



Botus Fleming Parish Council

BOTUS FLEMING PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2020/2021

It is my pleasure to present Botus Fleming Parish Council Chairman's report for 2020/2021.

The last 12 months brought some unprecedented challenges to the Parish Council. We continued to operate throughout the COVID-19 Restrictions, even though face-to-face meetings were not permitted. Utilising and conducting remote meetings have been difficult, but we managed this successfully and continued to hold the monthly Parish Council meetings, operational meetings and communicated with each other on a daily basis, working to improve our community. I am looking forward to resuming face-to-face public meetings in May 2021.

The Parish Council and the Community Action Team self-organised on Facebook and WhatsApp and were out on the streets handing out leaflets which detailed the kind of help we could give those who needed it. We were offering to bring people in self-isolation the basic things they needed - from prescriptions to the weekly food shop. We also offered a chat on the phone to the many, many people who were feeling more isolated than ever.

In March 2021, after over a year of hard work, we finally completed on the purchase of the Recreation Field at Hatt. We carried out a survey and 68.46% of the electorate contributed their views. It was gratifying that 92.23% were in favour of purchasing the Recreation Field and 92% supported the Parish Council's proposal of borrowing the money to purchase the field. My thanks to all the residents that supported the Parish Council in applying for and receiving £70,000 from the Public Works Loan Board to buy the field. We carefully considered our loan obligations and opted to pay it back over a 15-year period. We believe that this option allowed us to operate within our budget.

I think that our community has a bright future and we can begin improving the facilities for our community. Our short-term plan is to raise money in order to install a playground on the field. Longer term we aim to build a village hall that all our parishioners can enjoy. I hope that our annual Big Event will be able to resume this year. You will remember that the celebration of the 75th Anniversary of Victory in Europe Day had to be cancelled last year. This was after months of planning and hard work by the Events Committee, and I thank them for this and for their pragmatic decision and positive approach to future events. Hopefully sometime this year we will be able to have a get together and celebrate buying our field.

In 2021 there was a rise of 4.99% Council tax for Cornwall Council. The Parish Council increased the precept from £16,000K to £20,000. The purchase of the Recreation Field in Hatt did not cause an increase in the Parish Council precept. The rent for the field was £2,500 per annum. The loan is £5,400 per annum. The Parish Council is able to make up the difference from the existing Parish Council reserves. The increase was in the main due to a £3,727.22 levy to pay for the Local Elections

in May 2021. Without the local elections the precept for the Parish Council and the budget would have remained about the same.

If the elections had been contested, the Parish Council would have had difficulty meeting this amount within our £16,000 operating budget. We believe that we would have been negligent if we hadn't budgeted for the possibility of an election. It now appears that we do not have an election this year. The £3,727.22 will now be "ring fenced" within the Parish Council's account. The funds will then be available to be utilised for the elections in 4-years time and will not form part of Parish Council reserves. The Parish Council will review the budget next year and hopefully we will be able to reduce the current and increased precept.

In 2021 the Parish Council carried out the tender process for the contract for ground maintenance and grass cutting in the parish. I was very pleased that Nick Brown from BMS Landscaping was awarded the contract until 2025. Nick maintains his commitment to our community, above and beyond his contracted hours, is always available for advice and is an invaluable part of our team.

I would like to also thank our Parish Clerk, Chris Cook, for everything that he does for the Parish Council and our community. He also consistently goes above and beyond his paid hours, is always available and is an integral part of the Parish Council team. We supported and encouraged Chris to develop his skill sets and I was pleased that his hard work resulted in him being awarded a Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA). Chris has completed a full list of governance policies and procedures for the Parish Council and continues to give us good advice on our finances.

The Parish Council listened to our residents' concerns about road safety and made a successful bid for traffic calming measures to be installed in Vollarads Lane (at no cost to us). The work on this should be completed in July this year. We have also been mindful of Botusfleming residents' worries about speeding and congestion on the narrow lanes going through the village. We have already engaged with CORMAC and are looking at possible solutions for this issue. As a result of our membership of the Cornwall Gateway Community Network Panel and their Highways Scheme we will benefit from Mobile Speed Activation Signs (MSAS) being placed at identified strategic speeding locations by CORMAC. The signs will be sited at agreed time intervals over the next 5 years.

With Cllr Malcolm Fletcher's continued advice and assistance, the Parish Council focussed on two principal initiatives to promote biodiversity this past year. Firstly, the Woodland Trust allocated us 104 free mixed species tree saplings. These were planted in March 2020 on a newly cleared stretch of the A388 verge north of Hatt Roundabout. A group of dedicated volunteers nursed them through the long drought of that spring and early summer by laborious watering. In the autumn, a further 40 saplings provided by residents were planted. All but a few of the trees are doing well.

Secondly, with the support of Cornwall Council we adopted their "Grow not Mow" policy for managing Hatt roundabout. This entails mowing the whole roundabout in March and September to promote the flowering and seeding of the native wildflowers there. Additional seeds donated by Cllr Mervyn Ellis, were sown in the autumn. To ensure safe crossing of the A388 for pedestrians, two 5-metre strips will be regularly mown across the roundabout to provide lines of sight. We also anticipate that new signage will be sited at Hatt Roundabout in 2021 to try and improve road safety.

The two initiatives undertaken to promote biodiversity mentioned above, also contribute to honouring the Parish Council's commitment to taking all possible measure to combat the Climate Emergency. In addition, we support a group of residents that formed Botusfleming and Hatt Emergency Response (BOTHER). We provided £500 earmarked funding to help with occasional costs, and act as the account holder for any funds they raise independently. We were able to facilitate BOTHER's use of an on-line survey to gauge local support for a walk/cycle way from Hatt to Carkeel. This demonstrated overwhelming support for the project, with 98% of responses being in favour. With the backing of the Parish Council, the group was then successful in obtaining grant funding from Cornwall Council to pay for a feasibility study by Sustrans. The results of this are expected soon.

We should never forget that all parish councillors are volunteers. They give up much of their spare time in an attempt to make things better for everyone. We are currently running one councillor light and I hope that we can shortly fill the vacancy and recruit another member that has the qualities of all those that currently serve on the Parish Council.

I would also like to thank Cllr Dave Willey for stepping up and carrying out the role of as chair for the Parish Council during my absence.

I would like to thank all my fellow councillors for their hard work, commitment, patience and good humour.

Finally, I send my best wishes and hope that all our residents remain safe and healthy.

Thank you.

David James Edwards

Chairman

Botus Fleming Parish Council