount
The Birdbrook & District Community House	£310
Steeple Bumpstead Parish Council	£600
Mens Shed Great Yeldham	£1,000
Sturmer Parish Council	£700
Gestingtorpe Parish Council	£825
Birdbrook Bowls Club	£800
Helions Bumpstead Community Benefit Society	£803
Belchamp Otten & Belchamp St Paul Parish Council - Belchamp St Paul Community House	£300

I hope the above gives you an idea of the work that has gone in over the last year to develop our plans and deliver on them for the people of Essex.

Meanwhile, my work as Climate Czar has been extremely rewarding: meeting people across Essex and beyond; championing the work and achievements of people throughout our county; lobbying government on environmental causes – including the East Anglian Green proposals which I and colleagues across the region are steadfastly opposing.

On top of the above, I have also continued my busy work as a Braintree District Councillor, including membership of various bodies, such as the Planning Committee.

Most of all, it has been my pleasure and privilege to serve the residents of all the villages, both large and small, within the Heddingham division. I look forward to continuing to do so in the next year and beyond.

Best wishes,



## Appendix B

### REPORT FOR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – 2023 CLLR. RICHARD VAN DULKEN (YELDHAM WARD)

#### BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL ACHIEVEMENTS

- Finished developing 65 acres of employment land at Horizon 120, Great Notley, which is attracting new jobs and companies to our area. On the same site we have also built The Plaza Enterprise Centre part-funded by £7million of the Government's Get Building Fund
- Developed the I Construct innovation hub which supports small companies in the development of new goods and services in the construction sector
- Revenues from The Plaza and I Construct now support the authority's income
- Completed a refresh of Braintree town centre including new homes, a hotel and the bus interchange plus pedestrianisation of the High Street.
- Started plans for a refresh of Witham and Halstead town centres
- Enabled the building of 417 affordable homes against a target of 250 in 2023/3
- Over £250,000 given to Councillors for the community grant scheme over 4 years
- Delivered a Cycling Strategy to encourage a change of habits, allowing safer cycling connectivity across the District
- Adopted a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan to make the Council's activities carbon neutral as far as practical by 2030
- Planted with the help of schools, Parish/Town councils and Community groups – 18,700 native tree whips and 73,000 bulbs
- Distributed tens of millions of pounds of pandemic grants to our businesses and generally supported residents through several difficult years

#### MY ACHIEVEMENTS AND INVOLVEMENTS

During the past year, my 8<sup>th</sup> representing Yeldham Ward, I was a Cabinet Member for Operations and Commercialisation which covers waste and recycling, parking, highway liaison, Licencing and a relatively new area called Commercialisation which seeks to maximise income from the assets of the Council.

This led to my attending regular meetings across Essex as the Braintree representative of the NEPP (North Essex Parking Partnership) and the Essex Waste Partnership, as well as representing the District on STACC (Stansted Airport Consultative Committee) and being on the BLHP (Braintree Local Highways Panel).

I have made efforts to attend virtually all the monthly or bi-monthly Parish Council meetings at Stambourne, Toppesfield & Gainsford End, and Great Yeldham, as well as attending a number of community events throughout the year, to show support to the villages as much as to keep informed on local developments and views of residents on some of the major issues (e.g. potential prisons and asylum centre at Wethersfield). I have done what I can to support the development of the Men's Shed project, and the various Planning Enforcement actions in the Ward,

My Community Grant fund of £,1250 has been spent during the year (across the Ward).

I have received and dealt with – in some cases in collaboration with Parish Councils or ECC- a number of communications from residents on a wide variety of subjects, from highway problems to housing and Planning issues, and I have been pleased to help resolve the problems.

It has been a pleasure to continue representing Yeldham Ward over the past 12 months, giving a voice for the area at Braintree Council and Cabinet– rest assured that the well-run Braintree District Council will continue to support residents, businesses and organisations in our part of Essex.

## **Appendix C**

### **Little Chestnuts Preschool**

Over the past year we have realised that many in the village do not have an understanding of how the Pre-school runs. We thought this meeting was a great way to share this information.

Little Chestnuts Pre-school has been established in Toppesfield since 1974 when it first opened as a playgroup, which then developed into the Pre-school we are now for children aged 2-5 years.

We are based in Toppesfield Village Hall and are open Monday to Friday 8.30am-3pm, term time only. We also provide a walking bus service for those children attending St Margaret's Primary School. Recently we have been providing child care during the August holidays to help working parents and to provide continuity of care of children with additional needs. We had a good response to the holiday care last year so we will be offering the service again this summer holidays.

We are a registered charity, and have a committee made up of trustees who are parents and careers of the children that are registered to the setting. The committee are responsible for the recruitment of staff, and ensuring all policies, procedures, and regulations are adhered to by the Manager and all staff. The committee are also responsible for organising fundraising events. As a charity, any money that the Pre-school makes gets put back into the preschool for new toys, equipment, and outings

We are registered and regulated by Ofsted which means we are able to accept funding for 2 year olds, as well as 30 hours of funding a week for 3-4 year olds. We can have up to 24 children in a session and at the moment we employ 6 members of staff, 4 of these being local people, who between them have many years experience and skills.

We provide care for children from Toppesfield and the surrounding area, as far as Halstead and Sturmer.

At Little Chestnuts the children learn and develop through play and forming friendships, we pride ourselves in developing our practice to not only support our children but also our families. This could be by providing flexible hours and arranging additional support for any areas of learning and development. We also aim to introduce those new to the area or to parenthood to other families and groups to provide support and friendship.

This year we have been developing our Speech and Language programme, through attending training and purchasing equipment. This has been our focus due to noticing that children's development in this area has declined. We think this is partly due to Covid and the lack of interaction with other children but other factors too. We plan to develop this further in the next year and to provide more support and information for parents/careers with children who have additional needs.

We provide a range of activities that enrich the children's time with us. These include walks around the village, visits to our allotment, yoga, cooking, and outside discovery activities. We have our summer outing to Colne Valley Railways in May and we will be planting seeds and vegetable plants in the allotment very soon.

Next year, to celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> year we are planning to hold a celebration inviting those that attended or worked at Little Chestnuts in the last 50 years to join us. With so many local childcare settings closing, we feel this is a great achievement to still be providing childcare for our local community and supporting the school, and plan to do so for many more years.

For more information about the setting please visit our website at [littlechestnutspre-school.co.uk](http://littlechestnutspre-school.co.uk)

## **Appendix D**

### **Report from Village Hall Committee, April 2023**

At our recently held AGM the whole committee agreed that we have had a good year. We have worked well together and as Trustees our aim is to maintain the Hall in good order. Although the Covid pandemic is almost history, it's affect on the hire of the Hall is still present.



We have celebrated the late Queen Elizabeth platinum jubilee by providing a lunch, free of charge, for any villagers who cared to attend. It was a very successful occasion and prompted our Committee to also provide some Warm Hub coffee mornings. Once again this was completely free of charge, as our Treasurer Frances, had obtained a grant for us to be able to do this. Added to this we provided games to play plus our table tennis equipment. Debbie Fulford, relatively new to the village, came along with her art skills, and hopefully will be setting up an art class. We were lucky enough also to have our own local police lady who provided information on scams, fraud etc.

This year we have lost three regular bookings but have attracted a few others. We are hopeful that given the fact that we are over Covid, villagers will see the benefits of using our very presentable hall for all kinds of celebrations or activities. So many improvements have been and will continue to be made making the hall an attractive venue. The PreSchool continue to hire the hall every day.

Our Committee consists of Jean Bagnall, Chair. Frances Winter Vice Chair and Treasurer. Elizabeth Light, Secretary. Wendy Ames, Bookings Secretary. Vicki Wyeth, Cleaning Organiser. Maureen Dimmock and Linda Bowen, Safety and Security. Linda is also our key holder. Each person has their own specific area to cover and when needed we all pull together.

We look forward to promoting the hall and all it's benefits, plus carrying on with any improvements deemed necessary in the coming year months.

## Appendix E

### Pumphouse Brewery

#### Background to the financial year ended 31 October 2022

The pandemic impacted on the early months of the financial year with the arrival of the Omicron variant in November 2021 meaning that face masks were compulsory in almost all public spaces and NHS Covid passes were mandatory in many venues. It wasn't until May 2022 that GOV UK stood down its dedicated Coronavirus team. By that time more than half the financial year had gone.

However there was significant, though patchy, recovery in the hospitality sector.

**This, combined with hard work from our sales team, resulted in an increase in turnover from £27,000 to £50,000, up 84% compared to the previous year. Gross profit was £7,165.**

There was a huge reduction in 'other operating income'; down from £28,800 to £5700, as grant programmes and Covid support measures came to an end.

This drop of £23,000 in overall income resulted in a trading loss of over £3,000.

However we believe this gives grounds for cautious optimism going forward.

The withdrawal of funding could have been devastating, but our substantial sales growth offset 85% of it.

#### Current operations

The brewery shop supplies customers throughout the year on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, Aaron's working days. Our retail outlets, such as Poplar Food Hall, take regular quantities of beer in bottles. We operate with two online platforms which continue to produce occasional orders. **Far and away our best bottle business has been achieved by attendance at local and farmers' markets. This helps reinforce the most positive perceptions of Pumphouse 'small, local, high quality, not-for-profit and community focused'.**

The core business of Pumphouse was and remains the supply of good value, high quality traditional real ales to pubs, clubs and venues. It represents the majority of our turnover. Margins are relatively tight - and are sure to be squeezed further by increased operating costs - but selling draught beer to pubs is at the heart of everything we do.

**Currently we supply 15 local pubs and clubs, including the Railway Arms, Saffron Walden (who serve our beer under their own label, and are CAMRA's Essex Pub of the Year 2022), and of course Toppesfield's very own Green Man.**

The region's major beer festivals returned and Pumphouse was on show at several, including CAMRA's largest, the East Anglian Beer Festival in Bury St. Edmunds. We also supplied draught real ales to many private events and weddings, Birkett Long's Quiz Night and memorably, the 10th Anniversary Party for Toppesfield Vineyard at Bradfield's.

**Once again, anecdotal and written feedback has been uniformly positive. People love Pumphouse beers!**

In the brewery there have been no major upgrades or alterations. The focus has been on routine maintenance in order to sustain brewing efficiency. **Our equipment has produced in excess of 200,000 pints of beer under Aaron's expert guidance**, and continues to function effectively with the help of regular TLC. We have purchased dozens of firkins and pins to facilitate our growing sales.

As popular as our core beers are, pubs and customers ask us from time to time 'What's new?'

**Right now, we are supplying Coronation Ale on draught and in bottles and Coronation Imperial Milk Stout in a strictly Limited Edition of 330ml bottles. There will be new beers later this year.**

Sales have continued to grow, despite very difficult trading conditions in January and early February this year. We are regularly hitting £1000 a week, which would have seemed inconceivable twelve months ago. Our plan is to grow the business as quickly as our model will permit. Keeping it 'small, local, high quality, not-for-profit and community focused' means our emphasis will be on organic growth, primarily through developing clusters of local pubs and secondarily by attending more markets. In addition we have started to develop 'white label' bottles for bespoke branding. Lodge's Coaches in High Easter have taken over £1000 worth, with labels (from Wendy Ames) featuring their collection of vintage and veteran coaches.

We aim to grow our sales well beyond £1000 a week, and to do so this year. To achieve such a challenging target we will need all the help we can get - and all that you can give us. We are proud now to be operating with no form of grant income at all.

### **Going forward**

Our biggest financial challenges are the rocketing costs of raw materials and energy, together with the capital costs of brewing equipment, which will have to be updated some time soon.

We will be assessing the feasibility of a formal share issue to raise funds and have begun to explore the potential long term advantages of green energy to save costs.

**To bring things right up to date, the week including the Easter weekend was the best in the history of the brewery, with sales totalling over £2800.**

As always, none of this has happened without the help and support of many people:

**Our customers, our partner community businesses, Aaron and Kaaren, our volunteers, our committee and our shareholders.**

**Please keep encouraging as many people as possible to become shareholders, join in as volunteers or committee members and above all, please keep drinking and enjoying our beer.**

**Richard Evers, Chair  
Pumphouse Community Brewery Limited**

## **Appendix F**

### **Church Annual Report to PC 2023**

After the restrictions of the last few years life in church has returned more or less to normal, although attendances at services were still affected this last winter by vulnerable members of the congregation worrying about possible infection. A regular small group attend Sunday services and we have large congregations at Easter, Harvest, Remembrance and Christmas. We also had large congregations this year at a Wedding blessing, a Commemoration service and some funerals as the church continued in its centuries-old purpose of being the village meeting-point in times of family and public sorrow or celebration.

Rev Liz our Rector is retiring at the end of May; we are very grateful for her leadership and support over the last five years. We now have to go through the long process of appointing her successor. We're very fortunate that we have Rev Caroline working in Toppesfield, although when Liz retires her time will be more spread over the other churches in the benefice. She has done a great job here since becoming a priest and Messy Church with its craft activities is now a regular feature of school holidays. Talking of school, after Covid, St Margaret's is now able to hold its occasional services in church, when it is always full with the children, staff and family members.

2022 was a busy year for special events. In June we celebrated The Queen's Diamond Jubilee, with a special service, and an exhibition of royal memorabilia in church, and a commemorative oak tree was planted in the churchyard. Then in September we held the ancient ceremony of proclaiming the new monarch when King Charles succeeded his mother. Next month we will be holding a special service on May 7<sup>th</sup> to celebrate King Charles' coronation.

As with other village organisations finances remain very tough. Running costs, especially electricity, have risen sharply as has the amount we have to pay to the Diocese to cover the cost of our priests and other things. Contrary to popular belief, our church in Toppesfield does not receive any money from the central church; in fact this year we will have to pay the Diocese almost £10,000, which is a big ask for such a small village. So we rely on regular giving and donations to try to break even. And our thanks to everyone who supports the church in so many different ways, helping with flowers, cleaning etc. Our special thanks to the team who cut the grass and keep the churchyard tidy, and to all the volunteers - and customers - who made the fete and the supper auction a success.

Meanwhile the church building is our responsibility, for which we have to find funds for maintenance and conservation. The five year inspection took place last November and we now have a list of work required. We will need all the help we can get, both financial and volunteer, if we are to pass this historic building safely on to future generations.

Finally we offer our sympathy to the family of Vic Turner, who died this week while ringing the bells before the service on Sunday. Vic and Wendy were the main driving force behind the millennium project to restore Toppesfield's bells and Vic was Tower Captain for the last fifteen years. He will be sadly missed.

## **Appendix G**

### **TCP Annual report to PC 2023**

It is now just over a year since Kevin and Janet took over the lease of the Green Man. The time since then has been a period of consolidation and steady growth. Kevin and Janet have applied their long experience to raising operational standards and improving the quality of the food and drink offering, with the result that visitor numbers are increasing and customers are coming from further afield, though the Green Man is and will remain very much our local pub.

We hope to see the pub as a centre for more events, with local organisations making more use of it. The pool team is thriving, there is a monthly quiz night and we are very grateful to Chris Ames for hosting the monthly Open Mike nights. This spring Kevin and Janet will complete the children's play area in the garden (as soon as the final fundraising is complete).

With a well-run pub TCP's life is rather easier than often in the past, but there are challenges still to be faced. The fabric of the building is still below a desired standard. The exterior needs redecorating, there is a problem with damp in the dining room and we are still only about half way through the window replacement programme. Fortunately, now that TCP is receiving a steadier income, we can plan more confidently to tackle these issues.

Thanks to everyone who are shareholders and/or customers. It is now ten years since the Green Man was bought by the village. It is a credit to all who come in for a drink or a meal that it is still here and prospering.

## Appendix H



### News From SWAP

The Fields Association (TFA) had been flagging that the Home Office was looking at Wethersfield Airbase as an asylum centre for some time - way before Braintree District Council were in any loop. As you will be well aware, since the announcement of the Government's intention to site an asylum centre on the Airbase, national attention here has exploded. All the main news channels and I think all the main newspapers have held interviews with representatives of TFA. The coverage has been huge, and thanks have to go to the TFA people dealing with it all.

From my perspective, a three mile long, one-mile-wide monstrosity, should have greater reaction as you will never be rid of it. However, because asylum seekers would not be detained it produces different difficulties for them and the local community.

So many of the reasons for not having a prison on the site apply just as much to an asylum centre, but add in the likelihood of 1,700 (or more) lone males being bored out of their minds for months and wanting to get out to explore...but where? The village greens in Wethersfield and Finchingfield? There is nothing really to keep them occupied in either village. Will they be hoping to catch a bus to Braintree? The buses, very few in number, might be full for once! Where are the employees going to be found to look after the asylum centre? Where are the doctors and dentists going to be found to provide onsite healthcare?

What happens when asylum seekers are processed and become refugees? How many are going to look to Braintree District Council for support on housing, health care and everything else required?

Does anybody believe the Home Office has a clue?

Well, on this one, Braintree District Council seems to be on our side for once. It has applied for a High Court injunction, the result of which should be known on Wednesday 19th of April. In addition, a local resident is following suit, having set up a crowdfunding site on [crowdjustice.com](https://www.crowdjustice.com) <https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/stop-the-inhumane-asylum-camp/> to raise funds for engaging solicitors and barristers experienced with other, successful, asylum centre legal action, to fight this one. TFA applauds what he is doing and would encourage support as we believe this provides confidence that all the potential legal avenues for averting the Home Office are being covered. A pre-action letter has already been sent and the Home Office has been provided a little time to reply before he is likely to apply for an injunction.

A packed-out Wethersfield Village Hall heard members of TFA providing an update of the situation on Sunday 26th March, this followed one held in Finchingfield Village Hall which was supported by the group which campaigned successfully against the Linton on Ouse airbase proposed asylum centre – many thanks also go to them for providing advice and guidance.

Priti Patel in the neighbouring Witham constituency, which is part of Braintree District, has come out strongly against the asylum centre. We have met with James Cleverley, the local MP and Foreign Secretary, whilst against the proposal, he is concentrating on mitigation – no that's not what is required of you James. We expressed to Mr Cleverley residents' irritation and frustration at being bombarded first by an inappropriate housing proposal for 4,850 homes on the Airbase, then a proposal for two Mega prisons on the Airbase and now an asylum centre on the Airbase (whilst the prisons proposal is still being considered!).

We pressed him to follow up on a number of points:

1. Communication event: We expressed our very strong objections to the complete absence of communication from the Government. Mr Cleverley committed to investigate the feasibility of attending a public meeting along with relevant Government representatives from the Home Office to hear from the community directly.

2. Prison proposal: As the Mega Prisons proposal has not gone away, we told Mr Cleverly it was completely unacceptable that after nearly 20 months, we still did not know what was happening. We also reiterated that the reasons why the site is not suitable for an asylum centre, are also true of a prison. He committed to ask the Ministry of Justice if they had made a decision on whether to go ahead with a planning application or not.

3. Alternative site uses: Together with our local Parish Councils, TFA has been promoting alternative uses for the site for almost 20 months, and we expressed to Mr Cleverly our frustration at local, regional, and national government hinderance of our efforts to move these ideas forward. Our aim is to create a credible plan through a fully inclusive community-led process and be presented to the District Council as part of a Joint Neighbourhood Plan between Finchingfield and Wethersfield Parish councils. Mr Cleverly agreed to review these proposals and help address current bureaucratic obstacles.

This all has some way to run, but it may run quickly.

The May elections are looming, they also help to get the politicians' attention. Use your vote wisely, do your homework on who is against the prisons; the asylum centre; concreting over the countryside; expanding the capacity of the A131 and B1053; increasing the load bearing of Finchingfield bridge.

A lot has happened in the past month and a half that has caused a delay in the usual publication of this newsletter. We recognise that not everyone who receives the newsletter uses social media and may not be kept up to date on news as it happens quickly through the month so we have decided when an important piece of news happens, we will send out brief updates to our mailing list in between regular newsletters.

Alan Mackenzie  
Chair, Stop Wethersfield Airfield Prisons

## **An update from WASC (Wethersfield Airfield Scrutiny Committee)**

WASC continue to work towards completing a comprehensive works schedule to prepare for any prisons planning application for Wethersfield Airfield that arrives at Braintree District Council. This includes finalising a professional assessment of levels of contamination at the base and creating a worksheet of realistic sustainable alternatives to promote for Wethersfield Airfield.

### **Prison vs Asylum Centre**

In addition to the work already ongoing, WASC have responded to local residents' concerns regarding the proposal to house Asylum Seekers on Wethersfield Airfield by putting together a comparison chart you can see on the website here, and in summary below.

<https://www.thefieldsassociation.org/the-asylum-centre-proposal>

### **The problems and the government proposed solutions**

#### **Mega Prisons**

High rates of reoffending lead to excess demand on prison capacity so the Ministry of Justice have proposed to increase the size of the prisons estate. Building one or two Mega Prisons at Wethersfield, each with a capacity of 1,735 is the MoJ's proposed solution.

#### **Asylum Centre**

The build-up of a large backlog of asylum applications due to insufficient processing resources, even though other countries have coped with similar increases in volumes, has led to the proposal of using Wethersfield airbase to house 1,700 asylum seekers while they wait for processing.

Both proposed solutions have questionable effectiveness. Rural sites have insufficient resources to support such high volumes of inmates, asylum seekers and staff. Rural sites suffer from severe recruitment issues as seen in recruitment struggles at other sites. The MoJ's own studies show reoffending is greatly reduced by locating prisons near urban centres with better access to services and families – not on a remote site making

access more difficult. Asylum centres in or next to towns and cities improves access to support services and provides easier integration of successful refugees.

Sustainable alternative: For both new prisons and asylum centres the best solution is to site these developments in places with better access to services and amenities.

## **Crime**

A naturally major concern for the surrounding communities is about crime rates if a prison or asylum centre is placed nearby.

### **Mega Prisons**

Neighbourhoods at many rural prisons see higher crime rates than county averages and far higher than current rates in Finchingfield or Wethersfield. Essex police warn of extension of county lines drugs gangs if a prison is constructed.

### **Asylum Centre**

There've been several cases across the country of anti-Asylum groups engaged in violent protests near Asylum Seekers' accommodation, or clashes between two opposing anti- and pro-Asylum Seekers' groups. Residents fear that potential for crime is high with 1,700 unoccupied males on an open site and where no police are normally situated.

The sustainable alternative: no prison or asylum centre.

## **Health**

### **Prisons**

The long drawn out 'pre-planning' saga has caused severe strain on residents' mental health. It has been a constant background worry for many. And if the prisons are built, emergency services have expressed reservations about their capacity to meet prison demands.

### **Asylum centre**

A significant number of residents have expressed their anxiety and suggested a high degree of stress on top of the worry about what Mega Prisons might bring. If the Asylum Centre is built, what kind of drain on services will it create? Vague promises have been made of onsite health provision but no discussion of where individuals will go when given refugee status.

Note: neither Mega Prison plans nor Asylum Centre plans cater for emergency care so this will still be a drain on hospitals.

The sustainable alternative is to instead turn Wethersfield Airfield into a country park with open spaces and an exercise circuit, which will enhance mental and physical health and thereby reduce pressure on NHS.

## **Economic**

Mega Prisons more than an Asylum Centre will have an extremely negative impact on existing sectors such as tourism and equestrian activities. This is an area of full employment with no need for the introduction of new jobs. We have no local economic ecosystem or transport infrastructure to support Mega Prisons.

Again, with the Asylum Centre, we have no need for the introduction of new jobs to the area so any recruits will commute in and increase the traffic on our roads. The Asylum Centre is likely to be temporary, but the prisons would be permanent.

A sustainable alternative could include training in highly skilled green jobs (e.g., green energy solutions) in accordance with local priorities and infrastructure capacity. A country park incorporating green energy solutions and recreation areas with trails for walkers, cyclists and horse riders would be a positive impact to the area.

## **Traffic**

We have seen the state of the roads after one harsh winter and a regular amount of traffic. If the Mega Prisons are built, there will be five years of heavy construction traffic per prison, and once built, we will see a 50% increase in traffic per prison as staff will have to be recruited from a wide area. What kind of traffic increase would we see for the Asylum Centre? This depends on staff numbers. It may be a bit smaller than the prisons but at the moment they are not being honest about staff estimates. Also, in addition to staff and service traffic to and from the site, the Home Office have said they will provide shuttle buses for the Asylum Seekers to travel offsite.

## **Environment**

Any large development increasing the construction and population at Wethersfield Airfield will have a negative impact on the environment. This will come in the form of increased river pollution, increased pressure on water resources in an area forecast to be deficient in 5 years' time and additional stress on the water system that has undergone 6 repairs on B1053 alone in last 12 months.

An increase in traffic, both the five years per prison construction traffic and the day to day running of the prison or Asylum centre naturally increases CO2 emissions.

Construction of one or two Mega Prisons will require an enormous amount of digging into potentially contaminated ground. Pollution on building sites is caused by diesel, oil, and other harmful chemicals, as well as construction debris and dirt, which will increase the risk of ground contamination as well as destroy natural habitats.

The ground contamination risk for an Asylum centre on the airbase has been ignored. There is a current sewerage leakage already apparent onsite.

What are the sustainable alternatives? Not increasing the population at Wethersfield Airbase means no increase in demand on the water and sewerage systems. No large development construction means no massive increase in traffic, a preservation of land intact, enhancement of local habitat, reduced river pollution, improved runoff and water absorption in catchment area, and carbon capture through habitat enhancement.

## **Heritage**

The important history of the site has been disregarded. The Wethersfield Airfield Museum has been closed and no public access provided to (or protection of) designated Historical Cold War monuments.

Sustainable alternative: Restoration of Museum and provision for protection of (and public access to) designated Cold War monuments onsite as part of a country park and sustainable development plan.

## **Energy security**

Substantially increasing the population at Wethersfield airfield creates an additional drain on local resources when there are such good sustainable alternatives:

Community solar grid on runway owned by a Community Trust, supplying the local community with power. Affordable, sustainable housing, 200 homes for veterans and local residents owned under a Community Trust, the income from these homes reinvested in the community.

Keeping the airbase population low answers, a national need to improve energy security; provide skilled jobs; mitigate climate change; improve mental & physical health.

## **Community empowerment**

Local people's interest has been ignored, repeatedly evidenced by no or poor consultation between the community and the MoJ or Home Office. Accepted Planning protocols completed have been ignored and Local Community groups and Parish and District councils entirely by-passed. This is completely contrary to the spirit of the Localism Act 2011 and the Levelling Up and post-Brexit 'Take back control' promises.

The sustainable alternative: Involve local communities early in ongoing consultation in terms of problem diagnosis, solution design and project implementation immeasurable. Any plans for Wethersfield Airbase devised in accordance with Neighbourhood Plan protocols in conjunction with local Community groups and Parish and District councils.

## **We need your help!**

Do you have a few hours to spare and would like to help WASC and SWAP fight the Mega Prisons proposal?

We are looking for people with a background in local planning, law, environmental issues, promotions, design, campaigning, research and everything in-between!

Please email [swapmembership@outlook.com](mailto:swapmembership@outlook.com) if you can help.

## **Other ways to help**

Spread the word (see social links at the bottom of this email).

Become part of the Fields Association and join as a Community member.

Donate to the SWAP Campaign.

Donate to the Crowd Justice fund to stop the Asylum Centre.

Contact us to offer any specialist expertise if you have it.

Write to your elected representatives and let them know your views.

## **Did you know...**

What is really meant when we say asylum seeker, refugee, and migrant? Below are definitions from Amnesty:

A refugee is a person who has fled their own country because they are at risk of serious human rights violations and persecution there. The risks to their safety and life were so great that they felt they had no choice but to leave and seek safety outside their country because their own government cannot or will not protect them from those dangers. Refugees have a right to international protection.

An asylum seeker is a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country, but who hasn't yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim. Seeking asylum is a human right. This means everyone should be allowed to enter another country to seek asylum.

Migrants: There is no internationally accepted legal definition of a migrant. Like most agencies and organizations, we at Amnesty International understand migrants to be people staying outside their country of origin, who are not asylum seekers or refugees.

Some migrants leave their country because they want to work, study or join family, for example. Others feel they must leave because of poverty, political unrest, gang violence, natural disasters or other serious circumstances that exist there.

Lots of people don't fit the legal definition of a refugee but could nevertheless be in danger if they went home.

It is important to understand that, just because migrants do not flee persecution, they are still entitled to have all their human rights protected and respected, regardless of the status they have in the country they moved to. Governments must protect all migrants from racist and xenophobic violence, exploitation and forced labour. Migrants should never be detained or forced to return to their countries without a legitimate reason.

Source: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/#definitions>

You may also hear the terms British National (Overseas), from for example Hong Kong, and resettled or reunited persons, who are people from, for example, Afghanistan.

Putting things in perspective, of nearly 1.1 million people who moved to the UK year ending June 2022...

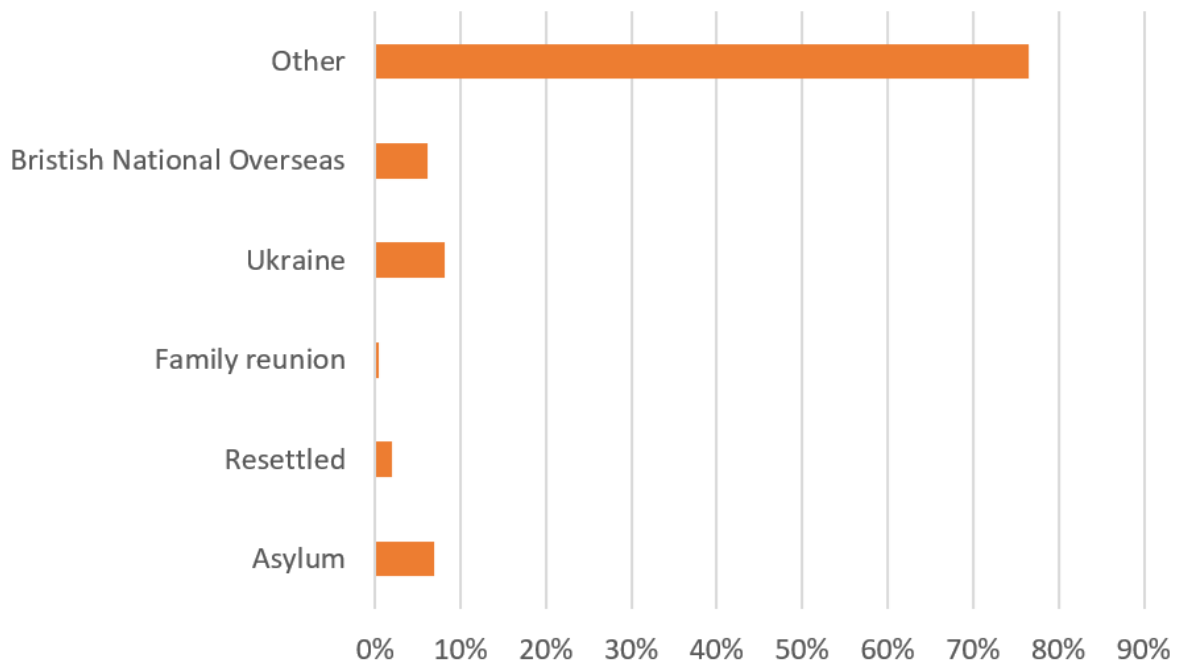
75,200 asylum applications

20,500 resettled

5,300 family reunion visas



88,900 Ukrainian visas  
66,000 British National (Overseas) e.g., from Hong Kong



Wethersfield barracks through the perimeter fence



## **Appendix I**

### **Toppesfield Community Shop (Community Benefit Society)**

The purpose of a community benefit society is to serve the broader interests of the community. Consequently, it is with this in mind that your shop committee and volunteers continue to strive to improve its appeal and profitability.

Although we have maintained a healthy balance of profitability and fair pricing again this year, we have not been 'sitting on our laurels'. Having applied for, and been given, a grant from Braintree District Council, we have planned several maintenance jobs/improvements to be carried out throughout the year.

These include:

A complete electrical inspection and upgrading of some equipment.

New, more secure, outdoor storage.

Garden renovation/facelift, including bistro style seating, for the use of our customers.

Grants given by the shop from our yearly profits 1 st April 2022 – 31 st March 2023 include:

June – Green Man (Play Equipment)

St Margaret's School (Leavers Event)

October - Ann Read (80 th Birthday Gift for our volunteer of 20 + years)

We have also recently commissioned 100 commemorative mugs for the Coronation of King Charles 111

One mug will be given to every child in the parish under the age of 16, the remainder will be on sale in the shop.

Our Monthly Markets, held in the Village Hall, are well attended and continue to do well.

We've had no resignations from our dedicated committee and have recruited 2 new regular volunteers.

Wendy Ames

Committee Chairperson

## **Appendix J**

### **St. Margaret's C of E Primary School Report for the Parish Council AGM – April 2023**

We have been very pleased in the last year to see things returning to normal in the school following the pandemic. Our three classes are very settled in school and the children are enjoying their learning.

In the last 12 months we have opened our nurture room, which is being utilised by children when they feel a little overwhelmed, and have made progress with our reflection garden – although gardening club are still working hard to develop this even further.

We have seen an increase in the wider opportunities we are offering our pupils, with 21 clubs happening across the week covering a range of interests including art, sport, music and reading. We have also started offering piano lessons in school and have had 16 children take this up this term.

We have also had a new trim trail installed to replace the old trim trail which was unfortunately condemned. The children have certainly enjoyed putting the new trim trail through its paces!

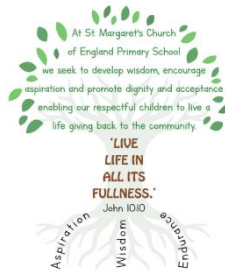
We also had a visit from OFSTED in September and were delighted that the hard work pupils and staff put in was recognised, with a good grade being awarded to the school with the report saying 'St Margaret's is a calm and happy place. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and say that the staff know them very well. Pupils are proud to be part of this small school.'

Next steps:

As always, we have lots of plans for the next 12 months. Some of these are:

- To complete our garden and have it officially opened by the Bishop of Colchester
- To continue to build on the wider opportunities available to pupils in the school

All of these projects will help support the children both emotionally and academically. We look forward to updating you on our achievements again next year.



## Appendix K

### Village Bowls/Pentaque

We are grateful to the Parish Council for showing an interest in our Bowls club and the possible improvement of our facilities.

At present, we play carpet bowls by hiring the village hall for two hours on a Tuesday evening, 6:30pm – 8:30pm. Our group is small due to space and equipment. Tim and Tia Stickland kindly purchased some new bowls but, our carpet is in need of replacement.

We are very much looking forward to some warmer weather and playing outdoors at the pentaque court, as this will be available to all, without hire and so many more could be involved. Hopefully, this will also include the use of the playing field/cricket pavilion, so happy days to come!

Quite a number of people have shown an interest in playing pentaque. We realise that this is fair weather game but allows for both the retired and those who work, the time to come and enjoy a game.

The Parish Council have negotiated the building of a new court at the playing field and, we cannot wait for this to be carried out.

It may be, with practice, that we could involve ourselves in a small club to have matches with other local teams and, have them come and play return games in Toppesfield, which could include a visit to the Green Man after, for refreshment and possibly food.

Susan Chapman

## Appendix L

Please Find Account of **Allotment Group** Plans and current Status

The allotments Group is 18 strong including Little Chestnuts which is at present a full contingent !

We have a Community Herb Garden managed by Linda Pritchard who is the Society Fund Raising Committee member .

We have a full set of accounts that is available to all members of the Society which have a healthy Balance for any contingency needs .

The Lawn Mower and Strimmer are available for any Allotments Holders .

This Easter Prize Draw raised £ 168 The draw took place on Easter Sunday.

The committee are in favour of planting Wild Flowers around the site and maintaining the Comfrey which grows freely around the perimeter this is to help the Bee population that visit and help out with pollination.

We have several Bird and Bat Boxes around the site For Tits and Robins etc and have plans to accommodate an Owl Box shortly.

We are planning a site maintenance day in May ,and a BBQ

Clare is Busy Making a Flower Garden with a bench which will be a tranquil place to visit and chill , Maybe take a book and experience what a great village space as been created,

All are welcome to walk the greensward with their dogs but please use the dog bins at both entrances. The Public footpath to the allotments which links to the footpat behind the Causway and the street as like a mud bath in the winter , It would be good if the PC could look at potential funding for laying some road plainings or similar down to make it a cleaner walk for the school Children that actually walk to school .

Paul Thompson -Chair

## Appendix M

### The Parish Charities Report.

There are four distinct charities that generate income.

These were established formally in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and their objects and the composition of trustees were updated by the Charity Commission in 1897, following the Local Government Act of 1894.

Three of the trusts created provide very modest aggregate annuities of £14.00 annually.

The fourth, however, comprises almost 12 acres of land which was settled on the trust in May 1712. It's objects are to support the **'reparation of the Church of Toppesfield and the relief of the poor of the parish and other charitable uses, by the discretion of the chief inhabitants assembled for that purpose'**.

This land has been rented for many years to Toppesfield Hall Farm which pays an annual rent for its use. This provides the greatest part of the total charity income.

In 2022/23 the rent totalled £960.00 and in line with the underlying deed, St Margaret's Church received £480.00, via the Ecclesiastical Charity of John and William Edwards, with the balance being placed in the Eleemosynary Charity of John & William Edwards. In recent decades the later has been used to provide small cash sums to a number of retired parishioners. In 2022, 17 parishioners received £22.00 each.

The Trustees have begun to consider if anything more can be done to provide a greater level of benefit to the community and to benefit other groups. To this effect, during lockdown the charity supported the school with funding to support the provision of milk to those children still at school.

Of, course, any amendments, however minor, to the underlying objects of the charity must be approved by the Charity Commission and take time. The trustees continue to look at ways to gain more benefits for the community from the land asset that is held in the trust but we do not expect to see any dramatic changes in the near future.

The trustees of the Charities are:

Appointed by St Margaret's Church PCC:                      OBrian Moody and James Blackie

Appointed by Toppesfield Parish Council: Dusty Millar and Alan Collard

The priest in charge (ex-officio): Revd Caroline Brown

If anyone would like to know more about the charities, please let me know.

**Alan Collard**  
**24 April 2023**

## **Appendix N**

### **Report of Toppesfield Village Show for APM 27th April 2023**

Yes, we made it and it was a brilliant sunny day. We had not held the show in 2020 nor 2021 because of covid so it was so exiting to be staging the show again. Of course, tinged with sadness at the passing of our dear Queen and several people thought that we should have cancelled the show, but I felt that village shows had meant so much to The Queen, particularly when the family were staying at Balmoral and Sandringham, that it was the right thing to continue. However, we did dedicate the show to her memory and held a minute's silence for our own personal reflections. I even found a photograph of The Queen receiving a cup at Royal Windsor Horse Show!

It had been a very hot and dry Summer I was concerned that there would be very few exhibits in the flower, fruit, and vegetable sections but I should know that Toppesfield will always find a way and the judges were very impressed with the entries. The cookery classes always look so delicious and there was such an array of different handicraft items. What talent we have amongst us. The thing that was so encouraging was the huge increase in children's exhibits, as always stealing the show with their weird animals and imaginative ideas!

We took a risk with the weather by having some stalls outside, but it was such a lovely day and it made such a colourful entry to the show to have The Brewery, The Vineyard and Plants That Grow stalls by the entrance.

The raffle was terrific, and I thanked so many local businesses who gave generous donations to the raffle. Darkins, Earey, The Green Man, Priors Hall, Kat Waterhouse, Poole Farm, Toppesfield Vineyard, Plants That Grow, East of England Coop as well as personal donations.

The refreshments were particularly delicious being strawberry and cream teas provided by Zoe".It was so great to see everyone enjoying the sunshine, the teas and chatting with friends.

The date for show 2023 is Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September in Toppesfield Village Hall. We have made a few changes to the schedule and look forward to another great village show.

More volunteers to help in the last few days always welcome.

Ann Read  
April 2023

## **Appendix O**

### **P3 report for APM 27<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

The PRoW (Public rights of way) continue to provide a wonderful facility for everyone to use. We are so lucky to have such a beautiful parish and have access to the countryside. During last Summer the temperatures were so high and no rainfall for weeks on end that the land dried up and cracked and the verges were scorched and dry.

Strange things did happen in that some plants that had flowered in the Spring flowered again in the Autumn and harvest was completed several weeks early. But nature is amazing and now we seem to be back on track.

The bridge at the back of Ollivers had been repaired but had moved again when the area was flooded but I am pleased to report that the bridge has again been repaired and secured. I did report the absence of the finger post for footpath 23, between Ollivers track and the T junction. This was scheduled to be replaced this Winter but unfortunately that has not been done as the Winter highways team who were doing this were diverted onto salting and gritting the roads and so now this will have to wait until next Winter. Better news on the many absent or broken waymarker posts. I have reported this problem to highways and Jason Botelho, our ProW officer, has offered to see if the Friends of Flich Way (FoFW) ,a team of volunteers, will come and repair or replace the waymarkers . I now have to walk all the footpaths and note the locations of the broken or absent waymarkers!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our local landowners for spraying out the cross-field paths and trimming back hedges so that we have easy access.

Please do let me know if you come across a problem on the footpaths and I will report it. No guarantee how long it will take to be sorted!

Sorry I have to end on a not so good note. When walking the paths I am sad to see dog poo on the paths or bags of dog poo just discarded. There are several dog poo bins around the village, so dog owners please make use of them.

Ann Read  
P3 Officer for Toppesfield Parish Council  
April 2023