

# Symondsbury Parish Council

## SPRING 2025 NEWSLETTER

### Annual report 2024-25 from the Chair

#### Boundaries

Our boundaries changed last year as Bridport Town Council felt that the Foundry Lea housing development should come under their jurisdiction, along with other areas around Bridport. We had long discussions with Bridport as we are a rural Parish and the Foundry Lea development would take that away. However a small part of Foundry Lea remains in Symondsbury. Other parishes were merged with Bridport so we looked long and hard at what would be best for us and Bridport. They took over West Cliff, logical as they already controlled West Bay, they also took control of Pine View. We gained West Allington and part of Pymore and have welcomed them into Symondsbury. Our residential numbers have gone down overall. Our Precept has remained stable for the last five years or so, and is the same this year, but because we have less properties, our Parishioners are seeing an increase of 22.2% on the Council element of their tax, but this still remains the lowest in the Bridport Area.

#### Our Parish Clerk

Natalie Bealing is the Parish Clerk and doing an outstanding job. Natalie also keeps the Website and Facebook up to date, along with our finances, attending regular training days and of course keeping us Councillors in line. For any problems in the Parish Natalie is the first person to contact and she will relay the problem to the relevant Councillor.

#### Councillors

We are lucky in having a full contingent of enthusiastic Councillors and all have taken on roles to ensure the Parish Council runs smoothly and in the Parishioners' best interests. Please bear in mind that the Parish Council is non-Political and the role of Councillor is voluntary and unpaid.

All new Councillors co-opted last May attended their 'Councillor Essentials' sessions and had an induction from Natalie.

Cllrs Evans, Hartmann and Elwes attended a planning enforcement and appeals course, run by DAPTC. And Cllrs Hartmann and Elwes, alongside myself and the Clerk, attended the 'Future Planning Conference' in March, also run by DAPTC. Cllr Hamblett attended the Dorset Coast Forum in Weymouth. The Clerk has also attended two full-day conferences for Clerks.



#### Planning

We have a separate Planning Committee to discuss any applications that are in or around our Parish, and are lucky enough to have Councillor Hartmann, who has extensive knowledge of planning rules and regulations. When an application is received we usually do a site visit and talk to neighbours to get their views where we think necessary. We can only discuss what is on the application and not speculate on what it may or not be in the future. After discussion, either at a publicised separate planning meeting or, if there are only a couple of applications, at a full Parish meeting. The applicant is free to attend and talk about the plans and anyone opposed can air their objections. We then make a decision on whether to support or oppose the application and list our reasons, then forward them to Dorset Planners to be included when the application is discussed. We do get a little frustrated when our views and that of residents are disregarded by Dorset Planners, when we have the local knowledge and should be listened to.

#### Resilience

The Emergency Response Team is a group of volunteers who are positively

connected who can offer help and advice to their neighbours should a natural disaster arise. The volunteers are a first port of call and know who to contact to help and advise, or will contact the Clerk to make contact with the right department to get immediate help. Councillor Hamblett is currently overhauling our resilience plan so if you feel you could step up and be of help to your neighbours in an emergency then please make contact and add your details to our register of volunteers.

#### Lengthsman

The Lengthsman scheme involved us paying Bridport Council for 100 hours work per year from their ground staff to carry out tasks ie hedge cutting, weed clearing, unblocking drains etc as they had the right equipment to carry out the tasks. Unfortunately Bridport Town Council has found this uneconomical and have elected to price up jobs as we request them. Financially we have found this very expensive and are currently looking at alternatives.

#### Budgets

Our accounts are always open to inspection and a summary of the accounts are always open to view. We listen to any requests for financial help with projects within Symondsbury Parish and have helped with our Churches, Village halls and Symondsbury School and maintenance of defibrillators. We also donate to organisations like The Samaritans and The Citizens Advice Bureau which could benefit our Parishioners.

#### Allotments

We currently have two allotment sites, one at West Road at the rear of the Old London Inn, and a second - no longer within our Parish - at Pine View. Pine View now comes under Bridport Town Council but as we own the land the allotments are on, we elected to keep them when the boundaries changed. The allotments are now

being looked after by Councillor Bates aided by Natalie and after a lot of hard work by them, are having a total re-vamp, with the West Road allotments being reorganised and some neglected allotments being reclaimed and recultivated. We also hope to have a further allotment site at Foundry Lea as we have been

promised some land in the proportion that is still within Symondsbury.

### Full Council Meetings

Full Council meetings are the second Thursday of each month excluding August. Members of the Public are welcome to attend you will find the dates and venues on our website

and Parish notice boards. The job of a Councillor is totally voluntary, and we do occasionally get vacancies, so if you are interested in becoming a Councillor and helping in the community then please contact Natalie for more information.

*Cllr Steve Ralph*

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## Natural Flood Management and the Brit Valley Project: A Tale of Two Projects

In the Autumn Newsletter there was an article on the Brit Catchment Natural Flood Management Programme, a three-year scheme led by Dorset National Landscape and supported by West Dorset Wilding and Dorset Wildlife Trust, to collect data and build leaky dams and other nature-based interventions, with the aim of reducing the risk of flooding when there is too much rain, and keeping moisture in the soil when it doesn't rain enough. These measures, it is hoped, will also result in an improvement in habitat for wildlife, reduce sediment and improve water quality. Many of the sites where this



is taking place are in Symondsbury parish, and the first training session for the project's volunteer river monitors was held at the end February on a tributary stream on the Symondsbury Estate.

and farmer-led charity taking action to restore ecosystems and increase nature in West Dorset through rewilding and regenerative agriculture.

The Brit Valley Project is one of Defra's Landscape Recovery pilot schemes. Currently in its development phase, it is bringing together landowners, farmers and local communities to explore ways to improve nature, support sustainable farming, build the

local rural economy and strengthen connections between people, place, farming and nature.

There will be more news about Natural Flood Management and the Brit Valley Project over the coming months. In the meantime, if you're keen to find out more, head over to West Dorset Wilding's website.



The photograph above shows a group of trainee river monitors. In the foreground is one of the high tech devices that sends data about the water flowing in the stream every five seconds, day and night. The data collected is being collected and analysed by the University of Exeter and is already allowing a clearer picture of the flow of water through the catchment.

But that is less than half the story of what's happening. The Brit Valley Project is an even more ambitious, long-term landscape and nature recovery scheme, hosted by West Dorset Wilding, a landowner

*Trainees entering data using waterproof clipboards*



*Where the Simene joins the River Brit*



## Parish Resilience Plan

We have been updating the Parish Resilience Plan, making it fit for purpose in the second quarter of the 21st Century. The first big step was to ask Dorset Council for help, and they sent Nigel Osborne to address the Parish Council meeting last autumn, when we were introduced to the Dorset Risk Register, and advised to base the plan on household resilience.

The Risk Register is a list of 27 calamities that might befall us. The No1 risk is a prolonged nationwide failure of the National Grid. It's there as a result of its severity AND its likelihood. This is also why asteroid impact is not in the risk register, yet... In response, we have produced our own Risk Assessment (currently 16 pages) to focus attention on what can be done at parish level to prepare for the various scenarios.

The Resilience Plan is based on household resilience, which means taking common sense precautions suited to each home. It might mean keeping a torch handy. A leaflet on the subject – produced by Dorset Council – is on the parish website. And soon it is hoped that the Risk Assessment will appear on the website, at which point all parish residents will be able to add comments and suggestions to the Resilience Plan. It is work in progress, and is designed to be amended, as circumstances change.

The next level in the Plan is the Emergency Response Team (see schematic). There are 15 members of the team – people who spring into action when incidents occur. This is what has always happened in this community. Since the boundary

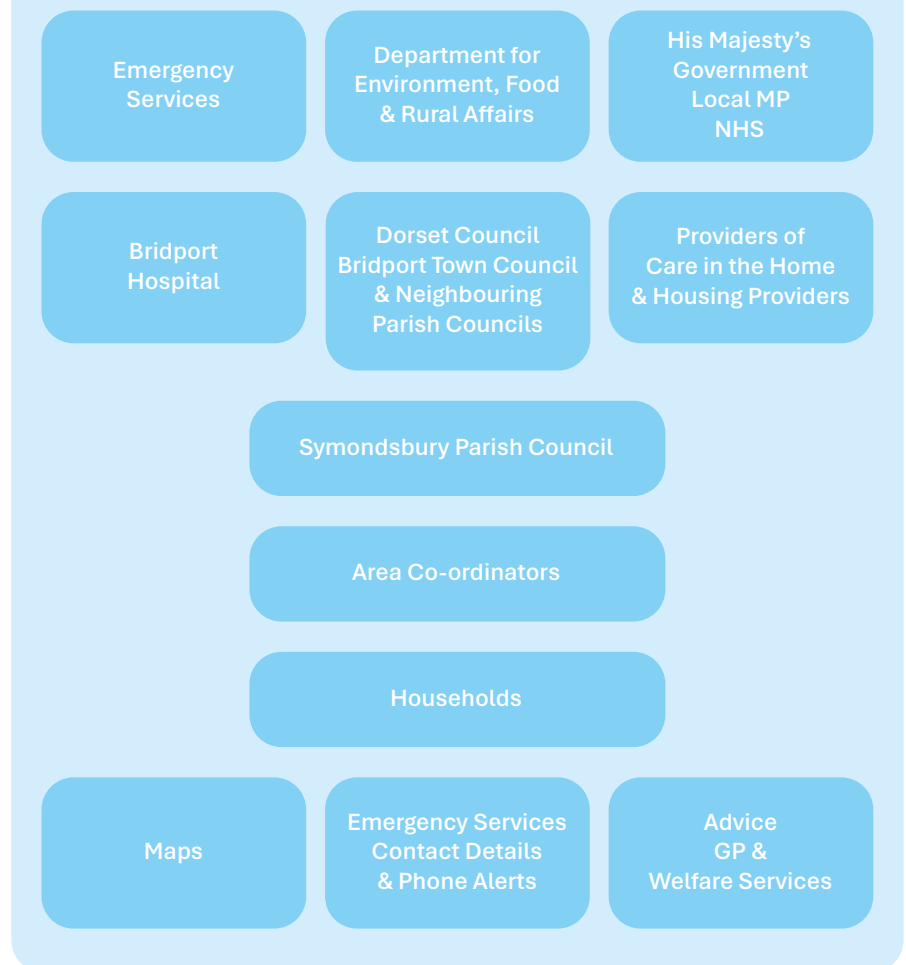
changes a few more team members have joined. Parish residents who would like to contribute to this effort, please contact the Parish Clerk.

The Resilience Plan is designed to start working without some central command telling it to. The role of the parish council is to co-ordinate with emergency services and government bodies in the event of a prolonged emergency.

Electricity is a crucial factor in our

response. We are planning to have hard copies of key contact details in case computers are down, and there is a suggestion for the Emergency Response Team team to have solar powered phone chargers if they don't already. We would like people to come forward and offer skills that would help in a prolonged emergency – electricians and cyber wizards welcome, along with all capable people with a willingness to help.

### Symondsbury Parish Resilience and Emergency Plan 2025



## Parish Exhibition(s)

Bridport Museum offers a co-curating service to parishes around the town. The aim is to stimulate community engagement by putting on an exhibition that tells the story of the place through artefacts, documents, maps and images from the Museum's archives, or from collections in the parish. This might be staged in the Museum itself or in a location, or locations in the parish. Or both.

In preliminary discussions it was thought that there should be at least two exhibitions – one about Eype, and one about the rest of the parish. But if you have other thoughts and ideas, nothing has been written in stone and we would love to hear from you. Do you have anything that you would like to loan to an exhibition? Or any stories to share? People who are interested should contact the Parish Clerk with a view to taking up this opportunity.

### Symondsbury Community Village Fete

Saturday 9th August  
2.00 – 5.00pm

All Welcome

## Foundry Lea

As many of you will have seen, the Foundry Lea development on the Western side of Bridport has begun. Based on land which was formerly part of Vearse Farm, it will consist of 760 homes of which around 35% will be classed as 'affordable'.

The developers are Barratts (including David Wilson Homes) and Bovis. For more detail look on the Foundry Lea website. Sadly, the regular Newsletter which was promised to the Symondsbury residents who live nearby has not been published since May 2024.

Over the winter the preparatory work on drainage and roads has been going on. The foundations for the show homes are underway. Under the legal agreement no homes can be occupied until the roundabout at Miles Cross is completed. Work was due to start in October 2024 but the developers are still awaiting final approval from national Highways and Dorset Council. The site has attracted publicity over the winter when the local newspapers carried photographs of severe flooding on site.

Symondsbury Parish Council has a representative on the Foundry Lea

Working Group. The membership is made up of representatives of the developers, local councils and organisations. It allows us to raise any concerns residents of SPC might have.

Some of the houses will fall into SPC territory. We have a particular interest in the land that has been allocated for allotments and have been in communication with the developers about planning for a new set of SPC allotments.

There are currently no plans available for the employment land which was the other part of the planning application.

## Leaf Cycle

The idea is to turn nuisance leaves into leaf mould. It's already being done in County Meath in the Irish Republic. We are very happy to copy their model. 'Cages' made of stiff wire are placed at strategic locations where leaves gather in the autumn and people put the leaves in the cages. The leaves rot down over the winter and by early summer they are ready to be used as a mulch, and if they overwinter twice, you have good compost. Then people come and take this stuff to their gardens or allotments or window box, and 'Bob's

your Uncle'.

The churchwardens want two cages. There will be four at least on the sports field in Duck Street. And Emma Roberts, the Head of Symondsbury School, is having four for the school playground. They will be very educational.

If you can think of any good locations where leaves gather near you, and would like to discuss if a cage or two would be helpful, please get in touch. And if you



*Photo credit: B Carry, Meath Co Council*

would like to get involved making the cages, could you contact the Parish Clerk?

## Symondsbury Parish Council Allotments – Applications Welcome!

Symondsbury Parish Council manages two sets of allotments. The first is at Pine View on the western outskirts of Bridport whilst the second is just off the A35 on West Road. We are fortunate to have an excellent set of plot holders who work together to maintain the plots. Our allotment holders are able to join the Bridport Allotment Society

We currently have a couple of vacancies. If you are interested in applying for an allotment, please contact the clerk@symondsbury-pc.gov.uk We will arrange a preliminary visit with a Councillor.



*Image by Nippelsn from Pixabay*