

Report by Cllr John Hobart

The last year has been a busy one for me in my role as Cabinet member for Environment and Heritage, Ward Councillor for Carisbrooke and, of course, a member of Newport Parish Council.

Wearing my Environmental hat I have continued to work with the Environment Agency and Southern Water in the endeavours to relieve flooding issues on the Lukely Brook, as well as efforts to improve the water quality and health of this main river. The Gunville Stream, also a main river, has been included in all these projects. I'm pleased to say that both elements of this are going quite well, I believe, this year by the fact that despite heavy rainfall throughout the winter months we haven't experienced any major flooding issues through the village. I think a lot of this has been helped by the CCTV monitoring system and the trash screens that have been installed. Efforts to encourage farmers to improve their field drainage is also proving beneficial as we have seen less run off on some of the roads most badly effected. Island Roads have been kept aware of the need to clear road gullies and so overall I do feel that the area has fared a great deal better than in previous years. I regularly attend Newport Rivers meetings and so am able to keep abreast of any developments.

Unfortunately the big freeze and snow had a detrimental effect on the reservoir at Alvington. Despite fears that more than 10,000 people would lose water the swift action of Southern Water, the Council's Emergency planning team and co-ordinated services worked effectively and efficiently so that a crisis was averted with very few losing access to water.

Also from an environmental perspective I am supporting Plastic Free Island and would urge everyone to think about what they do with their plastic waste and recycle wherever possible. Better still to go back to the traditional way of buying unpackaged foods, and making sure to carry reuse-able shopping bags. Decline plastic straws, and take your reusable mugs to take away coffee shops! All small things but if we all do it the positive impact will be great!

From a Heritage perspective I continue as a Trustee of Carisbrooke Castle Museum. The Castle is a wonderful focal point of our village. Unfortunately despite best efforts I was unable to persuade English Heritage to drop their plans to charge in the car park there. I understand those visiting the castle get a refund of parking charges, but those just using the car park as a base to walk from are now expected to pay.

I have been delighted to see the Hidden Heroes exhibitions and events around Newport, its wonderful to be able to celebrate so many of the talented and inventive individuals that Newport has been home to over the years (as well as many from across the Island as well)

I am very involved with the future planning for the Dinosaur Museum and we are determined that it will retain its accredited status as well as expanding its facility as a tourist attraction.

On a totally local level I continue to pursue the fixed crossing on Carisbrooke Road. The need for this was highlighted even further when our crossing patrol officer was relocated for a few months. I'm pleased to say that we have her back in situ now.... She was much missed. I know that local people understand the need to drive slowly in this area, particularly at morning and afternoon school times, however I totally support the 20s Plenty Campaign and feel that this is imperative through our village, a slower speed limit well sign posted will hopefully slow down those who are not so familiar with the area. I am also anxious to continue my pursuit of 20mph speed limits on our narrow, often single track, country lanes, particularly where they link bridleways and footpaths.

I work with the Local Access Forum and the Rights of Way department in the council. We are always on a tight budget but are seeking to do our utmost to keep bridleways and footpaths in the best condition possible for riders, cyclists and walkers. We are always looking for the opportunity to create multi-user tracks for shared use by vulnerable road users. We are also trying to get land owners to grant permissive rights of way over their land and have achieved several of these this year. I am delighted to hear the government environment minister saying that much of the available grant aid to farmers post-Brexit will be public money for public goods. This means that farmers will receive grants based on their environmental management and within this will be permitted public access across private land. If this all all comes to fruition it could open up even more trails than we already have.

The results of the car parking survey are now being analysed and we are considering on street parking permits, increasing the radius that residents can have annual permits in local car parks. It is anticipated that this will extend from 200 metres to 300 metres. This service currently costs residents approximately £2.88 per week and I believe is good value to park in a safe area off road.

I know that there are issues with cars parking on Cedar Hill causing traffic hold ups in the morning and evening 'rush-hour'. I am discussing the options of either double or single yellow lines along here. The advantage of single is that it would allow overnight parking and possibly the best solution as long as it isn't abused. It is in the hands of the Highways department, but I keep pushing for a solution.

We have seen three substantial planning applications for the Gunville area (Ash Lane, Alvington Manor View and the corner of Gunville and Forest Road) finally approved this year. I know that, as always when significant change is going to happen in an area, there have been a number of concerns voiced by some residents in the area. I would like to give my best assurances that I am in regular contact with our planning officers over the matters of concern and feel that good solutions and development control are in place and that these developments will be an asset to the area once complete.

I continue to be available to my residents, and I am happy to meet up to discuss issues.

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