Beneath the Vale Published on behalf of the Upper Marshwood Vale Parish Council

Autumn 2017: Issue 25



Colin and Sandra Hutchings outside Golden Cap View with some of the piles of paperwork from their application.

Agricultural tie lifted by council

The agricultural tie on a bungalow in Marshwood has been lifted. Golden Cap View at Harmshay is believed to be the only home West Dorset to have agricultural occupancy condition (AOC) formally lifted through a planning application.

The bungalow stood empty for some considerable time while the application was contested by planning officers. Owners Sandra and Colin Hutchings were unable to find a tenant who matched the exacting requirements of the tie. Now the tie has been lifted, they have let it to a family with children, adding to pupil numbers at Marshwood School.

Local district councillor Jacqui Sewell supported the application to have the AOC lifted. She said: 'The unique circumstances of this particular property meant that the AOC made no sense, the bungalow only having a domestic sized garden, not located on a working farm and too far from other farms to provide suitable accommodation for agricultural working elsewhere.

'I'm glad that rather than standing empty, it now provides a much needed family home in the village. It is fantastic to hear children playing in the garden once more.'



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Village saddened by loss of David Hitchcock, chairman of Marshwood CLT



It was with great regret that Marshwood Community Land Trust announced the death of chairman David Hitchcock after a short illness. The ever-popular, yet firm, leader turned around the CLT's fortunes and by sheer determination helped Hastoe create the new homes that so enhance Marshwood.

This was his second claim to fame. It was as a leading plant grower in his Marshwood greenhouses that he first found popularity and learned his committee skills. (*Beneath the Vale* plans to run a fuller article about his life in our January issue.)

Taking over the chair of the CLT at a bad time when a schism threatened the very existence of that organisation, it was by virtue of David's depth of integrity and his hard work that, problem by problem, he was able to dig into the background and to determine the real facts of each situation. Slowly and patiently, he rebuilt the trust that the CLT enjoys today. He will be much missed by CLT members, home occupiers and the whole village of Marshwood.

Steve Watson, affordable housing adviser at Wessex Community Land Trust Project said: 'We only knew David for a short time but his leadership, sound judgement, good humour and hospitality were inspirational for us and certainly instrumental in the success of the Marshwood CLT project. Sad news indeed.'

Alison Ward, social enterprise advisor at Wessex Community Housing Project, added: 'What a loss for David's family, friends, the community of Marshwood, and us all.'

A service of thanksgiving was held on 14 October at the Church of St John the Baptist in Hawkchurch.

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A scene from Dunkirk. (Image: Melinda Sue Gordon. © 2017 Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.)

Cinema wars - the 'goodies' win

The Plaza, situated bang in the middle of Dorchester on Trinity Street, has long been a popular venue for cinema goers. The advent of that hymn to the beauties of Weymouth, the film Dunkirk, has shown up starkly a recent trend. Audiences queue to get into the Plaza, while only a few bother to go to see the same film at the local Odeon just round the corner.*

Since the temporary demise of the Regent at Lyme Regis, film aficionados have been poorly served and many prefer to go to Dorchester where two cinemas now vie for paying customers. But while one is thriving, the Odeon, close-by in Dorchester's new Brewery Square development, suffers poor

audiences, apparently disappointing their national cinema chain backers. On the other hand, the Plaza is running extra showings with only few seats available at each session.

Part of the problem is the pricing of tickets. To watch *Dunkirk* will cost you £5.50 at the Odeon while the same performance on the same day will set you back just £2.50 should you choose the Plaza (£3.50 at weekends)

Another factor is the ambience for the audiences and the quality of the seating in particular. With the recent upgrade and improvements, the Plaza seating is both comfortable and legroom spacious, allowing newcomers to reach their seats without Continued on page 6

Safety fears as Marshwoood school bus service withdrawn

County council cuts to bus service subsidies have led to Marshwood school losing its mini-bus service. Parents and school staff are unhappy with the change, which they say raises concerns about safety and environmental impact.

'Safety is the main issue,' says Luke Owen, head of Marshwood C.E. Primary Academy. 'The withdrawal of the bus service means more traffic outside the school and on routes nearby. We are on a busy road where speeding is an issue, and on a junction with no real parking. We can't use the school field if it is too wet, as it often is. Parents have been extremely helpful by staging their arrivals and car sharing as much as possible, but it's still a concern.'

Last year there were five families (11 children) on the school bus, while two children (one family) arrived by taxi. This year figures are down to three families and four children in one taxi. These four children are the ones who still qualify for free transport to school. Mr Owen added: 'A couple of the children from last year have gone onto Woodroffe, but two families who used the bus last year have lost their places, and this means that five children are having to be driven in on a daily basis, who otherwise would have used the bus."

One of those parents is Helen Roberts from Whitchurch Canonicorum. She said: 'We're in the catchment for Charmouth primary



but wanted to send the children to a church school. I went to Marshwood school, my grandparents are buried in the churchyard – it's our local school.'

She was paying for seats on the bus for her son and younger daughter, but at the beginning of this term she was told to make alternative arrangements.

'The problem is the way the county council have changed the rules again and again without giving us any choice. I understand why they've done what they've done in terms of cost-cutting, but you've got to look at the safety issue and the environmental impact to measure the true cost. Safety has always been a problem and this makes it worse.'

The changes have had an impact on some parents' jobs. Dropping children off in the morning and then collecting them in the afternoon affects their work times. Helen has been able to juggle her hours and share lifts with others, but she has still lost some working hours. She also complained about the abscence of consultation by the council.

Continued from page 4

causing other cinemagoers the usual chaos. Oft renamed by local audiences, the 'Odious' is modern and reasonably comfortable but in no way outstanding.

But the real reason is far more fundamental and is a cause for celebration even as far away as Marshwood. Picturedrome Cinemas, who own a small, largely seaside chain, publish a mission statement that claims 'the pricing of tickets is kept as low as possible to make it accessible for our patrons.' Such claims are rarely carried out in practice, yet a small chain is succeeding in beating off the huge national chain now owned by AMC who claim to be the world's largest movie exhibition company.

From the art-deco building itself, to the traditional ticket dispensed by a real person: the original ceiling lights now restored and in use, to the latest sound system, the Plaza's owners seem to have tapped into a seam of cineastes who respect traditional values and support those who have for many years provided the only cinema in town.

Opening in 1933 to show *King Kong* on a single screen, the Plaza's main screen is the biggest one in Dorset. World cinema can be seen here since the Dorchester Film Society holds showings several times a year. One highlight of 2005 for the Plaza was the world premiere of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

Picturedrome Electric Theatre Company now own the freehold of the premises and have spent over £1M on their Dorchester site. They plan to continue to show the world's big screen blockbusters on up to four screens (one more than the opposition) and to relay live entertainment such as ballet, concerts, opera and plays.

In return, those in the know from West Dorset are busy supporting their independent cinema and ignoring the far pricier Odeon just down the road.

* In the film Mark Rylance plays the owner of a 'little ship' that eventually returns to Weymouth.

Ali Cameron

Neighbourhood Plan latest progress

After holding two public meetings at Marshwood and Stoke Abbott we have reviewed the NP schedule and provided a detailed timing to apply for further funding.

We will hold a meeting in October with West Dorset District Council (WDDC) to discuss our progress and how to proceed towards writing a first draft. Before the plan can be drafted, we need to develop our aims and objectives. This may lead to further public consultation. Following on

from that, we will conduct a formal 'callfor-sites' to see what land may be available in our parishes for small-scale housing or business development.

By around mid to late 2018 we should have completed a draft of our NP for public presentation before submitting it to WDDC to begin the formal process leading to examination by the government examiner and a referendum.

Charles Somers

Parish council meeting: July

20 July, Bettiscombe Village Hall

Cllr Eddie Rowe took the chair on this occasion as Cllr Matthew Bowditch was away on holiday. Five members of the public attended, four of them from Stoke Abbott.

During the democratic period, David French from Stoke Abbott spoke to say he was 'concerned about the state of affairs at Willow Farm.'

He added: 'This is a subject that has been going on in the village for a long time.' Mr French compared the way district council planners had dealt quickly with an issue over a thatched porch, to their long apparent inaction over the more substantial development at Willow Farm.

'We're entitled to look to the district council for action on issues of this kind,' he said and added that he hoped the parish council could encourage the district council to act.

Tommy Gibbs, owner of Willow Farm, spoke next. He said: "I'm here to defend myself as it's been a witch hunt for the last 10 years.' He added: 'At the end of the day I go out of my way to help people who've been chucked out their homes.'

He said he had a meeting with district planning officers and that he was having a bat survey as there were bats in the building. Mark Roberts, district councillor for Stoke Abbott, told the meeting he had requested an update on Willow Farm from West Dorset District Council and had received 'zero response'.

After briefly discussing the new data protection policy and council finances, the clerk, John Vanderwolfe, invited county councillor Daryl Turner to give his report.

Cllr Turner said that the timescale was now too short for Dorset's councils to be merged in 2019, even if they got a decision from the government in September. [Editor's note: September passed without a decision.] That meant that the councils will not achieve the cost savings predicted for that period. These savings were predicted to be £20M a year, with a one off cost of £20M in the first year.

The savings would be mostly in senior staff salaries, for example by having one chief executive rather than six. There were also a lot of buildings that might be sold.

Cllr Turner warned that despite the scale of potential savings, there were still spiralling costs, especially in social care. He said West Dorset has the highest number of over-65s in the UK. Children's services are also difficult to run and a shortage of foster carers means lots of children have to be placed outside the county.

After considering the latest planning applications the council discussed the lack of safety barriers on the road bend into Marshwood from Lamberts Castle.

The council then voted to exclude the press and public before debating Willow Farm. This was due to the confidential nature of the business to be considered.

Parish council meeting: September

21 September, Bettiscombe Village Hall

An extended agenda seemed to indicate that this would be a drawn out meeting, so with Eddie Rowe in the chair, a prompt start got the meeting under way.

No one from the five-strong audience chose to speak democratically, so our clerk, John Vanderwolfe, discussed the finances, pointing out that he had heavy payments due to our lengthsman Steve Lee becoming liable for VAT. With payments of nearly £5,000 going out, the council's account balance had sunk to £265 and this took into consideration the contributions of funds from *Beneath the Vale* advertisers. However, the payment of precept funds was expected soon to restore the parish bank account.

With three senior councillors present, county councillor Daryl Turner mentioned the changes in the school bus services. Parish councillor Jane Gillingham pointed out that with these changes full-sized double-decked buses were now asked to go down narrow lanes causing chaos and delaying the arrival at schools for many youngsters. Jane told of some that could not get around corners and had to use children to help the driver reverse and manoeuvre in order to get through.

Cllr Ali Cameron enquired if any council officers had checked to see if these behemoths could transit the routes. Cllr Turner blamed the teething problems on the bus company who had contracted to run these routes and would not accept any responsibility for the county council's part.

With no fewer than five planning applications, two turned out to be straightforward and were approved. The Old Bakery in Marshwood, however, did cause some problems, due to the owner's wish to create a total of four dwellings on a restricted area of land. One councillor questioned where the six cars associated with such usage would be parked when the present owner parks on the main road.

A similar concern was apparent regarding change of use to an animal sanctuary for a property at Templemans Ash, just in Broadwindsor parish. The owner, who spoke at the meeting, keeps 130 dogs on the site. But with limited information from the application, councillors decided to ask for an environmental impact assessment from the applicant before giving a recommendation.

The council supported the removal of a condition on The Reading Room at Stoke Abbott in order that it could be occupied full-time. Councillors spoke against having too many holiday dwellings in their community.

John Vanderwolfe was asked to communicate the council's dismay on the result of the Chideock bypass referendum and to reject any move northwards of such a road. It was conceded that a Chideock bypass will never be built in these difficult financial times but the clerk will still inform MP Sir Oliver Letwin and Highways England of the council's disapproval.

Date of next meeting 7.30 pm, 16 November at Bettiscombe Village Hall, All welcome. Your local sweep: Glyn Yorke

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Rural bus service updates

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

Passenger numbers on these routes have remained constant.

PlusBus, Marshwood/Thorncombe/ Catherston Leweston to Bridport, every Wednesday:

Passenger numbers have increased slightly, since the previous article, possibly due to the uncertainty around the #40 Service, (Bridport-Yeovil and return), which serves Broadwindsor and is therefore on the route of the Wednesday PlusBus to Bridport.

Retendering for the primary school transport contracts, in West Dorset:

Dorset Community Transport did not win the tender for Marshwood primary school. However, DCT, has confirmed that they will be able to continue all three of our bus services in the Marshwood Vale for the foreseeable future.

Second application for a Community Transport Grant, from Dorset County Council:

We are now raising funds in order to apply for the second part of the total of £2,000.

Fund raising for the revenue shortfall for the financial year 2017-18:

Our grand total at the moment is f,1,241. These funds are held by Thorncombe Parish Council and separately identified as 'Earmarked Funds', for the rural buses, (as previously). Our total was recently topped up by two very generous donations from Thorncombe parishioners, plus a successful

guiz night and raffle, held at Thorncombe Sports and Social Club. We are once again, having a coffee morning, craft fair and raffle, in Thorncombe Village Hall, on Saturday 4 November between 10am and 12.30pm.

Further thoughts:

My wife, Mary and I are members of the Advisory Group (AG) of WATAG, (Western Area Transport Action Group). We attend meetings monthly for the AG members in Mountfield, Bridport and every two months, general meetings in Bridport W.I. Hall, at which all are welcome.

Our general meeting on 28 September was well attended, with speakers from Dorset Travel, Bridport Town Council, and managers from First Wessex and Damory bus companies.

There have been major changes to the X series bus services, from First Wessex, in particular the winter timetables, which show some quite drastic reductions in service. It is therefore becoming more difficult to plan a timely journey between Dorchester, Bridport, Lyme Regis, Axminster and Exeter.

Even more worrying, the buses are not now connecting with the trains, without substantial waiting time in many cases, both at Dorchester South and Axminster stations. There was a big presence of 40 bus users, understandably angry at the way in which this inter-urban service has been chopped and changed. One of the main concerns is the stopping of the Saturday service and the possibility of the loss of buses going

into Broadwindsor and Netherbury, plus Bridport Hospital. This, plus the changes to the timetable, will affect people trying to get to work and returning home, who work in Yeovil, Crewkerne or Bridport.

This has all come about by the deregistration of the 40 bus route by Damory at the end of May, 2017. This gave 56 days notice, before the withdrawal of the service, i.e. end of July 2017. Dorset County Council, however, stepped in on a temporary basis and now First Wessex have put together a service from Monday to Friday only, in and around the secondary school contracts they have won, in the Bride Valley and Marshwood Vale.

Due to these constraints, there had to be a reduction in the frequency of the service, from First Wessex and this has led to anger and concern.

We are, when you consider the above situation, and other areas where other services have gone completely, lucky that our weekly buses are continuing as normal. That said, since we are relying on fund raising, if anyone feels they can help with ideas or indeed with fund raising activities in other areas, served by the our buses, then we would be more than happy to hear from them. Our telephone number 01-460-30139, mobile 07967-325803. Or e-mail dmarshdavid@aol.com

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

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Superfast broadband - last bits

Pilsdon and Stoke Abbott have been connected over the last few months to Superfast Broadband via fibre-to-thepremises (FTTP). This has resulted in a remarkable improvement to broadband speeds, allowing for the use of multiple broadband home devices and easy TV programme streaming. For those who haven't yet upgraded to FTTP we can thoroughly recommend it; so get connected!

A few areas are yet to be completed, in particular properties near Birdsmoorgate, the houses at Bramblehav and some properties in the Shave Cross area. The latest information on these is that BT Openreach is working to complete coverage for those

Several of us in Marshwood, Bettiscombe, areas in the next month or two. You can check the status of your individual property on the BT web site: www.homeandbusiness. openreach.co.uk/fibre-broadband/whencan-i-get-fibre and vou should see the message 'Ultrafast Accepting Orders' when it is ready.

> One further area remaining to be upgraded is at the far southwestern end of Marshwood parish. Here, a new cabinet is being provided to give a fibre-to-the-cabinet (FTTC) solution over the coming months. A road closure is scheduled in Whitchurch for 7 November to enable the cabinet to be installed.

> > Charles Somers

A35 Chideock bypass spectre revived

The A35 should be re-routed outside the parish of Chideock, say 155 Chideock residents who voted in favour in the recent parish poll (34 voted against). The vote raises the spectre of a busy trunk road cutting through the Marshwood Vale.

While a new road is unlikely to be built due to the massive costs involved (more than £100M), the vote has rightly raised strong resistance from our own Upper Marshwood Vale Parish Council and also from individual councillors on Char Valley Parish Council. Chideock Parish Council has been careful to emphasise that it remains neutral on the issue.

Local MP Sir Oliver Letwin, is holding discussions with Chideock Parish

Council, Dorset County Council and Highways England about the possibility of de-trunking the A35 from Honiton to Dorchester, as well as the idea of a new trunk road constructed through the Marshwood Vale.

Many will remember past plans to bypass Chideock and the divisive public inquiry held in 1994. That considered, and rejected, the option of a route through the Vale. It approved a shorter route running through North Chideock.

In 1996 the bypass was removed from the Government's trunk road programme. In 1998, as the estimated costs exceeded £,44m, Minister of Transport John Prescott buried the scheme as poor value for money.

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Marshwood Community Land Trust news

Just as this article was being written we heard the very sad news that David Hitchcock, our CLT chairman, had passed away after a short illness.

David was our excellent chairman all through the process of having our houses built and then occupied and led the subsequent process of identifying local projects that we could support with our annual ground-rent income. He, and his wife Ann, were also very generous in allowing us to hold our board meetings at their house. David will be very sadly missed and we hope that we will be able to continue the good CLT work that he was so keen to implement.

We had our first experience in early August of the procedure to be followed with Hastoe and West Dorset District Council (WDDC) when two of our housing tenants gave notice that they were leaving, this creating vacancies for the rental of a two-bed and a three-bed property. We were able to confirm that all those in our CLT catchment area

were given the chance to bid on these properties when advertised on the WDDC HomeChoice website.

Two new tenants were selected by Hastoe under the terms of our 106 agreement and both have recently moved in. We welcome our new tenants to Bramblehay and invite them to support the activities of our CLT by becoming members (see application forms on our website www.marshwoodclt.org.uk).

We recently held a CLT board meeting and elected Rob England as chairman until the next Annual General Meeting, which will be held at Blackdown village hall on 6 January 2018, starting at 10am.

A notice of the AGM will be posted on our CLT website and we invite all CLT members to come and give us their views and to think about becoming a CLT board member to help us develop our future plans.

Annual General Meeting of the

MARSHWOOD CLT

will take place on Saturday 6th January 2018 at 10am in Blackdown Village Hall Items for discussion to include:

Expanding board membership What new local ventures should we support?

When Plus is a minus, now and Zen

Monday 12 June

Well the great new day has dawned. Today I will get superfast broadband and fibre to the premises or FTTP. This will give me a direct line to the exchange and should provide the highest speeds and best service.

But this date is just an email from my service provider, Plusnet. And much of what Plusnet has promised has so far failed to happen. We should have had an external connection from a new pole in our front garden. Just 10 metres long, it should have gone to a box, fixed to the house and replaced the old and dodgy connection.

On contacting Plusnet Customer Service I was told they had tried FTTP but this was now closed. However when I complained they were not quite the universal service they claimed, Plusnet changed their minds and said I could sign up. Hence I am now

expecting to be connected this afternoon.

4pm: I have just heard that there is a fault on the line! And instead of telling me the installation had been cancelled, I had to call them. A new date is offered: 21st June. After all I do have superfast broadband to my garden.

Wednesday 21 June, 9.30am

I phone up Plusnet. The installation has been cancelled. The operator explains that superfast is very complex and unpredictable and I could be waiting months. I point out that the pole is in the front garden, the village is wired FTTP and many mates are now getting superfast. Getting nowhere, I speak to his manager; now it seems that today's date was given by a Plusnet person who exceeded his authority.

Continued on page 16

Marshwood Community Land Trust: Officers

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	em74@live.co.uk	

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

Facebook Page: Marshwood CLT

11.06am

The manager emails back. It now seems that one of our many trees is in the way according to Openreach. We will now need a new pole - that makes three, each within two to three metres. No-one sought our permission to put up the second pole, a third is insane.

Friday 23 June

Email from Plusnet which gives a contact at Openreach. I compose a heartfelt email to Openreach but all the given contacts seem to be incommunicado. I send it to Plusnet asking them to forward it.

Wednesday 5 July

A knock on our door introduces Jordon from Openreach. He is helpful and willing. It seems there is one pole where the fibres terminate on a manifold and the plan is to take our fibre to the next pole and on to our new pole to reach the house. I suggest a better idea would be to go direct from the second pole to our house and avoid all trees. This is rejected by Jordon as too time consuming to effect the necessary changes so I sign a form to allow trimming the trees.

Tuesday 11 July

I call to find out if the date is still valid and speak to James who tells me that I was mistaken and I had to wait for Openreach to come to do the survey. He gets very aggressive and threatens to cut me off when I insist the survey had already happened. I compose an email of complaint. I then hear that our installation was accidently cancelled and has been reinstated.

Friday 14 July

Disaster! £698 to be paid upfront is what

Plusnet is now demanding. I phone round friends who have been upgraded at zero cost, to about £80. I sign up with Zen and soon we get dates for cabling up - 20 July, and installation 31 July. No mention of any extra costs.

Thursday 20 July

Darian has been sent by Openreach from Cornwall and finally finds our fibre on another pole, this time on the other side of the road. He decides on a third route to our house, avoiding all trees. He checks out the fibre - but does not connect to the house. This should be completed by 31 July.

Monday 31 July, 9.50am

Phone call from Andy, at Openreach. He wants to put us back to the afternoon, but assures me he can complete the extra wiring and the installation. Andy and Phil arrive just after 2pm. In no time the fibre is connected to the pole, leaps across the road and is made off to the house.

We hold our breath and wait for a green light to tell us we are in touch with the exchange. It blinks on twice, flickers for a few more seconds and steadies - we have superfast broadband. A speed check gives us 80mb incoming and 30mb sending back.

What have we learned from all this?

Don't believe heavily publicised claims for good service. Openreach engineers suffer from BT's disastrous publicity, but when you can get hold of them they are helpful and friendly. So far Zen has proven 100% reliable in their promises, though not as cheap as some providers. I am a Zen fan.

Ali Cameron

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Members Jacqui Sewell, West Dorset District Council councillor

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