

## **Cusop Parish Council Chairman's Report for the Annual Parish Meeting May 19<sup>th</sup> 2021.**

I took on the role of chairman in 2012 so this is my 9<sup>th</sup> (and final) year of giving this report. I have enjoyed giving something back, to a community that I love being part of and that I have got a lot out of, but I want to do something different now. Being a volunteer councillor is rewarding but unfortunately it's not possible to please 'all of the people all of the time' so it is inevitable that some decisions that the council make are not universally appreciated. It has been a difficult couple of years since our last 'Annual' meeting in May 2019 due to the Coronavirus but we managed to hold 19 'well attended' council meetings of which 10 were held remotely, so 'thank you' to all the councillors for their selfless contribution.

There have been some lows and highs during this period which I will share with you:

- For a while we were without a clerk because Nigel from Dorstone had some medical problems and found the role too onerous. The upside of this however is that we now have Jane Stannard in office. I would like to thank Jane for her help and wish her 'all the best' as he grows into the challenging role.
- Unfortunately Alison Matthews resigned and she was a great loss but I am very pleased to be able to say that Julia Whittall has now joined the council. Welcome Julia.
- We were without a lengthsman for a while and there was quite a backlog of work accumulated but Martin Leighton has now taken on the role and things are getting done.
- There have been sixteen planning applications made in the parish during the two years, some of which have caused division within the community. Our policy of delivering a note to local neighbours and offering assistance if required, has continued to be successful.
- The council decided to maintain the precept at £8,500 and this has been reflected in the Council Tax demands.
- The playing field had to be closed in March 2020 and when it re-opened severe restrictions had to be put in place to try and keep everyone Covid free.
- A leaflet was produced and delivered to every house in the parish giving advice and guidance on how to cope with the lockdown restrictions.
- The most recent newsletter was produced in September 2019 which is quite disappointing but hopefully, now that the restrictions on activities are being lifted, normal service will be able to be resumed. If we could increase the number of parishioners who are registered with the website we could perhaps save some money by e-mailing them in the future.
- The construction of the boule court was completed and it was briefly put to good use but the lockdowns have limited our enjoyment of it.
- Unfortunately the council is getting increasingly frustrated with Hereford Council over the subject of the S106 monies which were allocated following the development of Bookers Edge. There are a few plans which the council would like to pursue but the County Council are not being very helpful.
- A working group was formed to measure the depth of feeling about speeding and road conditions in the parish and investigate what could be done to alleviate the perceived problem, this work is on-going.

And finally a few 'thank you's

I would like to thank Sharon Marsh for her efforts as Footpaths Officer, Alison Matthews for her contribution as Website Administrator and Jennie Hewitt who is our Ward Member at Hereford.

I would also like to thank all the volunteers who have been involved with the Hall, the Playing Field and the Events Committee for their efforts during this period. I am sure that each of these groups would welcome any assistance or involvement that you can offer in the future.

Jim Wesley,  
Chairman.

## **Village Hall report for Cusop Annual Parish meeting on 19/05/21**

Unfortunately the year to the end of August 2020 was a very quiet one for the hall, the doors were closed on March 21<sup>st</sup> and it got no use at all until September when it then got very limited use for a few months. Fortunately the hall qualified for some grants during the period of the pandemic and benefitted to the tune of nearly £27,500. To put this in perspective, the most rental income that the hall has had in 12 months is just over £8000.

A progressive re-opening is underway ..... and a celebratory BBQ is planned for lunchtime on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> July immediately after the AGM.

I can report that some progress has been made with outstanding works but, of course, it is never finished:

- The bollard lights were repaired but it is still 'work in progress'.
- The Salvation Army clothing bank was taken out of action for a full year.
- The installation of the soffit and some internal painting.
- The sagging gutter on the front of the building and some gaps in the fascia board.

There are some things that we haven't made progress on yet.

- The trim track
- The overhead projector
- The legacy from Mary Ridger

The hall is being professionally cleaned and checked on an ad hoc basis at the moment and only one booking is taken per day. The hire charges were increased to reflect the extra costs and they will be reviewed again when the Covid restrictions are lifted.

Jim Wesley, Chairman Village Hall Committee

## **Cusop Footpath report for 2020/2021**

Further to my report of 17th November 2020, during the winter months I have been continuing with inspections of the footpaths in Cusop.

There has been a deterioration in the fabric of some stiles and gates on a number of paths due to the winter weather and these problems have been brought to the attention of the landowner.

There continues to be heavy use of a number of paths particularly the paths from the church both up Cusop Hill and towards the road and the path towards the old golf course .

The crossing of the Dulas Brook has at times been very difficult due to wet and slippery paths in both directions.

Hereford Council are now beginning to catch up on the backlog of works that built up last year and I am hopeful that an improvement in the signage from the roads onto footpaths

( which get damaged by the hedge cutting ) will be completed this year . Many of these signs are currently damaged or absent.

Clearing of vegetation from the pathways and new signage continues as the weather allows.

As the lockdown restrictions ease and we see more visitors to the area I will continue to monitor the impact on footpaths and take appropriate steps to ensure access to the parish is safe and enjoyable.

Sharon Marsh, Footpaths Officer

## **Cusop Website Report**

The Cusop website really came into its own during this last tumultuous year.

An entire new area of the website sprang into life last March when the first lockdown was announced. Different pages were created to cover, in a simple, straightforward way, the current restrictions; symptoms to look out for; what to do if you or someone in your household tests positive; how to get a test etc. But the all-important page during that first lockdown, was the one that detailed which local shops and businesses were open and when; and who was doing click & collect or delivery. This information changed frequently as businesses got geared up for a completely new way of operating, and I'd like to thank Zoe McLean for helping me to keep on top of it all.

The 'News' emails also came into their own in the past year, to alert residents to important changes in things like restrictions; Covid symptoms; how long to isolate; as well as the very local things like who's

started to do deliveries and whether the playing field and church are open or closed. But at least the roadworks emails were largely unnecessary!

Sadly the Planning Tracker, over which I have no control, is still not working properly despite regular emails to Hugo Fox, the website provider. So my apologies for the lack of a potentially useful service. The Parish Clerk, Jane Stannard, and I are considering going our own way with this in the coming months.

As things get back to some kind of normal I would welcome suggestions from residents as to what they would like to see in the future on the website. I can be contacted via the 'Contact' page of the website.

It only remains for me to thank the various content editors for keeping their pages up-to-date, especially Celia Cundale who does the section for the church.

Alison Matthews  
Website Administrator

## Cusop Playing Field

The past year has seen only limited use of the playground due to Covid restrictions, and I have been undertaking the monthly inspections during the periods when the playground has been open.

The general state of the playground is good, some wear and tear but nothing out of the ordinary. I extend my thanks to the Lengthsman for undertaking the few pieces of maintenance that have been required.

At some point in the near future, it would be good to give some of the play pieces a good wash to remove algae build-up. The main issue still needing resolving is the state of the goalposts, nets and some of the perimeter fencing. Solutions for these issues are included in the proposed plans to use the Section 106 money from Hereford. I have been remiss in not pushing this through and give my apologies. I will endeavour to get this moving in the next few months.

Andy Fryers

## St Mary's Church, Cusop Annual Report year end December 2020

This has been an extraordinary year due to the Coronavirus pandemic which affected all areas of our church life.

**Services** - From 23<sup>rd</sup> March to 13th June all churches locked their doors. On 21<sup>st</sup> June, Cusop Church opened on Sundays only for Private Prayer. The first service with social distancing and face masks was held on 5<sup>th</sup> July. Some services have taken place in the churchyard including Bishop Richard's Prayer Pilgrimage and our Harvest Festival. Our "Churchyard Christmas" was cancelled due to a rise in Covid cases. Zoom services and online services have been available several times a week. **A very special thank you to Alison Matthews for administering the Cusop website which is an essential source of up-to-date information including our church services.**

**Cusop Parochial Church Council** continued to hold regular meetings via Zoom.

**Burials and Funerals** - sadly, there have been ten funerals including two past Churchwardens and a previous PCC member. It has been an extremely upsetting time for all those who have lost loved ones during the pandemic when there have been severe restrictions regarding the numbers allowed to attend a funeral. Families have also been denied an opportunity after a funeral to comfort one another and share happy memories.

**Weddings** - it was wonderful that two couples decided to marry in spite of all the rules.

**Fabric and Building**— our new kitchen and storeroom were completed alongside the new double doors leading into the vestry.

**Community Links**- at the beginning of the first lockdown, the Parish Council contacted us and an information leaflet "Caring in Cusop" was produced. Our thanks to the Parish Council for this initiative and for printing and posting this leaflet through every door in Cusop.

The churchyard proved a valuable community resource for local people as it was the only public space "open" during the first lockdown. There was freedom to wander in the peace and tranquillity of our beautiful churchyard and this was appreciated by many people.

**Hay Theatre Group** - Hay Youth Theatre, both Junior and Senior groups, regularly met in the churchyard on Saturdays and this proved a great success. It was wonderful to offer this opportunity to all these young people who had been unable to meet indoors due to government restrictions.

**The Big Clean** - this took place in early March. Our grateful thanks to our regular cleaners and flower arrangers who do a fabulous job!

**Caring for God's Acre** –five Taskforce Days took place during the year. A huge thank you to our fantastic volunteers! At a popular Fungi Session in October, thirty-five species of fungi were identified and have been recorded on the National Biodiversity Network Atlas and Church Heritage Record –part of the “Beautiful Burial Ground” Project.

**Eco Church Committee** has been busy preparing reports and projects including the planting of Herefordshire eight apple trees and a cycle rack for four bicycles.

**Foodbank** - thank you to our fifteen volunteers who transport donations from Cusop to Dorstone every Wednesday morning.

**Charitable Giving**

It has not been possible to hold fund-raising events, however, the PCC agreed to donate 10% operating income to be shared equally between Hereford Foodbank and the UNICEF Covid Vaccination Programme.

Celia Cundale, Churchwarden