

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT, 2010 AGM

I am sure that you all read the newsletter, which, as you probably know is designed, produced and edited by Paddy Doyle. I am sure you all agree that he is doing a wonderful job. You will have been able to see from the newsletter that we have been involved in a wide range of activities and the accompanying programme shows that, even in a non- festival year, Sarah Lewis has planned an exciting range of events. To me, one of the great attractions of the Widcombe Association, compared with other Bath Residents' Associations, is our social programme and we owe a huge debt of gratitude to Sarah who puts in an extraordinary amount of effort.

But not all our activities are in the entertainment field. In the absence of a Parish Council we do our best to make Widcombe people's views known to B&NES, responding to consultations and, helped by our two Councillors Ian Gilchrist and Brook Whelan, we lobby on issues that affect our community. The most important of these is the Rossiter Road scheme and I glad to say that, after nearly 30 years of campaigning we appear to be on the home straight.. There is strong political support for our proposals but the disappointing aspect has been the attitude of Council officers who, time after time, reject proposals as unsatisfactory without suggesting ways in which they could be modified to meet their requirements. However, we now have a scheme on the table that has passed the test of the Council's computer-based traffic modeling and which, I understand, this time, has been modified by officers to meet safety requirements. Since this issue is seen as political, discussions have been halted during the election period but a meeting has been arranged for the following week, when we hope a decision will be made to proceed to public consultation.

Highways issues, including parking, are not just limited to Rossiter Road and, on the committee, these are handled by Julian Williams. He has been involved in numerous parking matters including reviews of residents parking zones, traffic calming measures in Greenway lane, safety measures at Macaulay Buildings where there have been a number of serious accidents to speeding cyclists. Another initiative has been Community Speed Watch led by Ian Gilchrist. So far about 55 speeders and 2 mobile phone users have been logged. More volunteers are needed for this so if you are interested, make yourself known to Ian Gilchrist after the meeting – Ian please stand up so that those who don't know you will know who to look for. Another initiative to deter excessive speed is the Widcombe 20 campaign and Adrienne Baptiste will be saying a few words about this before Sam Holliday's presentation.

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Moving from Highways, I'd like to say a little about another thorny subject, Planning. The first of the objects in our Constitution is to protect Widcombe so we monitor planning applications to ensure that they do not have an adverse effect on the overall quality of the Widcombe environment. Of course, this area is a minefield and we are very fortunate in having Andrew Gordon-Duff as the Committee member dealing with this. We do not get involved where the impact is only on close neighbours and since Andrew has been on board we have only made one objection (to which the Bath Preservation trust also objected) and the application has been refused. Anyone thinking of making an application that could be considered controversial is strongly advised to talk to Andrew first. Once an application is made, it can only be judged on its content so it is not our practice, at that point, to enter into discussions before lodging an objection.

One other issue I would like to mention is the Two Tunnels scheme. As you know, in conjunction with Greenway we organized two public meetings and since then have maintained a dialogue with Sustrans and the two tunnels group. Unfortunately, this is a very difficult area as the interests of various sectors of the Widcombe Community differ. Residents of Lyncombe Vale, close to the proposed access point are concerned at the possible traffic congestion and nuisance, whereas cyclists in our community want access and those who have helped sponsor the scheme wish to see it succeed as originally planned. The debate continues!

One final issue is subscriptions. Our Membership Secretary, Mayveen Blackwell, has had a nightmare of a job, chasing up subscriptions. The amounts payable are small and easily forgotten about but we need your money. Please, if at all possible, complete a direct debit form and then we do the work for you. Some people don't trust the Direct Debit system but we have to honour the direct debit guarantee, if a debit is made in error, you only have to phone your bank and the money is refunded there and then, no quibbles. Mayveen has forms available after the meeting. If you haven't done so already, please complete one!

I would now like to turn to item 3, Committee retirements and elections. We have only one retirement, David Waterstone, and he is not seeking re-election due to his other commitments, including Chaimanship of the Cotswold Wardens. David will continue to look after our interest in the Abbey Cemetery. Unfortunately, there is no replacement to

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be elected so the Committee has shrunk by one. We desperately need some new blood – if you value the work we do and would like to put something back into your community please speak to me or one of the Committee members afterwards. We try to be businesslike but friendly and informal at our meetings so that even those who claim to detest committees find our gatherings relatively painless.