

# Monkton Combe Parish Council Newsletter

## Annual Report 2013-2014

(This document and a comprehensive range of Monkton Combe Parish Council documents can be found on our website:- [monktoncombe.org](http://monktoncombe.org))

No local elections affecting the Parish Council were held in 2013, however following requests made by a number of Parishes, Bath and North East Somerset Council increased the number of councillors serving Monkton Combe Parish Council to seven, thus creating two vacancies. Ann Stewart was co-opted as councillor at the Parish Council meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2014. Councillor Peter Bossom resigned as a member of the council. There are currently two vacant positions for councillors which the council will again seek to fill by co-option.

Ian Russell resigned as Clerk with effect 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013, Geoff Davis was appointed with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2013.

### Parish Councillors and their individual responsibilities

Lyn Alvis	- Vice Chairman	Footpaths and Bridleways, Rights of Access and Stiles, Neighbourhood Watch, B&NES and Other Parishes liaison, Village Bus Service; Bus Shelter
Ross Buchanan		Mill Leat and Weir, Village Signs – footpaths, roads etc., Grit Bins, Village Sweeper Truck, Public Seating and benches
Gavin Douglas	- Chairman	Graffiti and Litter, Fly Tipping, Litter bins, Dog fouling, Monkton Combe School liaison, Police Authority liaison
Ann Stewart		To be agreed.
Vacancies		Planning Applications, policy and consultation, Parish Plan, Road Safety, Village - Church liaison
Des Wighton		Roads and Highways, Boundary Walls, Hedgerows, and Verges, Gullies and Drainage, Village Hall liaison, Village Hall Car Park and Garden, Village Playground - health, safety and maintenance, Village Lock-up, Broadband Service
Geoff Davis	- Clerk	Responsible Financial Officer, Parish Notice Boards and Communication
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### Meetings

The Parish Council met on 7 occasions during the period 2013-2014. These were meetings of the Full Council. The meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2013 was the Annual Parish Council Meeting, and this was preceded by the Annual Parish Meeting or Meeting of Electors.

### Planning

During the year the Parish Council also considered a number of different planning applications for works in or near the Parish. We have always commented on purely 'Planning' grounds, using Local and National planning policies for guidance. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has changed the process with an emphasis in favour of development, although this new 'Planning Framework' still supports the purposes of Green Belts and AONBs. Much political debate around these issues is taking place nationally, and there are numerous cases of decisions over-turned by Inspectors, and some over-turned again by ministers. A full picture of these crucial issues has yet to emerge.

The Parish Council has worked with B&NES Council to develop the Place-Making Plan, and has produced a character assessment for the village. This document requires further development and will ultimately form part of the B&NES Place-Making Plan, a supporting Planning Policy document for the B&NES Core Strategy.

The Parish Council has responded to the consultations on the B&NES Core Strategy, in support of neighbouring parishes, providing comments opposing the development on Green Belt land in those parishes.

The Parish Council also responds to Planning matters in the neighbouring county of Wiltshire, monitoring any activities on the Wiltshire side of the valley. The council represented the Parish at the Waterhouse Alcohol/Entertainment License application hearing.

### Village Cleaning

The Parish Council employs Ian Croker to keep our village clean and clear of litter. He continues to do a fine job throughout the Parish, so a huge vote of thanks is once again due to him. He clearly makes a very noticeable difference to the village and surrounding roads as a whole, and is one of the most important services we provide.

### Footpaths and Open Spaces Maintenance

The Parish Council employs Jeff Avis Garden Services to keep the village car park area, Miss Davies's Garden, the playground and the public footpaths mown and maintained. This also makes a very noticeable difference to the village and this fine job throughout the Parish also deserves a huge vote of thanks.

### **Parish Council Website**

The Parish Council has now created its own website in order to display information and maintain it in lawfully compliant form and content. A full range of Parish Council documents including this report can be found on this site at [monktoncombepc.org](http://monktoncombepc.org).

### **Highways Maintenance**

It has been a difficult year for B&NES Highways with re-surfacing works on Brassknocker Hill, the proposed closure of the A36, the closure and now partial closure of the B3110 at Midford, and potholes and general repair works. The council works tirelessly to discuss these matters with B&NES Highways and the Highways Authority, and endeavours to obtain the best picture of the situation at all times, and to then keep the community informed. The information we receive in this respect has not been as accurate or timely as we would wish.

The proposed installation of an Electronic Vehicle Management Sign Board on the A36, which could lead to traffic being diverted onto Brassknocker Hill, has now had the original location dropped. There will be consultation on any new proposal.

### **Parish Works – Repairs and Improvements**

A significant range of necessary repairs and improvements to village structures and facilities have been carried out during the year, and continue into this coming year. The car park walls have been partially re-built and repaired at a cost of £4,300. The Lock-Up is undergoing repairs, which are almost complete, at a cost of £4,312, and the Playground fence is shortly due to be replaced with railings at a cost of £2050. The council has sought and is seeking grant support for these works, but much of the cost will nonetheless be borne by the Parish.

The Parish Council has also assisted with the purchase and installation of a Geology Information Board and a Sound Information System on the Two Tunnels Path. Whilst this is a significant cost all of it has been met by generous grants from the B&NES Ward Councillor's Initiative funds of Councillor Neil Butters, Roger Symonds and Cherry Beath.

The Parish Council has also installed a Village Notice board by the churchyard gate for the display of notices of general interest to the village.

### **Parish Council Finances**

For the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 we expect to record a significant deficit of income over expenditure of the order of £4,000, with a similar deficit again next year. This is the result of the significant expenditure on the parish works described above, and because the precept has remained fixed since at least 2008 representing a decline in the average contribution from each household. Whilst some of this additional expenditure is met from reserves, and some may be met from grants, it has been necessary to raise the Parish Precept for the next financial year. The Precept has been set at £4,890 for the year 2014/15, an increase of £1,400 on the current year. The council also receives a Local Council Tax Support Grant of £110. This increase will enable the Parish Council to maintain appropriate reserves going forward even though there will be a deficit for two consecutive years.

### **The Annual Parish Meeting will be held in Monkton Combe Village Hall at 7pm on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May.**

This is an opportunity for all residents of the Parish to attend a meeting with the Parish Council and allows us to hear from you. Please try to support the Council by attending.

Gavin Douglas. Chairman, Monkton Combe Parish Council.