



Walford Parish Council

Annual Parish Report

2023/2024



Chairman's Report

Councillors have been engaged in various Parish Council activities to deliver improvements within the Parish over the last 12 months for the benefit of Walford Parishioners.

Following the election of Councillors in May 2023, a second Council election was held in November 2023 due to the resignation of Pete Barley. We thank Pete for his service and welcome Yolande Watson, ex-Ward Councillor, to the Council. We also extend thanks to Andrew Corbett and Andrew Terry who have both recently resigned from the Council, details of the vacancies will be posted shortly.

A summary of Council activities is detailed below.

Appointments for the year commencing April 2023

Chair	Joanne Akers
Vice Chair	Dave Berry
Lengthsman Co-ordinator	Simeon Cole (resigned position in February 2024)
Rights of Way Officer	Heather Evans
HALC Representative	Bridget Vine
Kerne Bridge Canoe Launch Co-ordinator	Mark Petersen, Tara Barnett (replacing Simeon Cole who resigned the position in February 2024)
Police Representative	Andrew Corbett
Resilience Co-ordinator	Mark Petersen
WCSS Co-ordinator	Rebecca Parry
Parish Clerk	Nick Richmond

Finance Committee

Dave Berry (Chair), Will Warburg, Andrew Terry, Mark Petersen, Bridget Vine (replacing Simeon Cole), Joanne Akers

Personnel Committee

Dave Berry, Tara Barnett, Mark Petersen, Joanne Akers (one vacancy)

Community Engagement

Joanne Akers

Safety & Environment Working Group

Joanne Akers, Dave Berry, Simeon Cole, Heather Evans, Mark Petersen, Bridget Vine, Yolande Watson to include various local residents.

Kerne Bridge Canoe Launch Working Group

Joanne Akers, Dave Berry, Simeon Cole, Heather Evans, Mark Petersen, Bridget Vine, Charlie Baker (Riverseas Holdings) to include various local residents.

Community Support Working Group

Joanne Akers, Tara Barnett, Dave Berry including local residents

Localities Steward

Harry Bradbury, Balfour Beatty



Internal Auditor Jayne Dunstan, JD Accounting
External Auditor PKF Littlejohn LLP

Finance Report:

The guiding principles of the Finance Committee are that the parish finances are managed in a transparent, impartial way while seeking value for money at every opportunity.

Council had budgeted for the last financial year that expenditure would exceed income with the balance being taken from project and general reserves. However, due to challenges made to previous years' accounts by a single parishioner, the external auditor was obligated to investigate, and an unforeseen additional charge was levied by the auditor of £12,500 which had to be funded from general reserve. This is a huge sum, equivalent to almost half the precept, Council is extremely disappointed that despite the majority of the challenges being dismissed by the auditor together with Council's formal objection to the level of the auditor's fees, such expense was incurred as a consequence of a complaint from a single parishioner.

The Parish Council whilst providing the core activities covered by the Lengthsman and the Rights of Way provision, continue to provide social and welfare support via the Community Support Scheme. The Kerne Bridge Canoe Launch project continues to provide additional income that has enabled the council to avoid increasing the precept despite inflationary pressures and increases in costs.

The Council is pleased to provide support to a community-led initiative, the Howle Hill Memorial Project. The Parish Council has very recently been awarded a grant by the National Lottery Fund that will enable the project to be realised.

Community Support Scheme

The Hub located at Walford Village Hall offers a wonderful space for our members and community to socialise which is an invaluable part of their wellbeing. Our Co-ordinator, Rebecca Perdell delivers an exciting programme of events which are published on our website and Facebook page. Work is underway supported by the local Scouts and Cubs to create a Community Garden at the Hub to include planting of Bee and Butterfly friendly flowers.

The work of the Walford Community Support Scheme is to forge community spirit and improve the lives and well-being of its' residents - it is run by Parishioners for Parishioners. The scheme is open to all residents of the Walford Parish irrespective of age. If you know anyone who may benefit from the support we offer, or, if you have a few hours to spare and would like to become a volunteer member then please contact Rebecca, our Co-ordinator on 07493 171430.

Kerne Bridge Canoe Launch

Riverseas Holdings Ltd continue to operate the Site on behalf of the Parish Council and undertakes all operational maintenance activity on Site as per the terms of the Management Agreement. The Parish Council continues to manage compliance with the terms of the Management Agreement via the



Performance Management Checklist, copies of which are available on the website. Appropriate Risk Assessments of the Site have been undertaken and published on the website.

- **Bank Erosion**

With enormous thanks to Councillor Mark Petersen, the works to the eroding bank were completed by JPR Environmental in full compliance with the permissions from the Environment Agency. Thanks also to Councillors Tara Barnet and Mark Petersen, together with local residents, who planted numerous native bulbs and flowers on the site earlier this year.

- **Bus Shelter**

The new bus shelter, supplied by Walford Timer, has been installed and is fully operational.

- **Railway Buttress**

Councillor Mark Petersen is leading a project to preserve and renovate the railway buttress, an important part of our local industrial heritage which is located on the site. Details will be reported at Parish Council meetings as the project progresses.

- **KBCL Working Group**

The KBCL Working Group continues to meet as required to discuss matters relating to the Canoe Launch, details of the meetings together with meeting minutes are published on the website.

- **Footpath to Kerne Bridge**

Councillor Will Warburg is working with Herefordshire Council to formally recognise the path from the Kerne Bridge site to Kerne Bridge itself as a registered Public Right of Way.

Safety & Environmental Working Group

The Safety & Environmental Working Group has undertaken a number of activities within the Parish during the last 12 months. Supported by the tenacious efforts of local resident, Bill Cansdale, the Council continues to lobby Balfour Beatty to improve the safety of Leys Hill junction. The Council has requested a new access to the footpath to Kerne Bridge directly opposite to the Inn on the Wye to prevent canoeists walking on the road. Councillor Simeon Cole in his capacity as Ward Councillor is leading discussions with Herefordshire Council.

Public Rights of Way (PROW)

We have approximately 26 miles of Public Rights of Way in Walford, most of which are navigable, as they should be. Walford is a wonderful area to explore, with some stunning views, as well as 'secret' woodland walks to navigate. Given the size of the network, we urge anyone walking our paths and tracks to report any problems via our Clerk, or directly to the PROW Officer. This helps us to rectify problems and improve the walking or riding experience. We are aware of a couple of routes that are in a less than ideal state, we are trying to rectify these as soon as possible.