



# Berkswich Parish Council

# NEWSLETTER

Spring 2024



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Welcome to our newsletter for Spring 2024. We have had a busy start to 2024 with two working parties at Walton Coppice doing some felling and lots of planting. The Environment Group have worked very hard to enhance the Coppice for both residents and wildlife.

We are planning to apply for another grant for work at Hollybush Coppice soon and are working with Berkswich Primary School so watch this space!

## Council Tax for 2024/25

We have kept our precept (the amount we receive through your Council Tax) increases below inflation for a number of years now. During this time we have increased our spending on projects such as the replacement of the play equipment at Hollybush Playing Fields and our Earmarked Funds (money saved for specific purposes) have been decreasing.

At the Parish Council meeting on 2 January 2024 the Council agreed to increase the precept, for example charges for a Band D property will increase by £17.44 per year. This is the equivalent to 33p per week. It is hoped that in future years the precept will only need to increase in line with inflation whilst we build funds annually so that we have sufficient reserves to protect the Council from facing financial challenges in the future.

## Improvements at Walton Coppice

We had confirmation just before Christmas that our Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) grant application for just under £10,000 had been successful. FiPL is a Defra scheme managed locally by Staffordshire County Council and this is the second grant we have received for Walton Coppice. This grant pays for work by tree surgeons, trees and hedgerow plants, woodland management tools and training from Burton Conservation Volunteers (BCV).



The tree surgeons started in January with selective thinning of the existing trees to remove weaker specimens and encourage growth of the remaining trees. They removed larger trees from close to residential properties found some trees were suffering from ash die-back so more trees had to be felled than initially anticipated. The overgrown bramble in the Coppice was flailed to allow for the tree planting.

Working parties were held on 4 February and 3 March led by Burton Conservation Volunteers who provided training for all attendees. We are very grateful to the 12th Stafford Mohawk Scouts and to local residents - we would have struggled to complete the work without their help! They felled



smaller trees and were shown how to create a 'dead hedge' to create a further barrier at the rear of the properties while making habitat for insects and small animals. A new hedge was planted around the smaller section to the west of the Coppice and trees were planted further up the bank away from the residential properties.



We are very happy with how the work has gone and hope to be able to set up further working parties in future to manage the Coppice. If you would be interested in taking part in any working parties please contact the Clerk using the details on the back page.

## Bench Replaced

A member of the public reported that the bench near the corner of The Village near Walton Lodge was showing its age so the Parish Council agreed to replace it with a bench made from recycled plastic. The bench looks as if it is made of wood, but is maintenance-free and will not splinter as well as reusing plastic which would have ended up in landfill.



## Telephone Box



Our refurbished telephone box has been finished off with new signs for Berkswich Book Exchange. We think it looks very smart and hope you agree. Could we please remind everyone that the telephone box is for books only and toys, bric a brac, rubbish, etc should not be left inside. Please keep it tidy so that everyone can use it.

## Waste Bins

Do you think there are enough waste bins in the Parish? If you think we need more, could you please let the Clerk know of possible locations that a bin would be useful? We are aware that at least two bins have been removed recently. Streetscene at Stafford Borough Council own and empty the bins and we can ask them to provide more.

If you see a full or overflowing bin please report it at [www.staffordbc.gov.uk/streetscene-service-online-forms](http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/streetscene-service-online-forms) under the Street Cleansing category, then Other and help to keep our parish tidy.

## Hollybush Coppice

We are working with Berkswich Primary School on a Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) grant application which would allow the school to access the larger area of woodland much more easily and encourage native species within the coppice. We hope to move the fence slightly and add another section to create direct, lockable access without the need to book the pupils out of school and all the admin it creates.

Both Hollybush and Walton Coppices qualify for FiPL grants because of their proximity to Cannock Chase National Landscape.



## Berkswich Parish Council Contacts

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