



BERKSWICH PARISH COUNCIL

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2021

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Welcome to Spring

Spring is just around the corner. Many of us have now received our first Covid jab and many more will receive one in the weeks and months ahead. As the evenings lengthen and the snowdrops and daffodils come into bloom, there is a feeling that better days will return. Until then, we all have a duty to follow official guidance – to protect each other, protect our communities and protect health and front line workers. It is incredible to think the first lockdown began almost exactly one year ago. When this one finally ends, let's make sure it ends for good.



March of the snowdrops. Photo: Jack.

Berkswich Forest Project

Several years ago the Parish Council reached an agreement with Berkswich Primary School for the children to use Hollybush Coppice as a part of their Forest Project. It is now progressing well and the school has produced a video which highlights the project's activities and benefits. We hear the project has been well received by parents and the Council is pleased this has been money well spent.

Woodland Management

The Parish Council is responsible for two small areas of woodland – Walton Coppice to the rear of Bluebell Hollow and a smaller area of woodland next to the play area at Hollybush Field. The Council carries out regular maintenance of both areas, but plans to implement a long-term management strategy to run alongside the ecological plan prepared by the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust in 2016. The Council expects to implement the recommendations over the next few years.

Environment Group

A few years ago the Council formed a small committee to consider environment issues in the Parish. This group has reformed and is considering such issues as the state of foot-

paths, planting of wild flowers, tree planting and improvements in grass verges. As an informal body it can invite interested local residents to join, which will meet as and when necessary. Stafford Borough Council, Street Scene Department is also happy to provide members of the public with litter-picker devices and plastic bags for rubbish collecting. If you would like to help, call the Street Scene Department on 01785 619000. To submit comments about environmental matters in the Parish please get in touch with the Parish Council at the contact info overleaf.

Annual Precept

The precept is a tax that parish council's charge local electors to meet their budget needs. Councils do not receive direct funding from central government and instead rely on the precept plus income from other activities and services provided. The financial year runs from 1 April to 31 March and it is the council's task to agree a budget before it can set the precept. Issues under consideration include:

- Current spending levels for on-going services.
- Cost of additional spending plans and projects.
- Provision for reserves.
- Levels of anticipated income.

For over five years our precept has remained the same or slightly below previous years. This year, however, we plan to increase the annual precept by a little over one percent, or sixty pence per year, per band "D" property. This must be done to meet increased

demand and reduce the drain on the council's reserves.

Hollybush Fields Play Area

The Parish play area at Hollybush Fields has recently re-opened, in the knowledge that play in the open air is good for children. However, malicious damage caused to some of the equipment this winter has caused some concern and a considerable cost to make repairs. The Parish Council aims to keep the play area open, but urges residents to keep an eye open to help protect the play area and its environment from further damage.



Footpath to Jacob's Ladder. Photo: Jack.

Jacob's Ladder Footpath

One of our most popular footpaths leads out of the village past Walton Farm to Brocton via Jacob's ladder. Unfortunately, the section of the footpath at the bottom of the field, between the two gates at Jacob's Ladder, has

become very muddy during this winter's bad weather. Although this part of the footpath lies within Brocton Parish, in light of the many residents from both parishes who regularly use it, we feel we should work together to improve its condition for the benefit of all.

Trip Rails Along the A513

Last autumn wooden trip rails were erected along the A513 following concern that vehicles were churning up the grass verges. The Council considered such rails would help deter parking and work went ahead after consultation with the County Council Highways Department. The Parish council sees this as necessary work to protect the environment. The matter will be kept under review.

Milford Speed Indicators

For many years complaints have grown over the speed of vehicles through the parish along the A513. Centre road islands were installed to improve safety and demands were made for Speed Indicator Devices to also be erected. This has been a costly project, but we expect the signs to be installed later this year as a further aid to road safety.

