

BRETtenham and KILVERSTONE PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

2019 – 2020

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Introduction The Parish Council has continued to meet regularly scheduling meetings every month but on the understanding every other meeting is designated "Provisional" and is only taken up if there is urgent business. The Council continues to run a deficit budget by utilizing the allocation of Public Open Space "S106" money granted to cover the upkeep costs of the space. As this grant is used, the PC is conscious that it is necessary to increase its income to cover all running costs and establish a reserve for both contingencies and to be able to contribute to public facilities envisaged in Kilverstone as part of the Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE). The Council's annual accounts are attached to this report.

Arlington Way The development at Arlington Way continues to be the largest group housing in the Parish Council area. It is located in the west of the parish council area, on the eastern banks of the Little Ouse and Thet rivers. In 2012, the Parish Council bid for, and was awarded, a grant from the 'Moving Thetford Forward' fund to help pay for a pedestrian link from Arlington Way into Thetford. Thetford Town Council then joined the proposed scheme by 'match funding' the PC's contribution. The 'Riverside Path' was completed in 2015.

Former Railway Station The former Thetford Railway Station situated at the entrance to Arlington Way has remained derelict since being acquired from Norfolk County Council by a private individual. The site has long been regarded as an eyesore and has, from time to time, attracted the travelling community and also been used as a dumping site. The site is now relatively secure but still contains items of refuse and remains an eyesore. The PC's Joint Neighbourhood Plan identified the site as a potential site for a sympathetic residential development.

Riverside Path The Riverside Path, which is wheelchair-friendly and runs from Arlington Way to Nuns Bridges, was formally opened on 15 February 2016 and continues to be extremely popular. The Parish Council, in conjunction with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), pays to maintain the section of the path within Brettenham with herbicide treatment and verge cutting during the summer growing season.

Path Extension The Parish Council submitted a 'Parish Partnership' bid to Norfolk County Council for the extension of the footpath at the start of Arlington Way to link with the wheelchair access entrance to the Riverside Path without users having to cross Arlington Way twice. The PC's bid was submitted to NCC using a quote provided by NCC Highways. Another comparative quote was obtained, and the PC agreed to accept the NCC quote. The Council arranged for payment of its 50% share of the quote, using some of its reserves, and the project was completed by NCC Highways in October 2019. Like the Riverside Path itself, this extension has proved to be extremely popular and is much used by parishioners and the public at large.

Public Open Space 1 A section of the main Arlington Way Public Open Space (POS) was left uncut in order to allow a wildflower meadow to emerge. The resultant wildflowers were limited to mostly ragwort, nettles, and the occasional viper's bugloss. Subsequently, in 2018, the Parish Council tasked its contractor to prepare the area by removing the top layer and seeding with a local wildflower mix. This re-seeding was repeated in 2019 and we look forward to a better display in future years. Additionally, some parts of the knee-rail fencing surrounding the main POS have been replaced and there will now need to be an ongoing process of inspection and repair. Maintenance of the POS is currently financed using funds from a Unilateral Agreement (similar to a Section 106) with Abbey Homes. Once these funds have been exhausted the Council will need to use its precept for any further maintenance.

Public Open Space 2 There is a small area of POS separated from the main Arlington Way POS by the combined drive to 2 bungalows. This area of POS is populated by large trees and shrubs and the PC has left it untended and 'wild' as this space cannot easily be used by the public. The occupants of the first bungalow have made a request to use a small part of this smaller POS for use as a car parking area in support of their daughter who has been disabled from birth, and is wheelchair bound, but is now a successful self-employed small business owner. The occupants wish to develop their garage into a fully accessible office space and this, combined with their daughter's continuing mobility support needs, requires them to have an additional parking area adjacent to their drive. The Parish Council fully supports this request, provided that it is achieved at no additional cost to the Parish. A suitable lease has been prepared for a small rent of some £100 per annum and it is hoped that this project will be completed during 2020.

Greater Thetford Partnership Board The Board continues to move the programme forward to bring 5,000 new homes and supporting infrastructure to the greater Thetford area and regenerate the whole area covered by Thetford, Croxton, Brettenham and Kilverstone. The Board's terms of reference have been changed to ensure the Board is able to function and discharge its oversight duties properly. Since this, the 2 later meetings were held on 4 Dec 19 and 19 Feb 20 but the meeting scheduled for the 21 Apr 20 was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, since when there has been little activity. Sub phase 1A of the SUE programme to deliver 343 dwellings is still under construction. It is understood capital has now been assured to enable the necessary power and drainage for the development but until these facilities are in place, further housing development cannot take place.

A GTP manager has been recruited, appointed and was due in post on 30 Mar 20. The Parish Council contributed to the cost of this new post to support the Board but in light of the present pandemic, the GTP manager has yet to contact the Parish Council. The manager is responsible for the Delivery Plan, as well undertaking other work on behalf of the Board, including lobbying and liaising with other partners and authorities. The Parish Council remains extremely concerned that its proposal for a 7th objective, "*to provide the Sustainable Urban Extension of 5,000 new homes and supporting infrastructure (3PL/2011/0805/O) and Section 106 Agreement (dated 27 Nov 15)*", has been rejected. It is very difficult to envisage how the Board will be able to discharge its responsibilities in full if it is not able to have oversight of the main driver for the Board's existence.

Of further concern is the absence of new primary care facilities to serve the new population of some 12,000 as there are no primary care premises or facilities planned, albeit there is a small provision of about £170k provided in the Section 106 Agreement. It is hard to see how primary care can be delivered without new facilities as the current two practices in Thetford area full and have no room for expansion.

The Board also believes the following major infrastructure projects need to be included in the programme in order for the wider economic vision to “Extend the Oxford/Cambridge corridor” into East Anglia is realised:

- A11/A14 junction interchange
- Upgrade infrastructure at Ely Junction
- Improve the “5-Ways” junction on the A11 at Mildenhall to reduce the great deal of congestion the present roundabout causes.

Community Safety The Community remains safe with crime low. The Parish Council continues to be represented on the Safety Neighbourhood Action panel (SNAP) but its meeting on 16 Apr 20 was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The continued prevalence of speeding vehicles through villages remains a key concern along with the use of inappropriate minor roads for heavy goods vehicles. Norfolk Constabulary had taken to talk to estate managers regarding the issue with the HGVs and the Camera Safety Partnership has been active in the two Parishes but more needs to be done. More recently, off-road “scrambler” motorcycles have started to use the minor roads as tracks, both on the tarmac and verges. They are very noisy, disturb residents and damage the environment and it is doubtful whether most are registered or licensed. The Parish Council will take this up with the appropriate authorities when the pandemic eases.

Kilverstone Alms Houses Since becoming the Trustee of the Kilverstone Alms House Trust, the Parish Council has undertaken a refurbishment of both homes to bring them up to modern standards. This 2-year project costing some £100,000, is now complete and both homes are occupied with beneficiaries. The whole plot is now also fenced to the original land registry sizes with access improved for entry and egress. It remains an aim of the Trustee that more accommodation of this type in the parish can be provided.





Knettishall Heath The PC continues to support the heath run by Suffolk Wildlife Trust as it is a popular recreation spot for walkers and families having picnics. The Warden's annual report is at Annex A.

Annex A: Knettishall Heath Annual Report for Brettenham & Kilverstone Parish Council

Draft



Knettishall Heath
March 2019 – April 2020
Annual Report for Brettenham & Kilverstone Parish Council

RESERVE MANAGEMENT:

GRAZING

- The reserve's 18 resident Exmoor ponies continue to graze the 250-acre grazing enclosure, creating fantastic diversity in the vegetation. Their dunging areas help to boost invertebrate numbers, whilst a fungi expert has confirmed their critical role in supporting one of the UK's best populations of declining nail fungus *Poronia punctata*.
- Unfortunately, in April 2019 a vehicle hit one of the Exmoor ponies whilst it was crossing a road, and this resulted in the pony having to be euthanised. This led us to conduct a thorough review of risk mitigation, resulting in no actions taken except for the normal annual planned cut of roadside vegetation. We continue to appreciate the efforts of local people to drive slowly through the reserve and encouraging others to do the same. The ponies continue to wear the highly reflective collars that have proved very successful in helping motorists see the ponies when driving through at night.
- We continue to experience problems with visitors feeding the Exmoor ponies. Being a semi-wild native breed suited to grazing moorland and heathland, Exmoor's can become quickly unwell, and even die, if fed foods such as carrots, apples or bread. This can also lead to long term behavioural problems with individual ponies associating people with food. We therefore appreciate any helping in spreading the word that feeding them is not allowed.
- **Goats.** A herd of Bagot goats were introduced in February 2019 to aid the heathland restoration process by browsing on birch and pine seedlings that the ponies rarely graze. However it became apparent that modifications would be needed to the cattle grids to prevent the goats escaping, therefore the goats were moved to the riverside paddocks to graze and benefit the meadow structure there. We are continuing to wait for the Highways Agency to carry out modifications to the cattle grids to allow the goats to be reintroduced into the heathland enclosure. The goats also graze some of our other Trust reserves on the coast, and so are not currently at Knettishall Heath (May 2020).
- **Rabbits.** Being crucial to the long-term maintenance of rare Breckland flora and fauna, we continue to encourage rabbits to populate the heath. We are also still observing how rabbit numbers are boosted in areas that the ponies have grazed heavily, where they lower the vegetation enough for the rabbits to move in.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT

- With the end of the project in 2018 there have not been any contractors undertaking work on Knettishall Heath throughout 2019 – 2020.
- Weekly volunteer working parties have been continuing the management programme by removing encroaching scrub on the heathlands, and felling trees along ride edges and within woodlands to create or restore glades. The majority of this year's work has been to thin the woodland edge bordering the western heathland that runs adjacent to the Icknield Way footpath. This is creating a more scalloped natural edge allowing the sunlight to permeate into the woodland, providing improved habitat for invertebrates, heathland and woodland flora, bats and reptiles. The work was halted by the start of the Covid19 lockdown; therefore the stump removal remains to be completed in this area later in the year.
- With consent of the EA, repairs have continued to the Little Ouse riverbank, with posts, faggots and soil to help prevent erosion damage to the footpath. In some areas temporary wooden fencing remains in place to allow the groundwork to recover before access is allowed down to the river again.



Image 1: Riverbank repaired adjacent to dipping platform, May 2019

- Tree planting was undertaken by Knettishall heath volunteers, with funding from the EA, in February 2020 along the Little Ouse bank. This was to reduce the likelihood of flood damage and improve the ecology of the riverbank and the river channel itself. 170 trees were planted at Knettishall Heath and on neighbouring land, species including alder, willow, goat willow, maple and oak.
- In Spring 2019 an unexploded ordnance (UXO) was found at Knettishall Heath, resulting in the police bomb disposal unit attending to detonate it. As a result of this a thorough risk mitigation survey was carried out, resulting in changes to the way we approach any new ground disturbance in reserve management.

WILDLIFE

- Woodland edges, rides and glades that have been created and improved over the last 8 years are now supporting a greater wealth of plant species including honeysuckle and foxgloves. These areas have in turn boosted populations of white admiral butterflies, hawker dragonflies, and over 7 species of bats.



Image 2: Foxgloves and woodland flora in new woodland glade June 2019

- We are continuing to see heathland specialities such as the green tiger beetle, rare lichens, moths and butterflies, bats and reptiles all increase in number and diversity around the reserve, as a result of the grazing, newly cleared areas of heathland and bare ground plots.
- The butterfly transect was successfully carried out from 1st April – end of September 2019 and results submitted to Butterfly Conservation.
- Reptile transects are ongoing with good numbers of slow worm, common lizard, grass snake and some adder sightings in 2019.
- Invertebrate surveys, bryophyte and fungi surveys, and vegetation monitoring by experts ongoing, particularly in areas of bare ground creation.
- Spring 2019 saw woodlark return for the third consecutive year after a 10+ year absence. These ground nesting birds rely on the patchy areas of bare ground to feed on, and the heather and gorse swathes to nest in. Other heathland, grassland and farmland species doing well include the yellowhammer, skylark and stonechat.
- Woodland bird species that have been recorded breeding are lesser spotted woodpecker and woodcock.

- We would like to offer thanks to all our regular dog walkers who are helping to spread the word about keeping dogs on leads on the heathland areas between 1st March – 31st July to protect ground nesting birds.

COMMUNITY WORK

- Summer 2019 saw our new wild learning officer; Lauren Mack, in post to help further drive events and learning activities on the reserve, under the Trusts core funding and support from our Higher-Level Stewardship Programme. This included monthly youth groups, school visits, school holiday events, new family walks, and new weekly wild tots.
- The reserve has unfortunately experienced an increase in problems with antisocial behaviour, particularly over summer 2019, including bonfires, car racing, fly tipping and general litter, dog fouling, and night gatherings/parties. The Trust are currently looking into ways we can introduce a greater site presence and maintain control. This will include improved car park infrastructure in 2020, such as:
 - The removal of BBQ pits and introduction of BBQ stands to prevent the use of pits for fires
 - Improved signage in the main car park area
 - New improved network of bins
 - Greater staff presence
 - Improved main car park entrance security
 - Improved links with local police

Looking forward – Covid19:

- The Trust have cancelled all events up to the end of June 2020, and the main car park remains closed in line with government guidance (as of 05/05/2020). We hope to run some events throughout the summer, which will be put on our website, and hope to welcome our wider visitors back to the reserve soon.

We once again thank you for your ongoing support and I hope to attend another parish council meeting soon.

**Samantha Norris – Knettishall Heath
Warden**

MONEY MATTERS

FY 2019/2020 Accounts

	£		£
Opening balance	£ 23,977.40		
Receipts		Payments	
Precept	5,145.00	PC Expenses (travel)	27.00
Support Grant		Postage	7.32
VAT Refund	243.32	Subscriptions	210.22
Interest (to Mar 20)*	6.26	Insurance	554.99
BTO Refund	165.00	Grounds Maintenance	1,556.40
		Stationery/Ink	320.05
		Local Plan	135.00
		Clerk Pay, Expenses and Allowances	2,129.50
		Partnership Bid	3,709.00 *
		May 19 Elections	933.71
Total Receipts	<u>5,559.58</u>	Total Payments	9,583.19
In Year Net Surplus	- 4,023.61 *		
B/F	<u>23,977.40</u>		
Total	<u><u>19,953.79</u></u>		
Carried Forward	19,953.79		
	<u>2019</u>	Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2020	<u>2020</u>
			£
		Bank	
	12,405.65	Treasurers Account	8,375.78 *
	11,571.75	Business Instant Access Accour	11,578.01
	23,977.40		19,953.79
Assets	£ 10,688.64		

* as of 09.04.20

The above statement represents fairly the financial position of the PC at 31 March 2020 and reflects its receipts and payments during the year.

Notes to the Accounts

- 1. Assets** Notice boards (and with drop boxes), Village signs, bench, grit bin, office equipment for the Clerk, Riverside Path furniture and donated Public Open Space at Arlington Way - £10,688 (Based on the purchase value).
- 2. Borrowings** The PC has no borrowings
- 3. Earmarked Reserves** Following completion of the Riverside Walk project and legal work associated with the transfer of the Trust from CoopHomes, The PC had earmarked reserves of £11,500 for at the end of FY 19/20:
 - £11,000 for Community Facilities Development
 - £7,500 for POS Maintenance
 - £1,000 Contingency
- 4. Tenancies** The PC has no tenancies
- 5. Section 137 Payments** The PC made no S137 payments in FY 19/20.
- 6. Agency Work** The PC undertook no agency work
- 7. Contingent Liabilities** The PC's accounts for the year end 31 March 2020 do not include a provision for any such contingency.

A contingent loss will be accrued in the financial statements where it is probable that a future event will confirm a material loss which can be estimated with reasonable accuracy at a date when the financial statements are approved.

Where a material contingent loss is not accrued, perhaps because it cannot be accurately estimated or because the event is not considered sufficiently certain, it is disclosed in a note to the accounts.
- 8. Advertising and Publicity** No costs were incurred for advertising and publicity during the year
- 9. Trust Funds** The PC is the trustee for the Kilverstone Alms house Trust.
- 10. Commitments** The PC has and maintains the POS at Arlington Way under a Unilateral Agreement (similar to a Section 106 agreement).

PARISH CONTACT DETAILS

Chairman
A M Poulter OBE
01842 753634

Responsible Finance Officer
R H I Dawson
01842 762926

Email: clerk@brettenhamandkilverstonepc.co.uk

Parish Council Website: <http://brettenham-and-kilverstonepc.norfolkparishes.gov.uk/>