

# Upton St Leonards Parish Council

## Annual Report 2024 / 2025

### **Chairman's Report: Cllr Keith Pearson**

I am making this report once again as Chair of the Council as due to unforeseen personal circumstances having caused our Chair Chrissie Castle to step down, I find myself in the role once again. Most importantly now that those issues have gladly gone away we once more have Chrissie back on Council. There were elections last May and we have some newly elected members on the Council having been previously co-opted, namely Andrew Skelton and Dr Cliff Alderman.

The Sub Committee Chairs will report separately. But the main points that I need to highlight for the past year are as follows. After quite a number of years since originally planned the new development at Bowden Hall Farm was completed and the Close was proudly named Monica Sims Close, after that very esteemed past resident of the village.

It will also be noted that during several times of bad weather over the winter, the River Twyver did not really flood at all, this we believe is mainly due to the works carried out on the scarp edge. Following that it will have been noticed of course that dredging work and tree removal have since happened, all being carried out by County to further restrict flooding issues.

Finally I must pay tribute to Cllr Graham Hayes who stepped down from Council in 2024 after 41 years of service to the community. The Parish Council bestowed upon him an honour never before used in Upton, " The Freedom of Upton St Leonards". So watch out for his sheep in the High St

### **Planning Report: Cllr Jim Browne**

This year seemed a fairly quiet year for planning applications. The Council received 17 applications, 5 rejections which was supported by SDC. The majority of these were extensions to private dwellings. There is one application currently on appeal to the Secretary of State. The New Dawn development on Bondend Lane has now been completed and is understood all properties having been sold. There has been no change in the Stroud Local Plan.

### **Environment Report: Cllr Cliff Alderman**

First, my thanks to Peter Wilson for his work on the Parish Council as Environment Lead as he takes a break from PC duties. I took over this role in March this year although I had been a part of the environment group feeding into the PC and also developed a strong commitment to Biodiversity which has been an important part of environmental consideration since the Environment Act 2021. I have attended 3 training sessions as a result.

I enclose a summary of what has been achieved over the last year:

**June 24** PC Biodiversity Policy was formally adopted.

I was invited to talk to Upton School to introduce the idea of looking after and thinking about all living things.

**July 24** New Village signs were installed at each end of the village. The Autospeedwatch camera System was approved by the PC for Churchfield Road plus two other sites for a moveable Vehicle Activation System (VAS)

**Aug 2024** Attended a training session in Stroud with Rebecca Charley, Nature and Environment Lead for SDC. This was a discussion on what good habitats look like. I met with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust on 3 occasions:

1. To discuss grass verges and roadside management
2. To discuss the possibility of species identification training and a Bioblitz
3. Arranged a site meeting at Cud Hill common and the Recreation Ground and provision of a subsequent audit of the flora.

**Sept 24** Watercourse clearance undertaken for Bonded Lane/Bondend Road Bridge by GCC. Area Highways conducted unblocking of drains along Birchall Lane and again this spring

**Oct 24** I met with Donna Cavill of Natural England at Cud Hill Common to better understand what the HLS Agreement means and to consider how best to reduce the amount of scrub. (see later)

**Nov 24** Met with Stuart Roweth from Stroud Valleys Project (SVP) and they have agreed to plan hedging along parts of the Glebe Field Perimeter in the Spring of 2025 (this has been delayed until the autumn)

**Dec 24** The PC agreed to organise a public meeting in March 2025 to raise awareness of, and promote Biodiversity in support of the PC's Biodiversity Action Plan.

Dexter cattle belonging to the Painswick Beacon Group grazed Cud Hill Common for about 3 weeks. This aids the management of the grassland.

At about the same time the Footpath Team cleared some brambles, Willowherb and smaller trees/shrubs in an effort to maintain the Common as grassland as much as possible.

**Jan 25** In response to a fallen tree on a house next to Twyver Bank, a number of trees were removed as a safety precaution. Some of the root systems had been weakened due to dredging work to prevent the risk of flooding. (Since then more work has been done to tidy up the banks and hopefully replacement saplings will be planted later this year with the School's involvement.)

**Feb 25** The PC agreed to provide Solar lighting alongside the Village Green footpath following a discussion and request at a previous meeting.

The PC agreed to hire a Flail Mower to remove scrub (mainly brambles) at Cud Hill Common which was an action identified at the Last Natural England Review of Cud Hill Common in late 2023.

**March 25** Investigated the possible re-seeding of bare ground at Cud Hill Common. Arranged a Biodiversity Information evening at the Pavilion inviting 5 speakers to address the meeting. This appears to have been well-received.

The PC agreed that the perimeter of the Recreation ground would be left uncut, and the Glebe Field would have large areas unmown as well. Paths will be cut through the grass for access to picnic tables and benches. Other areas in the village especially around trees will also be left uncut.

**April 25** Finalised the plans for the Bioblitz event at the Recreation Ground with Megan Adamou of GWT.

Confirmed that the planting of hedging at the Recreation Ground would be put back to the autumn.

I held an Environment Group meeting to discuss a wide variety of subjects including efforts on improving biodiversity, the feasibility of a Repair shop (cafe) and use of excess produce at the Allotments.

**Ongoing** Weekly Tuesday morning sessions as one of the Footpaths' Group managing, maintaining and improving the footpaths in the Parish. This year alone we have installed 7 galvanised steel kissing gates thus making a circular walk in the Parish possible without stiles. Other work has included repairing stiles, brush-cutting paths of nettles and brambles, removing fallen trees or branches in most cases, helping to maintain the Churchyard, litter picking up Portway and Nuthill. Our thanks should be given to Andy Russell for his organisation of a group of ageing men, and Julie Watson, in getting the equipment, arranging who does what and ferrying us about with his car and trailer.

### **Recreation Report: Cllr Cliff Alderman**

I took over the role as Lead Councillor for the above in September last year. I perform weekly checks on the Play areas, the Glebe Field, the Jubilee Garden and the Recreation Ground field and record my findings on a spreadsheet. Minor adjustments are made as a result and I liaise with the Clerk when appropriate.

In July the surface of one of the picnic benches was replaced because someone had burned a hole in it using a disposable BBQ. Signs have now been put up to hopefully prevent this happening again.

The Glebe Field is used by dog owners mainly and it is largely free of dog fouling. It is a pity that some dog owners refuse to keep their dogs on leads in the Recreation Ground despite the signs and me asking them to do so.

In March a new litter bin was installed which should have greater capacity and encourages recycling of suitable materials.

Car parking at the Pavilion has been discussed (and deferred to a later Parish Council meeting) as some vehicles are using it to park outside normal usage times. A Parking Policy will be agreed soon.

I held a meeting in January with two of the four Recreation Ground Users ie Cricket and Football (Tennis and Petanque sent their apologies with a report).

**Football:** Main issues are lack of weed control and feeding of the football pitch and discussion about drainage ie clearing the drain along the road alongside **the**

carpark/tennis club boundary and possibly putting in another land drain from the play area to the Vodafone mast. The Club has developed good relations with Saintbridge Sports Club who now encourage the Teams to use their facilities for post-match hospitality.

**Cricket:** Nothing particular to report.

**Tennis:** Report by email: The Club is hoping to expand the footprint of the Tennis Hut outwards by about a metre. Mention was made of reduced cleanliness of the kitchen and toilets. The new cleaner since September has hopefully rectified this.

**Petanque:** Report by email: The Club has replaced all the boards around the piste and created some new seating areas. Weeding and new topping has been applied and new members are always welcomed.

**Pavilion:** Andy Russell, Pavilion Manager, mentioned that the Pavilion has been decorated inside and has now painted external window frames and doors. He is happy with the work of the new cleaner who he says is doing a great job. Mention was made of the perceived lack of sweeping of the floor after football have used the changing rooms (it is expected that users sweep out mud particularly and leave the floor tidy). Andy has made and replaced the shed door. He continues to manage the Pavilion very well and I thank him for this.

**General comments:** Cricket have exclusive use of the Rec from May until the end of August and Football from September until the end of April. Any use overlap is negotiated between the two clubs. Both Clubs expect the grass to be cut about every two weeks. All Clubs have use of the Pavilion free of charge for meetings and the odd social event but only if there are no commercial bookings. It was agreed to have two meetings a year, in April to collate information ready for the Annual Parish Meeting and October. The next meeting will be October. Cliff asked if white lines could be with biodegradable paint. Cliff mentioned the litter that at times appears by the dugouts (drinks bottles especially). He was reassured that Football take this seriously and have bags to collect litter after each game.

### **Allotment Report: Cllr Mary McLachlan**

Both sites are doing well thanks to the good weather of late. The skips were delivered on both sites and were very soon full. Perry Orchard has been now removed and Stanley will be next. Tracy has sent out the renewals for this year. We will know when they have been returned how many may be vacant for any new tenants. The compost area on Stanley has been removed to make way for more parking further down the site. Most tenants have their own compost arrangements on their plots so a communal area is not needed. Scalping has been delivered to make sound parking for the user's. The paths on Perry Orchard are being cut fortnightly as is Stanley and the cuttings used for composting and mulching so nothing goes to waste. We look forward to another productive season weather permitting.