

Newton Poppleford Annual Parish meeting—30th May 2014 County Councillor's Observations

This has been a busy year in Newton Poppleford, made particularly exciting by the renewal of the water main along High Street. After considerable discussion between SWW, May Gurney the contractors, and parish, district and county councillors, and the police, plans were put in place for this work to be undertaken with a minimum of fuss and disadvantage to local residents and the people who needed to travel along the A3052 at this point. By and large the project was undertaken very successfully and there were many residents who actually enjoyed the reduced flows of traffic through the village. After the initial closure, the work was speeded up and was complete before Christmas. I would like to thank all those who made this major project less painful than it might have been.

Parish meetings have been well attended by members of the public, mostly likely due to local interest in two particular planning applications. Both applications give me concern because they will inevitably increase the already constant stream of traffic we have through a village which is 3 miles long. I was therefore happy to arrange and attend a meeting last month together with an officer from DCC Highways, police, some Parish Councillors and local residents to see what could be done in terms of improved signage and highway improvement to make Newton Poppleford safer. We need to follow up this meeting.

Highway and flooding problems were raised about the road in the vicinity of Venn Ottery Quarry. Councillor Cole and myself met with Helen Selby on 7th April at the Quarry. We pointed out areas where the road needed to be patched, potholes that were dangerous and needed to be filled and other areas where both water and tyres had undermined the road edge. It was also agreed that Highways would contact Aggregate Industries regarding the overflowing pond in the quarry. I do not have a date yet when this work will be carried out but will keep pressing.

It was a very wet winter and as a consequence Devon's roads have suffered a massive number of potholes. Contractors were taken from other jobs to join the pothole gangs and at one stage we had as many as 45 gangs in operation in a week. I think at last they are beginning to win the battle and the number of gangs was reduced to 10 last week. If your favourite pothole is waiting to be filled please contact DCC, let them know where it is, or failing that contact me.

There are three issues relating to Public Rights of Way. First, Back Bridge: which is awaiting installation. I was informed today that the contractors, SWH, are under so much pressure with other work that Richard Spurway says another contractor is being sought; second, Red Bridge: the EA are still asking lots of questions regarding the footpath which leads up to Red Bridge but Richard continues to assure me that he expects the groynes to be in by the end of summer and the stones pulled back to secure the bank; thirdly,

Farthings Lane: the funding for this work was agreed as part of the Local Transport Plan for this year, the plans are being drawn up and will go to the East Highways meeting on 23rd October, to be completed before the end of the financial year. I have made enquiries to see if there is any S106 agreement in connection with the Planning Application for KAW and so far DCC officers cannot find any reference to such an agreement. However, they are on the case and will be pursuing the situation with the developer. It would be very expensive to metal the path beyond KAW towards School Lane, as there are some extremely large tree roots along the path.

I was pleased to get the small area of grass bank between Parson's Close and the bus stop paved during the time the SWW works were taking place. The road between Newton Poppleford and Bicton has now undergone considerable repair and has been resurfaced dressed. For the most part this work was done at night in order to cause the minimum inconvenience.

I was delighted to learn that Newton Poppleford Primary School had become the runners up in a competition to avoid waste in packed lunches. I was asked to present their prize but unfortunately I broke my ankle the day before and was unable to attend. I have every reason to believe that the government is funding them a new school and that these plans should move forward in the Autumn.

I would like to thank the clerk for his detailed minutes and for keeping me well informed of matters that require my attention, the Parish Council who have not had an easy ride this year, to Ken Potter who keeps me up to date on District Council matters, and Shan Merritt for the way she keeps the website updated and chivvies us to produce the odd article for the Parish Newsletter.