

Beneath the Vale

Published on behalf of the Upper Marshwood Vale Parish Council

Summer 2017: Issue 24



Bottle Inn, Marshwood, re-opens

Marshwood's village pub has reopened and is now serving food as well as drinks.

The Bottle Inn reopened on 24 June with the owners, Michael and Pauline Brookes, behind the bar. The Brookes have returned after many years in Australia, where their hospitality businesses included a restaurant and a motel in Queensland.

'We're really excited,' said Pauline. Michael added: 'We want The Bottle to be the hub of the community as well as a popular

destination for people further away.' The Brookes are hoping to start darts and skittles teams for local players and host events such as wedding receptions. They plan to hold the pub's famous nettle eating contest at the end of July.

Meanwhile, one of our other parish pubs, The New Inn at Stoke Abbott, has won a Taste of the West Gold award for its food. Judges said it was 'a cosy and friendly pub with a friendly and welcoming landlady serving good home-cooked pub food.'

Marshwood, Stoke Abbott, Pilsdon and Bettiscombe



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Neighbourhood plan asks: 'Do we want more housing?'

A little before Christmas we sent a NP questionnaire to every household in the combined parishes. We sent out 400 questionnaires in total, some of them to homes just over the parish boundary and others to addresses within the parishes but with no corresponding names on the electoral register. By February we had received 101 replies, a response rate of 34% of the 300 on the electoral register (or 25% of the 400 total).

The main findings were as follows:

- Sparse population of the area with 0.2 people per hectare. The UK national average is 3.7 people.
- An older population who own their own homes. More than half are retired.
- High car dependency.
- High level of vacant homes (23%). The figure is 10% across West Dorset as a whole.
- High level of self-employment (45%).
- Most people (80%) have lived here for more than 10 years.

Housing a key issue

Housing is a big issue with views on both sides: 56% of people would like to see, over the next 15 years, more than the eight new

houses created in the parishes. However 28% said they would prefer fewer than eight and 16% no more housing at all. When asked what type of homes would be best, the majority favoured the development of existing buildings through conversions, extensions or the removal of agricultural occupancy conditions.

Landowners were invited to put forward land for development and there were three responses. One offered several redundant traditional and modern buildings and flats in Pilsdon/Bettiscombe and suggested 50-80 houses over the next 15 years. The second offered farmland in Bettiscombe, as a 'perfect area to increase population of the hamlet', suggesting 50 new homes over the next 15 years. The third proposed development of land previously used for chicken sheds at the rear of a farm in Marshwood.

None of these large-scale housing proposals are likely to go ahead. According to David Hitchcock, the chairman of the Marshwood Community Land Trust, anyone who wants to build new houses would have to first prove that there is a demand. Judging by the current picture, he can't see that future demand would cover more than a few houses, perhaps one or two every few years, and that this demand will need to be phased

over the next 15-20 years. In addition, our parishes are not obliged by West Dorset District Council's Local Plan to create any new housing unless we want to. Larger places such as Bridport will be required to build new homes, but not our parishes, which are considered open countryside in planning terms.

Transport

Almost everyone drives, the majority of us once a day. There wasn't much support for car sharing or electric charging points, probably because we are such a scattered community with many isolated homes. There was strong support for providing more passing places on our narrow lanes, but not for general road widening.

Communications

We asked if people wanted a better mobile signal for phone and data calls and whether

they would be prepared to have a mast near them. The response showed a high demand for a better mobile signal and a split between those willing to consider a mast with 73% of the responses saying 'yes' (37%) and 'maybe' (35%) and 27% 'no'. There were two comments suggesting using church towers for mobile masts.

Nearly 90% of us use the internet for shopping and banking, 75% for emails, video calls and other ways to communicate and 60% for home working.

Energy

The highest support was for small-scale renewable energy alternatives with very little support for large-scale types such as wind turbines or solar farms. More than 70% said they supported solar panels on farm or commercial buildings. Eight comments were provided, suggesting we include ground and air source heat pumps as well as biogas.



Twenty-two people attended the public meeting in Marshwood church on 6 May.

Public meetings in Stoke Abbott and Marshwood hear questionnaire results



Eighteen people attended the public meeting in Stoke Abbott village hall on 3 June. There was much discussion about whether there is a need for new houses in the parish, especially for young families.

In May and June we held two public meetings. The first meeting was at Marshwood church on 6 May and the second at Stoke Abbott village hall on 3 June. (Minutes of these meetings are on the NP website www.uppermarshwoodvale.org/home/neighbourhood-plan.)

At those meetings we presented:

- A progress review prepared by our NP consultant outlining our situation and the likely timetable to develop our plan, this together with a more detailed document.
- A report on the NP questionnaire returns, a list of people's comments

on each question and a table of the benefits and challenges people saw of living here.

- Our proposed 'vision and goals'.

All of these documents are available on the website and copies can be collected at Marshwood shop and the pub in Stoke Abbott. At both meetings we received strong public support to continue our steering committee's work towards producing a first draft of the NP document and we will be reporting on our progress as we go along. You can still add your views by filling out a NP questionnaire, this is available on the NP website, or by providing us with your comments via post or email to the contacts listed on page 15 of this magazine.

Neighbourhood Plan: Vision & Goals

What's your view? After analysing the questionnaires and hearing people's views at the public meetings, we have prepared the following 'vision and goals' document. But this is only a draft – please tell us what you think is important.

VISION

Housing: The need for some housing growth at a rate that reflects local needs and the rural nature of the area.

Where possible, we wish to provide for younger people with children, as well as older people needing to downsize.

Environment: To protect the landscape and features that contribute to the area's unique character, the enjoyment of the area in terms of countryside access and views, the general tranquility of the area and its dark skies.

The design of buildings and settlements is important, contributing to the area's character.

Economy: Support home working, rural workshops and small-scale tourism to strengthen the local economy and provide further job opportunities.

Community: Support a range of community facilities that can be sustained given the sparsity of the local population.

GOALS

Housing. Need more affordable homes. (In practice this can be a mixture of solutions: both private and housing association rented, shared ownership, self-build, change and/or removal of AOCs where appropriate.)

Community facilities. Existing facilities need to be protected and new facilities need to be provided. Existing facilities include pubs, Marshwood shop and post office, halls, churches, garage, the Millennium Woodland and Marshwood Primary School. New facilities needed include play areas, a community shop in Stoke Abbott, sewage treatment works in Marshwood and toilets in Marshwood church.

Traffic. Need a safe walking route to school in Marshwood, better parking in Stoke Abbott (possibly a car park), more passing places in the lanes.

Environment: Protect the ecology of the natural environment and improve access to the network of rights of way.

Business: support for converting buildings into workspaces or tourist facilities.

What next and how long will it take?

Now – Agree our vision and goals
Autumn and winter – Research and gather information. Consult on options.
Spring and summer 2018 – Draft

the plan, consult and finalise.
Autumn 2018 – Send plan to WDDC for examination.
Winter 2018 – Referendum.
End of 2018 – Plan adopted.



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UMV Parish Council meetings

The Parish Meeting was held on 18 May in Bettiscombe Village Hall, immediately followed by the Annual Meeting

Eight of the 12 parish councillors attended plus six members of the public. Vice-chairman, Cllr Eddie Rowe, acted as chairman as Cllr Matthew Bowditch was away on holiday.

In his report, Cllr Rowe revealed that there are 584 residents and 262 households in the combined parishes, making 49 people per councillor. Cllr Rowe thanked David Hitchcock and the CLT for their work and Charles Somers for his dedication to

superfast broadband and the neighbourhood plan.

Figures show that most of council's precept (the money it raises through the council tax) is spent on the lengthsman, Stephen Lee. He clears ditches and drains, deals with roadside storage bins and looks after public places.

Cllr Matthew Bowditch was re-elected chairman in his absence, with Cllr Eddie Rowe as vice-chairman. Cllrs Christopher Rabbetts and Cassian Gray were nominated as rights of way representatives. The meetings ended after little more than an hour.

Superfast broadband here at last! (Well, it is for *most* of us)

The wait is over at last for most houses in the combined parishes – superfast broadband is now available.

Since early June, parts of the new superfast broadband fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) networks (Hawkchurch and Broadwindsor numbers) have been activated across a large part of the Upper Marshwood Vale area, initially in Marshwood and Pilsdon and then in Bettiscombe and the western parts of Stoke Abbott (Broadwindsor numbers).

The eastern end of Stoke Abbott (Beaminster numbers) already has available a fibre-to-the-cabinet (FTTC) broadband solution and a similar solution is under consideration for the part of Marshwood parish adjacent to Whitchurch (Chideock numbers).

Check if your address is ready

Dorset County Council (DCC) has provided us with a full list of premises where FTTP service is now available and we are sending out FTTP flyers to each of those together with this magazine. There remain a few areas not yet FTTP-ready (the Birdsmoorgate end of Marshwood and other areas) but these should be completed by the end of July or August once technical issues have been resolved (e.g. rotted telegraph poles in need of replacement with road closures having to be scheduled)

To confirm that you are able to place a FTTP order please check on the BT Openreach

web-site – www.homeandwork.openreach.co.uk/when-can-i-get-fibre.aspx – to see if your postcode and premises are indicated as FTTP ‘ready for service’ (it should say ‘Ultrafast accepting orders’). If so, you can check with your existing service provider (ISP) to see if they are ready to offer you an upgrade to FTTP service; if not, these other ISPs will: BT, Plusnet, TalkTalk (Fleur), Andrew & Arnold and Zen.

Another website – www.dslchecker.bt.com – allows you check FTTP availability by phone number (and should show, in the top line, ‘WBC FTTP – up to 330 Mbps – FTTP available’) and identifies any technical issues that may affect a FTTP connection to your premises (e.g. trees in the way); normally it should read ‘our FTTP records show: Single Dwelling Unit, Residential, OH feed with no anticipated issues’.

We have heard from DCC that in other FTTP areas, local issues have only been uncovered once householders actually placed an order, and naturally a home that is at the side of the highway is much easier to connect than one down a very long private driveway. So we can anticipate some of these issues arising in the Marshwood Vale area and DCC has promised to help residents work through these where they arise; you can contact them directly via www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/broadband/contact

Charles Somers

Your local sweep: Glyn Yorke

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Rural bus service updates

Routes 14 and 688, Thorncombe/Marshwood to Chard/Axminster, every Thursday

Passenger numbers on these routes have fluctuated more than in 2015-16, with some weeks being at or below eight passengers, or 40-50% loading. They do tend to bounce back to close to normal levels, but not quite as high as the previous two years, being between 11 and 13 passengers or 70% to 80% loading.

PlusBus, Marshwood/Thorncombe/Catherston Lewiston to Bridport, every Wednesday

Passenger numbers have again fluctuated, with a similar picture to the 14/688, but there have been weeks where the total passenger numbers have been close to the eight passengers or 50% loading. Again the numbers do bounce back and can on the odd week, reach 15 total passengers or 90% total loading, over the two bus runs.

Application for a Community Transport Grant, from Dorset County Council

This was sent off in November last year, asking for matched funding of £1,060.00,

for our total needed for the 2016-17 financial year, in order to pay the revenue shortfall. We were awarded this money in full, and were able to pay Dorset Community Transport a total of £2,000.00. (The rest of the matched funding was used to cover admin costs, for our fundraising events).

Funding and fundraising for the financial year 2017-18

Our grand total at the moment is £981.50. Thorncombe Parish Council has very kindly given £500 from the Parish precept. Devon County Council will continue to subsidise the route 688. Further collection jars have been in place at Thorncombe Sports and Social Club and Perry Street Social Club, and with the help of a private donation, raised a total of £44.50. The Breakfast Club and Raffle, held in Thorncombe Village Hall in March, raised a total of £297.50.

There will be a quiz night at Thorncombe Sports and Social Club on 8 September 2017, plus a coffee morning and raffle at Thorncombe Village Hall on 4 November.

Cllr. David Marsh (on behalf of Thorncombe Parish Council and Thorncombe Bus Users and Supporters)

Looking ahead: Parish Council meeting dates

Next parish council meetings are:

20 July, 21 September, 16

November, 14 December (precept setting.) All meetings at 7.30pm in

Bettiscombe Village Hall. See www.uppermarshwoodcouncil.org for minutes.

Deadline for the Autumn issue of Beneath The Vale is 30 September for publication in October.

Recipe: Pimms Jelly

By Joy McClellan

This seasonal recipe is just right for *al fresco* summer parties. Serves six.

Ingredients:

1 teaspoon sunflower oil
4 sheets of leaf gelatine
400ml lemonade
4 tablespoons of Pimms
Juice of half a lime
400g strawberries, hulled and sliced
5cm cucumber, peeled and thinly sliced
10 small mint leaves

Method:

Lightly oil a jelly mould. Soak the gelatine in cold water until soft.

Gently warm the lemonade. Remove from heat and add Pimms and lime juice.

Lift gelatine from water and add to lemonade mixture. Put strawberries and cucumber in mould, leaving some for decoration.

Pour mixture over and set in fridge for at least 4 hours, preferably overnight. Remove from mould and add decorations. Serve.

Shave Cross Mini-Marathon dates

30 July: Coffee morning and bring-and-buy sale at Broad Orchard Farm, 11am.

4 August: Car treasure hunt.

5 August: Mini-Marathon.

6 August: Dog show.

For more information, see the Facebook page @ShavesCrossMarathon.

Stephen Lee
Landscape Gardening
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Postie Pete retires after 15 years

One of the most visible personalities in and around Marshwood is no longer seen in the village. A few weeks ago, Pete Dew decided that at 65, he could and should retire from being our postman.

Born in the old Bridport hospital to parents who had been evacuated to the area, he has lived in the town for his whole life, going to school at Colfox. His first job as an engineering apprentice was as a tool and die maker, other similar jobs followed before the early 80s when his firm closed down and Pete moved into insurance with United Friendly. By now he had met (at the Bull) and married Lin. They went on to have two sons, Simon and Dan.

The next third of his life passed pleasantly enough as an insurance agent handling and assessing claims. He enjoyed this work especially dealing with the public. But the second third of his working life came to a close when he was asked to move to London but chose not to. Instead he was tipped off that there was a job as temporary postman, so he promptly applied. After a period of 'town rounds', his first permanent round was based in Chideock where a Post Office van would drop off him, his post and his bike and collect him when he phoned in from a call box.

Then the Marshwood round – 'Best round out of Bridport office' – became available. It covers Marshwood Village, Shave Cross, Pilsdon, Bettiscombe, Whitchurch, Laverstock, Blackney; over 40 miles a day. Not surprisingly, this was just the round for



Pete Dew and son Simon at home in Bridport.

Pete. He enjoyed the wide-open area, great distance to community facilities and 'close sense of community.'

Pete owns a car but cycled to work before he would load up his regular van. He certainly was in two minds about his retirement. Lin still works at an arts and craft shop in Bridport but household duties called – sorting out the garage, clearing the gutters, and they would like to travel more.

For over 30 years Lin and Pete ran Bridport House Club. Supported by the vicar of St Mary's in South Street. To his regret he could not find any one to take on the responsibility so the club closed its doors. Pete sums up his Marshwood years simply: 'I felt appreciated.' How very true.

Ali Cameron

Bottle Inn 16th Century Freehouse



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Marshwood Community Land Trust news



The signpost renovation in Turners Lane, Marshwood, is now complete at a total cost of £253. David Hitchcock provided the labour needed for free. Thanks are also due to Howard Strawbridge for preparing the oak timber arms in his workshop, a professional job well done.

Following the suggestion made at the AGM that a toilet and kitchenette could be installed in Marshwood church, I arranged a meeting attended by the Rev. Stephen Skinner, Luke Owen, head teacher of Marshwood Primary School, the school chair of governors, the church architect and CLT representatives. Phillip Chapman kindly prepared a costing of the work involved.

The idea, however, did not get approval from the church members and the Acorn Academy, which runs the school, said the idea would not be a top priority in their budgeting. The suggestion remains on the

table and in the meantime, the CLT Board agreed a donation of £200 for church funds towards repairs to the windows.

Blackdown Hall has allowed the CLT use of the hall for meetings without charge and so we agreed to donate £150 towards a baby changing unit for the hall as a thank you. Several small children from the area attend the pre-school at Whitchurch, who requested help in erecting a gate to keep the children safe. This we did and the total cost of materials and labour was £590.

To save tax being payable on the balance in hand a forward payment was made towards the renovation of the signpost at the bottom

of Mutton Street, which will be the next to be tackled. I can assure you all that it does take many hours of work cleaning, painting, screwing on the letters and re-erecting so if anyone feels they would like to become involved please let me know.

We arranged a successful day-long First Aid course, with appropriate certification. Twenty-two people took part at a cost to the CLT of £810. This means there

are now people living locally with First Aid knowledge who could help in the community if needed.

All these projects were funded from the annual ground rent at Bramblehays. The next board meeting will be in September when we will consider future plans to help.

**David Hitchcock, Chairman,
Marshwood Community Land Trust**



CLT member and parish councillor Ali Edwards practises CPR during the First Aid day.

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee: Members

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	somers984@btinternet.com	
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Members	Jacqui Sewell, West Dorset District Council councillor	
	David Hitchcock, chairman of Marshwood CLT	
	Ali Cameron, UMV parish councillor	
	Ali Edwards, UMV parish councillor	
	David French	
	Sara Hudston, Editor, <i>Beneath the Vale</i>	

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Community Land Trust website: www.marshwoodclt.org.uk

Facebook Page: Marshwood CLT

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