

Once again, thank you to everyone who attended and participated in our wonderful ANNUAL PARISH MEETING in March. It was a wonderful turnout and I am told by many, that it was one of the best yet! Huge thanks must of course go to our Guest Speakers who really make the evening what it is.

These are the DRAFT Minutes of the **BLAKENEY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2015** which was held on **Thursday 19th March** at 7pm in Blakeney Village Hall.

Present:- Tony Faulkner (Chairman of Blakeney Parish Council) & Jenny Girling (Vice-Chairman of Blakeney Parish Council, along with 52 other members of the Public.

1. **Welcome by the Chairman** - Mr Tony Faulkner welcomed all those present and thanked everyone for coming. Apologies for **Absence** were received from Parish Councillors; Barry Girling and Roger Hall and also from Judith Paxton.
2. It was ***proposed & agreed*** that the **Minutes** of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 20th March 2014 are to be signed as a true record.
3. **Guest Speakers** –
 - **BLAKENEY NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSING SOCIETY** – John Seymour (Chairman of BNHS) gave the following report for the year to 19th March 2015

I will not be commenting on the specifics of the financial side of BNHS activities. I work closely with the Treasurer and his reports together with the abbreviated accounts brilliantly cover all aspects of cash movement, donations and legacies including expressions of gratitude to the many individuals and organisations that help us in so many ways. His reports for 2014/2015 financial year will be available after the BNHS AGM in May.

We always have about 18 people on our waiting list, they are single people, couples, single with a child and families. We do have dilemmas when a house comes up for let, and we have to deal with the let the best we can.

Another year has flown by. However, having had an expensive 2013/2014 we had to take things a bit easier during the past year. The most significant work during this period was the refurbishment of 40 Morston Road where we have built a new kitchen and bathroom extension, insulated the cottage to current standards, installed new windows and doors, wiring, plumbing and new fittings throughout. We are having problems with the running costs of the electric heating system installed and we are working with the manufacturer to resolve them. If we are successful the system will be a simple and cost effective way forward.

The usual cyclical painting, chimney sweeping, boiler servicing and other repairs including those led by tenants have been carried out. As at the time of writing we have authorised our contractors to carry out a wide range of essential repairs and refurbishments to a dozen or so of our houses. We hope to be able to start a further

refurbishment later this year, which will then leave three properties still in need of a full makeover.

Our relationship with our main contractors is effective and beneficial. We hear occasional complaints that they are expensive. My response is simple. They provide 24 hour cover throughout the year and their rates stand good comparison with others. It is always possible to get cheaper quotes but experience has shown the backup isn't available.

The additional level of management introduced two years ago to the contractors' structure works well. As I am not receiving any negative comments from tenants we have to assume the priority system introduced for tenant led repairs is also working.

I have often heard it said that the houses have stood for 200 years so they will stand for another 200. That may be true but only if there is continued expenditure on a programme of maintenance and refurbishment. The Society was founded 70 years ago and the founder, Norah Clogstoun, remarked, on first visiting cottages that eventually became part of the Society, there were 'Ceilings with yard long gashes in them, windows that wouldn't close, doors that let in every storm of rain, roofs that let in so much driving snow that snow and ceiling came down on the beds below'. Fortunately, overall, her words no longer apply but we cannot afford to rest.

So, without Norah's foresight would these houses still be standing. The answer is yes but probably not in the ownership of the Society, more likely in the hands of second home owners. The houses would be fine but the historic part of Blakeney would continue to slide to an ever increasing percentage of second home and holiday cottages. Our aim is to continue to provide homes for local people in the village they were born and brought up in and in doing so to preserve the fabric of the traditional flint cottages.

Having said that, we do need to be aware of the changing needs of the housing market. It is no longer acceptable to provide a bare cottage. Tenants expect, quite rightly, a warm, dry, draught free environment that doesn't leak with modern kitchen and bathroom and if we are charging affordable rents then we are obliged to fulfil our side of the bargain. At any one time we have about 18 names on the waiting list and we are aware the NNDC has many more applicants on their Housing List with strong local connections. There has been a shift to mainly singles and couples without children and when we do have a vacancy there can be the dilemma of a three bedroom house becoming available but with a single person at the top of the list. In the short to medium term this situation is unlikely to change.

Our new treasurer, Kevin Walker, and Housing Officer, Linda Cripps, are both fully up to speed in their roles and we are very grateful for all they do for the Society. Along with our very hard working secretary, Lal Wright, we have an active committee and I am grateful to them all for help and guidance.

About seven years ago we embarked on a policy to align rents with those of a range of local Housing Associations. Why? We did not have enough income from rents to carry out the repairs we needed to do and although it is not and never will be a policy to charge higher than affordable levels we have to acknowledge the fact that the majority of our cottages are old, not very well built with damp being a major issue

and usually difficult to access. Many have listed status, which brings its own set of difficulties, for example installing double glazing is an uphill struggle. The policy is continuing and over 50 % of the houses are now aligned. Future rent increases for those properties are linked to cost of living rises.

The first fifteen houses owned by the Society were bought for an average of £112 each. By the early 50's the number owned had grown to 36 properties. Due to difficulties in servicing mortgages, cottages had to be sold reducing the stock to 22 properties and it wasn't until the mid 80's when the number increased substantially again with the John Wallace legacy of ten cottages. In the early 90's, there was a major fundraising effort resulting in the purchase of two cottages in Cley and the partnership with Broadland Housing with the purchase and long term leaseback arrangements for the four cottages in Durrants Row. Another fundraising effort in the late 90's raised enough money which together with Development Fund reserves was enough to buy two former council houses, one in Cley and another in Queens Close. Other legacies and generous gifts have enabled the Society to increase ownership to 43 houses. mainly in Blakeney with some in Cley and Wiveton. Up to a few years ago a levy was placed on rental income to accumulate funds for the Development Fund. This no longer happens.

Where do we go from here? The opportunity to purchase additional houses is difficult due to the very high prices of properties locally. We do not have spare capital. Our only source of guaranteed income is our rents and we made a policy decision several years ago to spend all of it on the existing properties. Due to past experiences we are loathe to take on mortgages even though rates are currently low. We are reluctant to change our restrictive letting policy to that of the District Council even though that might unlock funds from the Homes and Communities Agency. Fundraising may be one answer but difficult with the smallest cottages selling for well over £300,000. Another way forward may be to attempt a partnership arrangement with an organisation such as Broadland Housing Association. We have a successful arrangement with them at Durrants Row and it may be possible to look at building new properties on sites where opportunities exist for exception policy development.

At 31st December 2014 there were 87 shareholders.

The AGM of the BNHS is on 13th May at 7.00pm in the Methodist Chapel.

Before I finish I would like to pay tribute to Elizabeth Moore who died last year. She only retired as Housing Officer a relatively short while ago and is missed by us all. With her husband Brian, they made a formidable and very active couple in championing everything the BNHS stands for.

- **BROADLAND HOUSING ASSOCIATION** – Ed Mumford-Smith, Head of Development.

We understand that Blakeney Parish Council may soon start looking for land in the area for a possible 'Exceptions Site', and speaking with the neighbouring parishes and hence they have invited us along to speak this evening.

Broadland Housing Association is over 50 years old now. We have over 5,000 properties in Norfolk, mostly in King's Lynn, Dereham and Great Yarmouth. The biggest provider here in North Norfolk is Victory Housing and then Broadland who tend to undertake small schemes. We have the Oddfellows scheme here in Blakeney and we work closely with North Norfolk District Council and various Parish Councils. We are a charity and have 200 staff.

As you will know, planning policy is very strict when it comes to development. The average income for North Norfolk is around £23k, and hence when you look at recent developments such as Avocet View, you will understand why they are unaffordable to local people, hence the need to consider the Exceptions Policy. This means land outside of the development boundary, but adjacent to it and this is what Blakeney Parish Council will be looking at.

In the 'Band A' Housing Category this week there are 20 people in need of housing in this village and the adjacent villages. Suitable land is likely to attract a moderate sale price, slightly more than agricultural but nothing compared to the cost of land which could be used for open market housing. Such land would of course have to be granted planning consent for an exceptions site. Affordable Housing Rent is deemed to be 80% of the market rent, which here in Blakeney is £116 a week for a 2 bedroom property.

There is now not much in the way of government funding for such schemes, the bulk of the money from the sale of the previous right to buy properties now having been used. As an Association we are looking at the National Planning Policy to help us find land. However, in order to fund such a scheme there would now have to be some open market housing which we know is a big ask of the community. In many places we know that lots of the houses are being sold to retired local people. Norfolk County Council encourages us to build where there are services and amenities. (Blakeney is classed as a Coastal Service Village.)

Q. to Blakeney Neighbourhood Housing Society – Many people buy properties in Blakeney and then rent them out, mainly for holiday lets, but a few to families for a period of time, who then settle into village life, sending the children to the primary school etc, then the owner decides to sell and they have nowhere to go in the village, how can we help them?

A. Whilst BNHS recognises this point, under our own constitution we can easily let all of our properties to those who are locally born and bred. We often look at our policies and we do consider changes, it may one day be possible to help in such circumstances.

We know of people who have land and would be happy to talk to us and hence partnership working is a real possibility now and we are more than happy to be involved in joint discussions and working.

Q. to BNHS & Broadland – Do you move people on when a property becomes too big?

A. BNHS – No as our tenants have an Assured Tenancy, however we try to negotiate with them and encourage them to consider moving. People are currently only means tested at the point of entry. We know that some people think we should means test the tenants throughout their occupation of the property, but currently we do not.

Broadland – Our tenants have fixed term tenancy agreements, anything from 1 year up to 10 years, which is generally linked to children's schooling, as brought in recently by the government. The majority of affordable housing properties across the district are 3 beds, hence we are looking to build a mixture of 1 and 2 bedroom properties and encourage tenants to downsize and move.

Q. to Broadland – How can we stop Local Housing Authority Stock from being sold off, ie. as per a house at Cley recently?

A. Broadland – This would be classed as Stock Transfer which they are legally permitted to do. An Exceptions Scheme, such as we are discussing could never be sold off and you could never own any more than 80% of such a property, ie. under Shared Ownership Schemes. Hence such schemes would be good for this area, for the Parish Council and the Blakeney Neighbourhood Housing Society.

John Seymour – As Chairman to Edgefield Parish Council, I can also advise that we are currently working with Broadland Housing Association for 24 houses. 12 would be affordable and 12 would be open market houses, but set at a level for local people and this would be under an Exceptions Site Scheme.

- **ENVIRONMENT AGENCY** – Steve Hayman explained the works which have now been completed on our Flood Defence Bank.

Following local consultation here in Blakeney during February 2014, it was apparent that the footpath along the top of the sea defence was very important to the local community and the economy, hence we managed to temporarily reopen this just before Easter last year. We then started the main works to the sea defence in August 2014, however the criteria meant that the works had to be completed by October 2014.

The quantity of material used in the banks is still the same as it was before, but we have reshaped the bank. It is now wider with a lower crest level and is less likely to be breached during tidal surge events and this has resulted in a lower bank. This means that over topping onto the freshwater marshes will happen more often, but we have looked to clean and maintain the sluices in order to help clear the area quickly. They have not been tested yet, which is good, as ideally the bank needs a good level of vegetation to cover it. The footpath has been totally reinstated. We will check the bank and keep up with ongoing maintenance.

Q. to E.A. – How often do you think it will overtop?

A. E.A. – We have set the minimal level for over topping at 4 metres and we have built it to be above this. There would not be lots of leeway above a high spring tide. It could be overtopped on average say about once in every 5 years. We have a tide

recorder at both Wells and Cromer which is good and we can monitor activity well now via the computer. The footpath reinstatement was funded by Norfolk County Council.

Thanks were given from the public to the Environment Agency and the Local Councils for all their work on this.

- **BLAKENEY & DISTRICT WILDFOWLERS ASSOCIATION – DUCKPOND** – Keith Morley updated the meeting following the December 2013 tidal surge.

I speak tonight on behalf of the Blakeney & District Wildfowlers Association, custodians of the Blakeney Conservation Duck Pond since its inception in 1977 and the Sub-Committee formed to manage its restoration. Following the tidal surge 15 months ago and the retirement of 'Cobo', our long-time *Master of the Duck Pond*, our plan for the restoration, revival and operation of this much loved facility has relied upon the completion of a number of strategic goals.

Site Clearance - The duck pond, its immediate surroundings and the meadow to the north had to be cleared of a vast amount of rubbish and detritus left behind by the tidal surge. A digger was brought in and the site was cleared. The remaining pile of non-hazardous material (wood, trees, bushes, reeds, etc.) will be burned when it's dry and conditions are favourable.

Completion of the Repairs to the Sea Defences - The Environment Agency completed their work on time at the end of October last year. Since then we have had several big spring tides and the bank has contained these. However, none of these events coincided with a fresh or strong on-shore wind, so the jury is still out regarding the effectiveness of these defences. Also, with no flooding of the fresh marsh, we cannot be sure of the speed at which the sea water can be evacuated, the true test of the sluice improvements made. Many still think the bank is too low but that's what we have to work with. Some think that just two sluice gates are inadequate but again, this isn't going to change anytime soon. We can only hope for the best and push ahead with our fingers crossed.

Repairs to the Duck Enclosure - Much of the perimeter fence was destroyed or severely damaged by the tidal surge. The bulk grain store was also badly damaged along with various other hardware within and around the enclosure. This has now been replaced or repaired and the site is more or less ready for the return of the waterfowl. Some cosmetic work remains but this can be done as and when we can.

Electric Fence Replacement - The perimeter wire was so badly damaged by the tidal surge that this has had to be replaced, in its entirety. Likewise, we lost all of the equipment needed to operate the electric fence (batteries, energiser, etc.) and this has now been replaced. We now use solar panels to recharge the batteries and we are able to have the wires live during the hours of darkness only. This saves battery life and minimises risk to the public from an uncomfortable (not dangerous) shock. Without this deterrent foxes would climb the fence and kill all the captive birds within.

We know this as an Aylesbury duck, which cannot fly, was 'dumped' in the pen a while ago and vanished shortly afterwards. Cobo has also witnessed foxes trying to gain entry. It is of paramount importance that we protect against foxes and other predators.

Recruitment of Volunteers - We now have 3 volunteer Duck Pond Managers. Don Cripps and I will concentrate upon the enclosure, its contents and its inhabitants. Hilary Glossop is devoting her skills to the commercial side of the operation (fund raising, etc.). Cobo will remain involved in a mainly advisory role.

We are fortunate to have had some 25 people volunteer to feed the ducks. Feeding will start on April 1st (no, it's not a joke!). A feeding rota involving all volunteers has been drawn up for the first 3 months of the operation. Training sessions have been arranged for the end of March.

Duck Food - We have had an initial delivery of 200 kilos of special pellets and 2 tonnes of wheat. Some of this has been decanted into 10 litre buckets stored within 4 waterproof and vermin proof steel oil drums. Duck feeders need only to help themselves to a bucket or 2 of feed and distribute this within the enclosure. Don and I will keep the drums topped up with full buckets of feed.

We will shortly begin to allow visitors to buy bags of feed from various retail outlets within the village. This will hopefully ensure that the ducks are not fed too much bread (not good for them) and that this income stream helps finance the facility.

The Waterfowl - We plan to have some captive ducks back in the enclosure before April 1st. 5 mandarin ducks have been donated and are currently with our supplier. When we collect these, we will also take as many other ducks (in pairs) as he can supply at that time. Some will be 'out of stock' but we'll acquire as many as we can. Others will have to wait until after the spring/summer breeding season when more stock become available (we will place an order for what we want). It will take quite some time before our collection is back to the sort of numbers and varieties we have enjoyed in the past. We will try to breed from the initial stock we obtain and 'sell' the eggs to our supplier in return for more ducks in the future, as we have done for many years.

We shall soon begin an appeal for folks to donate a pair of ducks (various prices apply). It is hoped that we can capture the public's imagination and secure further waterfowl in this way, whilst making people feel more personally involved with the duck pond. Win – win!

Vegetation - The long period of immersion in salt water has killed much of the vegetation in and around the pond. Two sycamore trees are dead and must be felled for safety reasons. All but one of the willow trees along the bank of the pond are dead and will need some sort of attention and replacement. Virtually all of the protective hedging within the pen is now dead and will need to be replaced. Many

other plants and flowers have succumbed to saline poisoning. Even the grass has suffered. Much work and expense, over several years, will be needed before the visual appearance is once again, pleasing to the eye. Alas this cannot and will not be achieved overnight.

The Future - Whilst not totally 'rosy', the future of the duck pond looks far healthier than it did some 6 months ago when the plan to restore it was first mooted. We have come a long way but have much left to do. We are indeed fortunate to have had the support and assistance of so many kind and generous people on this journey and the promise of more to come. The demise of our cherished duck pond seems to have struck a chord with so many people that we are confident that (in the words of a song made famous by Pete Seeger in 1957 and latterly by Dr Martin Luther King) *we shall overcome, some day!* Hopefully, sooner rather than later.

Our plans for the future includes the goal of making the facility financially self-sufficient and to this end we are pursuing a number of different commercial ventures to provide the income needed to achieve this. More of this will become clear as our plans come to fruition and information becomes part of the public domain. I'd prefer to keep my powder dry until then so as to not jeopardise the impact of the various initiatives we have in hand. So - Watch this space!

We have many other objectives to keep us busy over the coming months and these include:

- Improved viewing facilities
- Improved access
- Improved information point
- Presence on Facebook
- A web site, maybe even with a web-cam?
- A vibrant population of waterfowl for us all to enjoy

Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to convey our sincere gratitude to Blakeney parish council not only for the very generous donation made towards the restoration of the duck pond but also for the help and support we have been given in so many different ways since that fateful day in December 2013. This, and support from so many others has given us the inspiration and enthusiasm to continue with the efforts we have made to date and hope to carry on for many years to come.

In recognition of the size of the 2014 grant from Blakeney Parish Council, it was agreed that we would not apply again this year but would like to keep this door open for the future.

- **NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCILLOR** – Dr. Marie Strong reported as follows.

I would like to add my thanks to the Environment Agency, but I am of course very pleased that Norfolk County Council could help too, by putting in £21k to the footpath.

The Marine Conservation Zones, known commonly as MCZs, are now to be known as 'High Detected Marine Areas', and whilst keeping an eye on them, we should be updated by the end of March.

Faster Broadband is now with us, but you must each contact your Internet Service Provider to see what they can provide for you. Mobile phone signals should soon be better in the village due to the scheme you have bid successfully for via Vodafone. I am pleased to report that Norfolk received 11 of the total 100 schemes for the whole of the country. I am aware that other service providers systems are not able to offer even an SOS signal at many places in Norfolk and hence we are working hard and campaigning to rectify this.

Finally my thanks to the Parish Council and their Clerk, all whom work extremely hard for this village.

A. PARISH COUNCIL COMMUNITY FUND – (Each group will be presented with a grant from the fund) Group presentation & brief reports: Other groups which benefitted from this fund but not with us this evening were; Norfolk Age UK, Norfolk Accident Rescue Service & Norfolk Rotary Club (specifically for smoke alarms for the elderly).

Blakeney History Centre – Pam Peake received a grant of £400, gave the following report and produced a display.

It seems to have taken ages for the History Centre to put together sufficient funds and then secure all the necessary permissions to place the lifeboat model "Hetty" on long term loan in the church. However, with grateful thanks to a few very generous donors, and particularly the Parish Council Community Grant, the end is now in sight. Later this year the "Hetty" will be in her new home, standing just in front of her service board in the north aisle.

Meanwhile research on our Great War servicemen is progressing. Family biographies and service records for the casualties is virtually complete. Of the 36 identified, only H Wright remains a mystery. Although many Wrights have been investigated, they have all proved to be wrong!

Six names have been added to those originally listed on the village war memorials, 3 by Mary Ferroussat some 20 years ago and now 3 more. One of these casualties has since been added to the Memorial on New Road. Sadly for William Bond, Job Simpson and George Haines, who were all born and raised here and attended Blakeney school, they had no family left in Blakeney to speak up for any of them when they were killed in action.

Now some interesting statistics for you to ponder over.

Of the 36 casualties, excluding H Wright;
24 were born in Blakeney – 11 were not

Of the 11; 8 had family connections – while 3 had holiday homes here

Ages; 4 were teenagers – 17 were in their 20s
12 were in their 30s - 2 were in their 40s

Service; 28 served in the army
21 lost their lives in France and Flanders
2 lost their lives at Gallipoli (7 days before final evacuation)
2 lost their lives in Palestine
3 lost their lives in the UK (1 in Blakeney)

7 served in the Navy, all died at sea, 3 of them accidentally

Blakeney's youngest serviceman, Christopher Cooke, was only 14 when he went to war as a naval cadet and was one of the teenagers when he was killed in action, 1918.

The Navy even had two 13 year old cadets commanding landing craft at Gallipoli on April 25th 1915 and that brings me nicely to my last point, ANZAC Day.

Anzac Day, April 25th is the next event remembered by the History Centre with;
an article in the next Glaven Valley Newsletter
a small exhibition in the church on our Notice Board
and a Handout, tonight

Take one, learn a little more about the role of the ANZACs and enjoy the biscuits. Better still, instead of biting the proverbial bullet, bite the biscuit. Find out who was living in your house at the time of the Great War and what their role was. If your house wasn't built, what was the land being used for?

Blakeney Scout Group Executive Council – Paul Henrikssen received a grant of £400 and reported that it would be put towards new lighting, shelving and safety equipment in the Scout Hut.

Blakeney Methodist Church – Lillian Timms received a grant of £400 and reported that it was specifically for the Café TMC. This was the reason for their application; Last year it was noticed that a lot of people who visited the café talked about struggles people had with technology. This year to respond to this clear need, we will be holding a monthly free computer surgery to anyone who has a technology problem with their computer, tablet or phone. This money will help provide this free service to the community.

Blakeney & District Scout Group – Paul Henrikssen received a grant of £400. Their application stated that this money would be used to update equipment and help towards the costs at camp and activities. Buy new games and camp cooking equipment.

Blakeney Sports Club – James Cowan received a grant of £400 and advised that the tennis courts are now in a bad state of repair and need resurfacing as soon as possible, which may now happen by this June. The cost of this work (as per their application) is around £18k, which does not include any additional cost for

floodlights.) James stressed that they really would like to see the courts used so much more, by the community and not just for tennis.

Blakeney Royal British Legion Bowls Club – Mick Scargill received a grant of £400 and advised that it would be used to maintain the very high standard of green on which to play, ie. levelling, re-seeding and feeding. 3 ton of levelling compound is required every 2 years at a cost of £120 a ton. The local team play in the County League (something Mick is especially proud of) and has not been out of the top 3 in the last 4 years. What they do need however is many more local members, so if you are interested in joining, then please do get in touch. Our green is the envy of many in the county and beyond. Mick himself has undertaken every role to do with the upkeep of the green throughout the past 30 years.

Blakeney C.E.V.A. Primary School – Mary Dolan: Headmistress received a grant of £400 and gave the following report.

The four primary schools of Blakeney, Hindringham, Kelling and Walsingham federated in April 2013 under the leadership of one governing body, myself as Executive Headteacher and a Deputy Headteacher, who leads on Teaching and Learning.

The schools work together to provide the best possible education for every child. Each school retains its own unique identity, yet benefits from collaborative working.

We regularly organise events which bring the children together to widen their learning experiences and opportunities.

The staff share their strengths and skills and have greater opportunities to develop their professional expertise. This has a direct impact on the quality of teaching and learning and enables us to deliver an exciting and relevant curriculum for all of our children as we believe that learning should be creative, innovative, inspiring and irresistible!

Through our shared vision, staff, parents, governors, children and the local community all play their part in our learning and in achieving excellence in everything we do.

Blakeney Church of England Primary School greatly appreciates the funding towards the cost of an electronic drop down screen that has been provided by the Parish Council. This resource will be used within collective worship for singing, displaying of prayer words and enlarging learning material.

It is well evidenced that ICT has a positive impact on teaching and learning, mainly by motivating and engaging pupils. This drop down screen will be an additional resource within the school to help this motivation and excitement for learning. At Blakeney Church of England primary school the pupils' skills in using ICT for presenting information are good and now that we have this drop down screen we can share these skills with the whole school, parents and local community when visiting.

In a bid to be ever forward looking, we are now saving up to purchase a permanent projector to make this facility a permanent feature that will have a significant impact upon the learning of our pupils.

With this facility we can display and showcase ICT video's that pupils develop as part of their topic led curriculum along with pupil photo slideshows and displays. Further to this, the opportunity to be part of video conferencing linked with international events such as world book day and the chance for pupils to Skype all over the world.

If anyone would like a guided tour of the school by the children, then you would be very welcome, just get in touch.

Many thanks to Blakeney Parish Council.

Coastal Rowing Association of Blakeney – Steve Roch received a grant of £150 and gave the following report.

The Coastal Rowing Association Blakeney is going from strength to strength. We promote rowing, especially coastal rowing amongst our members and the local community. The skiff community is growing in Norfolk, with Kings Lynn Coastal Rowing Club launching their first boat next month, and then starting to build their second. Last year we were awarded a grant from the North Norfolk District Council's Big Society Fund to enable us to get our second skiff "Bluejacket" onto the water. "Bluejacket" was named after a "billy boy" ketch that traded in Blakeney. The two St Ayles Skiffs on the Carnser are proving as popular as ever with our members, tourists and passers-by. To the end of last year there were over 174 outings with 118 different individuals rowing in either boat. 64 new people experienced outings in 2014, including youngsters from the Holt Youth project and Gresham's school.

This year we will be travelling to Brittany for a week-long tour as well as going to Cork in the Republic of Ireland to try to retain the trophy that we won last year in the 15-mile long Ocean to City Race. Closer to home we have invited the Endeavour Project from Lincolnshire to row our boats in July. This is a small national charity working at grass roots level with some of England's most disadvantaged and disaffected young people. We are also making plans with Holt Youth Project to get them on board more regularly now that the weather is more pleasant. The grant that the parish Council has kindly awarded us will allow us to take them without charging membership fees.

We will be offering taster session here in Blakeney for anyone who would like to try rowing on Saturday May 16th and Saturday June 13th. More details including times of the try out sessions can be found in the Glaven news.

OTHER COMMUNITY GROUP REPORTS:-

Blakeney Dinghy Park Management Committee – The following report was read by Committee Member, Margaret Benson on their behalf.

Dinghy Park - As you all will know, as a consequence of the Tidal Surge of 5th December 2013, a part of the dinghy park was destroyed and a considerable number

of boat spaces were lost for last season. In October, the Environment Agency started work in rebuilding the sea wall and reinstating the lost area of the Dinghy Park. The work was completed but they did not reinstate the holding down chain. A team from the sailing club assembled with the National Trust and their tractor. The chain has been laid, tightened to drum tight, what a difference a tractor makes, and then staked down, the best line of the lot. Two days later another team assembled to tighten up some of the earlier laid runs and lay 2 more. Many thanks to all of these volunteers and to Charlie Ward for supplying the chain.

Once again the Dinghy Park has run relatively smoothly, the annual clean up resulted in the usual amount of rubbish but, thankfully, very few items needed to be removed off site after December 1st.

There are some slight changes coming in 2015, parking north of the bollards will be allowed by those who hold a specific permit as the Parish Council wants to stop non sailors parking in the boat area. The up to date regulations are available from the Parish Council, and everyone placing a boat in the Dinghy Park is encourage to complete and register a boat owners registration form via the Parish Council.

Channel Improvement - The project to improve the channel for a distance of 200m north of the Dinghy park slipway has moved forwards albeit rather more slowly than the Committee would have wished. The major obstacle has been to find a site to move the dredged spoil which will be acceptable to the relevant authorities. We are hopeful that a potential solution has been found.

Our initial objective with the grant provided by the Sheringham Shoal Fund, was to complete all the preliminaries necessary, the number of bodies that have to be consulted and agree this modest project is mind bending, prior to starting the project itself. However we are hopeful that we will complete this initial phase fairly soon. We know that the work will have to be done in October and whilst we had originally targeted 2015 we have still to start the fund raising process for the work itself for which we need a final budget so 2016 is more likely.

The channel is changing rapidly but if access is to be retained through a navigable channel then this and further works to maintain and improve the waterway are essential. Blakeney without boating is unthinkable.....

GENERAL REPORTS:-

Blakeney Parish Council – The Chairman reported on the past year and the year ahead.

You might be interested to know that **Blakeney Parish Council is 120 years old**, having had its first meeting on 4th December 1894. Three new Councillors have joined during the year, Leanne Welch, Rosemary Thew and Edward Hackford. We have had another busy year and hope we have taken some worthwhile actions, some of which are listed below.

THE PAST YEAR

Recreation Area - One of our main achievements, and certainly the most visible, is the installation of the recreation area for older children and teenagers on the playing field. Largely funded as an offshoot of the development on Langham Road, together with other grants, this is almost complete although it does still await the construction of the BMX track. This recreation area has been something that the Council has wished to do for many years in order to provide a play area for older children, and we are very pleased that it is at last coming about.

Coronation Lane Car Park - The conversion of the public part of this car park into a pay and display, although not initially universally popular, is proving of great benefit to the village, raising a considerable sum. Indeed for part of the winter it has raised more money than the Carnser car park.

Broadband and Mobile Phones - High speed broadband is now available in the village and to receive it you need to contact your Internet Service Provider. We have been less successful in improving the mobile phone signal but if you are with Vodafone, you will find the signal improved later this year when further booster aerials have been fitted around the village. I would like to thank all those who have been willing to have these installed as they will benefit their neighbours as well as themselves.

Parking - We are in discussions with Norfolk County Council over the occasional use of the school playing field on Langham Road as a temporary car park. This would be for special events such as the rural sports in the summer, when parking becomes a real problem.

Trees - We have had all the trees on parish council property surveyed for condition and are having work carried out where recommended to make them safer. The tree by the public toilets near the Carnser that was killed by the recent flood event has been taken down and will be replaced in due course.

Road Safety - We have had installed a vehicular activated sign on Langham Road where traffic speeding down the hill has been a problem. This was done in conjunction with NCC Highways on a partnership funding scheme where the cost is shared between us. We are discussing with Highways the provision of a footpath at the top of the hill on Morston Road where the public footpath has a very dangerous staggered crossing over the Coast Road, but this is proving complicated because of uncertainty about the ownership of the land affected.

Other Matters - There are many, many, other matters that have been dealt with during the year ranging from commemorative seats (over 40 in the village!), to dog bins (7), the bottle and paper banks and the annual Bonfire and Fireworks event held last October. As always, the last was a great success only slightly spoilt by the downpour at the end, and I would like to thank all those who helped with it, without whom it just would not happen.

THE YEAR AHEAD

Affordable Housing - This is a subject always at the top of our minds. The Langham Road development has provided 12 affordable homes, 9 of them rented, and we are told by NNDC that of the 9 available for rent 6 have been let to people with a local connection, the remainder, presumably, going to people in urgent need from elsewhere in the NNDC area. However, the Council says that there are still 83 households with a local connection on their waiting list for properties in Blakeney and the surrounding parishes, and so the need for affordable housing in the area is still very great. We will be having discussions with our surrounding parishes to see what can be done to help satisfy this need, in the hope of finding a site for an 'exceptions policy' development where the houses have to be let to local people.

Election - The present Council stands down in May when there is an election for a new Council. I am hoping that many of your present Council will stand again, but it would be good for the village if sufficient people came forward for there to be an election. There are 11 places to fill and if any of you would like to join please have a word with Tracey Bayfield, our Clerk, who will explain what has to be done.

Thanks - I should like to thank all of your present councillors for the great amount of time and effort that they have put in during the last year. Also, especially, to thank Tracey for the amount of work that she does on our behalf, often involving evening meetings when I am sure that she would be happy to be at home! Lastly, to thank all of you who are involved in one way or another with organising and taking part in events which help to make our village such a vibrant community, said by the Press to be the best place to live!

OVER TO YOU; OPEN SESSION:- A chance for those present to comment on any items already discussed.

Judith Pegden – Just to mention our beautiful St. Nicholas Church in the village, where lots of good things happen. Lots of events are held in the church and everyone is very welcome.