

## **Parish Council Update – August 2014.**

### **Neighbourhood Plan**

The Steering Group has made good progress in the drafting of the Plan and has completed a 4<sup>th</sup> draft. This has been sent out for comment to Parishioners who had indicated on the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire that they wanted to be involved in the development of the Plan. We have asked for comments back by August 28<sup>th</sup>. If anyone wants to read this 4<sup>th</sup> Draft it is available on the Dorstone Community Web Site, Neighbourhood Planning section. A paper copy is also available in the DFR. Comments can be sent to Colin Thomas – e-mail [postmaster@colinjthomas.plus.com](mailto:postmaster@colinjthomas.plus.com) or in writing c/o Castle Barn.

### **Mobile Phone Coverage**

There are some signs of progress in improving the Mobile Phone coverage in the Parish. As reported in previous Updates the Government has set up an initiative known as the Mobile Infrastructure Project (MIP) aimed at extending mobile phone coverage in rural areas. The idea is to establish a radio base station infrastructure which will host all four main mobile operators, who have agreed to co-operate in the Project. A Company called Arquiva has been selected to implement the project with the assistance of another company called Harlequin, a specialist site search and acquisition agent.

Whilst it is understood that some landowners have already been approached with a view to have a mast on their land, the Parish Council has also been contacted by Harlequin to help in identifying possible sites in the Dorstone Area. A site will typically comprise:-

- A 20m high lattice mast, although the height may vary for operational reasons
- 6 antennas and 2 0.6m diameter dishes attached to the mast
- 6 equipment cabinets at ground level
- A compound secured by fencing
- An access track (depending on location)
- An electricity supply.

Apart from a wide range of technical and operational criteria, the MIP site must be located on land where there is a willing landlord at an economic rental and where planning permission may be obtained.

Therefore any landowner who is interested in providing such a site should contact our Clerk Chris Hendy asap. If a viable site is found the detailed design and layout will be subject to further consultation as part of the planning process.

As a contingency, the Council will also be contacting Vodaphone with a view to participating in their Sure Signal programme, a localised scheme aimed at present at potentially 100 rural communities. Alistair Phillips has kindly volunteered to lead the attempt for Dorstone to participate in this programme.

### **Broadband Improvements**

There is not such good news on the planned improvements for 01981 numbers, for Broadband service in the Parish. Originally we were told that the Golden Valley was a priority Pilot area and that improvements would take place before the end of 2014. This project is managed by FasterShires ( a joint venture of Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and the Department of Culture), but operationally undertaken by BT. Fastershires is now indicating, that whilst work has started on upgrading the

Peterchurch Exchange and associated network, some improvements will arrive in June 2015 with a completion date of December 2015. Regretfully we know of no plans to bring about broadband improvements for Parishioners who are connected to the Clifford Exchange, i.e a 01497 number.

### **Grass Cutting**

As part of its planned cuts in expenditure Herefordshire Council has reduced the frequency of grass cutting areas. In rural areas this had been virtually reduced to no grass cutting, apart from immediate areas around road junctions where it is undertaken for safety reasons. Herefordshire Council have listened to feedback on this change and have now organised a countywide cut of verges starting at the end of July to tidy things up before the autumn. In urban areas the frequency has been reduced from 7 to 3 times per year, although again additional cuts have been authorised on high priority public spaces and parks. Within Dorstone Parish, the Lengthsman will still undertake grass cutting of areas traditionally cut by the Parish at the same frequency as previously. Householders are encouraged to continue the practice of cutting the grass, adjacent to the road, in front of their houses.

### **Mobile Homes**

Parishioners have raised with the Council the placement of mobile homes/ caravans on sites in open countryside without planning permission being obtained. The Council has raised the matter with the Planning Enforcement team at Herefordshire Council.

### **Highways**

Following continued representations from the Parish Council resurfacing have now been carried out on Scar Lane and Scotland Bank, and repair work also carried out on the back road to Peterchurch. Balfour Beatty has now appointed a Locality Steward for the Golden Valley who is responsible for liaison between the communities of the Valley and Balfour Beatty, Herefordshire Council's contactor. She is Linzy Outtrim; we welcome this appointment and look forward to working with her in the future.

### **Donation Policy**

Applications are invited from voluntary organisation operating in the Parish to apply for funding under the Parish Council's funding policy. Information and Application pack will be available during September to be returned by the end of October with a decision being made at the Council's November meeting. The pack can be obtained from the Clerk – Chris Hendy.

### **Elections**

On May 7<sup>th</sup> 2015 in Herefordshire there will be a General Election, Herefordshire Council elections and Parish Council elections. There are two new features on the Herefordshire Council web site "Parish Councils and Community" and also a feature "Spotlight on Parish Councils" celebrating excellent work with the parish council sector. Anyone who may be interested in standing for the Parish Council may find these pages helpful, including information on how to stand for election.

Colin Thomas  
Chairman