

Char Chat News

For residents and our guests in
Whitchurch Canonichorum, Wootton Fitzpaine, Morcombela
Stanton St Gabriel, Fishpond, Ryall and Monkton Wyld

December 2021

Welcome to the Char Valley Parish Council newsletter

December 2021...

What a busy summer it turned out to be. With so many tourists staycationing, and Dorset being such an attractive area, it was no surprise to see our venues, restaurants, pubs, accommodation, and roads heaving with people. So much so, that we didn't have enough staff to keep everything going 7 days a week and our businesses couldn't get all the benefits they deserved after the long lockdown. Hopefully, next year, we'll have a better balance.

Besides the economic benefits which we all needed, the overload of tourists and other visitors brings with it many problems. The extra traffic on our narrow country lanes, the surprising lack of reverse gear in some cars, the demanding attitude of some visitors, and lack of basic courtesy and respect for others was very disappointing, but it was the excess strain on our public services that caused some of the most lasting damage.

While we understand the need to encourage tourism, this has to be matched by an increase in investment in local services. Our countryside and coastal areas—the very thing that attracts so many tourists—needs investment to improve the roads, improve the broadband, improve the public transport, and protect our natural resources from the increased strain caused by the influx of so many visitors, especially if Dorset Council expects to increase the revenue from tourism in West Dorset.

In this edition we publish a summary of our major report on the state of the River Char. The River quality has suffered badly from a combination of climate change and increased flow of pollutants. The river is a key resource for us and our neighbouring parishes—please read the report and, if you can, come to the report launch on Saturday December 11th.

Meanwhile, as you travel through our parish, can you recognise the houses that used to be pubs? We had quite a few locally and here we have their history for you to 'mull' over.

There's an update on Dorset's Bus Service improvement Plan—and we're looking for a location for one of our public benches.

Enjoy...

The Editor

Char Valley Parish Council (CVPC) is a group council made up of the civil parish councils of Stanton St Gabriel, Whitchurch Canonichorum (North and South), and Wootton Fitzpaine.

Because each separate council is small, we join up for meetings so we can take decisions together and achieve more.

The combined civil parish stretches from the Jurassic Coast to the Marshwood Vale, all falling within the West Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

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Opinions expressed by individual contributors do not necessarily represent the views of CVPC as a whole.

CVPC Meetings

CVPC meets monthly except in August and December. Being a group council, our meetings are normally held in each of our village halls in rotation—James Hargreaves Hall in Morcombela (JH), Whitchurch Canonorum village hall (WC), and Wootton Fitzpaine village hall (WF). The meeting minutes and agenda are posted on parish notice boards and website. All our meetings are open to the public and we welcome public participation.

Our meetings start at 7:30pm, with the following schedule:

2022 Meetings: 10th January WC 14th February WF 14th March WC 11th April WF 9th May JH
13th June WC 18th July WF 12th September JH 10th October WC 21st November WF

Currently the Council have returned to physical meetings in our local village halls, but this may need to change. As always, our meeting is a public meeting even if it is on-line, so please check with our clerk for details if you wish to take part.

CVPC COUNCILLORS

www.charvalley.org

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VACANCY

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CLERK

Tamsin Ely	07786 086038	E: charvalley@dorset-aptc.gov.uk
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Char Valley Parish Council information

CVPC Vacancy for Parish Councillors representing Whitchurch Canonorum North and Wootton Fitzpaine

Carolyn Peck and Kit Vaughn have decided to step down as local Councillors after many years of valuable service. Carolyn and Kit undertook many duties for the local Council and contributed with a wide experience of local and national issues. Councillors do not get paid and take on the responsibility of representing our local residents in many local matters and are asked to respond to policy initiatives both locally in Dorset and from Central Government.

If you have lived or worked for at least the past 12 months in or within 3 miles of the boundaries of the combined Char Valley Parish, then you are eligible to be a Parish Councillor for CVPC. Please contact our clerk, Tamsin, if you are interested.

Parish Noticeboards for local community use

CVPC maintains eight noticeboards around the parish and, apart from Parish Council notices, suitable items of relevance to our residents may be posted on the CVPC Boards by anyone. We replaced three boards last year and are replacing three boards later this year as they are beyond repair.

If you have a notice, an event, or a local request that you want to publicise on one of our 3 locked noticeboards, please contact one of your local Parish Councillors who will open it for you.

Wootton Fitzpaine Noticeboard

CVPC is looking for a new position for our notice board in Wootton Fitzpaine as the current position no longer enables the Council to fulfil its legal obligations.

We will continue to post notices on the existing boards and a new noticeboard will be erected when a suitable site has been agreed. We welcome suggestions for the new location.

Char Chat News and email notifications

We aim to produce 3 issues per year of Char Chat News to be distributed as a printed version to all residents and local organisations or businesses within the Char Valley combined parishes.

Let our clerk know if you would prefer to receive only a digital copy, or would like to receive both a digital and paper copy, and remember to include your postal address in your request as well as email address.

We have a separate email notification list that we use to send residents updates on local information, traffic and urgent updates, and to notify residents of any important matters arising between Char Chat publications (eg Bus user survey requests from Dorset Council). *These are also posted on our website.*

If you want to join the local information email distribution list, please inform our clerk, Tamsin.

Your Address

We use the local electoral roll as our primary source for addresses. However, this may not be up to date, so we also update the names and addresses based on local knowledge. If the address used for your copy is not correct,

PLEASE TELL US HOW YOU WANT TO BE ADDRESSED.

For example, we have over 70 addresses that say 'The OCCUPIER' - is this right for you?

We also recognise that personal circumstances can affect the addressees, so please inform us if we need to change the name or title of anyone on our list. Contact our Clerk, Tamsin, with your changes.

TREE OFFICERS needed

There are two new vacancies for Tree Officers within the Char Valley parishes. The applicants do not have to be a Parish Councillor or have any specialist knowledge beyond an interest in the subject!

Essentially, this important local role involves keeping an eye on applications lodged with Dorset Council for tree work, field enquiries from residents and, if necessary, liaise with officers in Dorchester.

In addition, the occasional site visit might be necessary to ensure that protected trees are not under threat from a planned development.

The applicants should be willing to familiarise themselves with individual trees and those stands of trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders and understand the importance of trees as part of the area's biodiversity and their place in our rural landscape and village streetscapes.

Libraries in Dorset

Dorset Council has launched a public consultation to inform how they develop and deliver their library service in the future. Library users and non-users are being asked to share their views. The consultation runs from 25 October 2021 to 7 January 2022 and is available at www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/let-s-talk-libraries-consultation

Char Valley website

However you get your news about what's going on in the village (whichever village that may be), remember that there's a huge amount of information on the parish website: www.charvalley.org

If you want to know what planning applications have been made recently, they're all listed at www.charvalley.org/planning (with links so you can see the drawings, application forms and how to make a comment yourself)

If you want to report a blocked drain or footpath, a pothole, a missed bin collection, an abandoned vehicle or a dead otter, visit www.charvalley.org/howdoi

If you want to speak to a parish councillor about anything that's concerning you locally, their contact details are all listed at www.charvalley.org/parish-councillors

If you want to look at a map of all the monuments, footpaths, ancient woodland, SSSIs or traditional orchards in our parishes, visit www.charvalley.org/maps

If you want to read issues of Char Chat Magazine back to 2011, find them at www.charvalley.org/char-chat

If you want find the latest news from Dorset Council, Healthwatch Dorset, Citizen's Advice Dorset, Dorset History Centre, Dorset Community Action, Artsreach, Dorset Coastal Forum, Dorset Local Nature Partnership, the Rural Services Network, Dorset CPRE Newsletter, Dorset AONB, WATAG (the Local Transport Group) or BLAP (Bridport Area Parish Liaison Group)... you'll find links to their current newsletter here: www.charvalley.org/news

If you want to read more about our plans to clean up the River Char, local efforts to cut down on use of pesticides, the implications of climate change locally, plans for a Dorset National Park or local response to the climate and nature crisis, you'll find everything at: www.charvalley.org/environment

If you want to know what your parish council is doing, how to contact us, how to stand as a councillor, how to attend a meeting, where to find minutes of all our meetings... start here: www.charvalley.org/council



State of the River Char and Monkton Wyld Stream

Dorset Wild Rivers Partnership

09/11/2021



Landscapes
for life
.org.uk

DORSET
One of the
AONB Family

River Char Community Project

The full results of the [River Char Community Project Survey \(RCCP\)](https://www.charvalley.org/riverchar) are now published and can be viewed on the Char Valley Parish Council (CVPC) website at www.charvalley.org/riverchar

This important survey was commissioned by Char Valley Parish Council (CVPC) and compiled by the Dorset Wild Rivers Partnership (a partnership of the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT) and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest), with the support of the Dorset Catchment Based Approach, Environment Agency and Wessex Water. It drew on many sources including CVPC councillors and farmers, the questionnaire we circulated to all residents earlier in the year with Char Chat, the local knowledge of DWT and the Environment Agency (EA).

2 minute Report Summary—please read

Headline results are that the River Char and Monkton Wyld Stream are considered **failing watercourses** by the Environment Agency (EA) and in need of improvement.

The report identifies seven main ways we can start to make improvements – from monitoring the quality of the water to getting involved in clearing the banks and blockages, from advising on farming and land management issues to looking after our septic tanks better.

Meetings, walks and working parties are planned between now and next summer – ***do join in if you'd like to be part of our drive to clean up our river***, make it safe for everyone and a haven for wildlife.

REPORT DETAIL

River classification

The EA classifies rivers into these categories: High > Good > Moderate > Poor > Bad. Both the Char and Monkton Wyld Stream are classed as Moderate. The EA's aim is to have waterbodies classed as Good, so both our rivers are considered to be failing watercourses and in need of improvement.

EA reports identify pollution from agriculture, run-off from roads, invasive species, disease of alder trees and poor conditions for wildlife as the main issues. Further concerns about land management, sewerage, habitat and health & safety issues with bathing water quality at the mouth of the river have been expressed in the EA's Water Framework Assessment and voiced by local residents.

Key problems and areas of concern

The combined areas of most concern, as identified by the EA and other agencies, local people and those that work in the area are:

- ◆ Sediment & phosphate contamination from agriculture
- ◆ Phosphate/sewage pollution from septic tanks
- ◆ Flash flooding
- ◆ Poor habitat for wildlife
- ◆ The impact of invasive species, particularly Himalayan balsam
- ◆ The desire for the river to function as naturally as possible, without causing issues downstream

What we can do to address these problems (in Phase 2 of the River Char Community Project):

Monitoring

Training local people in river monitoring techniques, from looking at insect life in the stream to checking the chemical properties of the water. Regular monitoring would give us early warning of pollution incidents and an opportunity to inform the relevant authorities.

Habitat improvement & restoration

This will restore the natural processes of the river where it has been altered and allow aquatic plants and fish species to thrive. Much can be achieved with the help of volunteers.

Invasive species control

Clearing Himalayan balsam will allow native plants to thrive and reduce bank erosion. This is relatively easily achieved by volunteers, though we may never eradicate the plant. Using mink rafts to monitor mink, and then controlling them if necessary, would reduce pressures on the native water vole.

Research & survey

Further research, with the help of volunteers could help refine what condition we should be aiming for

with the River Char and Monkton Wyld Stream. Particular areas of interest are:

- ♦ what the natural state of the river would be (a geomorphological appraisal of the river)
- ♦ what animals and plants would we expect to find here – compared with what we do find (an ecological appraisal of the river).

Community engagement

As well as practical opportunities to improve the state of the river, walks, talks and demonstrations will highlight successes and show what else could be done (e.g. better septic tank management).

Agricultural land management change

By working with the farming community in the catchment to make changes to the way the land is managed, sediment runoff and therefore nutrient pollution could be reduced.

Natural Flood Management

Along the river, leaky woody dams, gully blocking, and tree/hedge planting could be undertaken. This could delay and even reduce flood peaks and reduce sediment runoff.

Planned actions

This report will be launched on **Saturday 11th December** at Becklands Farm, Whitchurch Canonorum DT6 6RG. Please join us (parking onsite or at Whitchurch Hall):

1:45pm ~ coffee/tea | 2:00pm ~ a talk by Ian Rees of Dorset AONB | 2:30-3:30pm ~ walk led by Nick Gray of DWT pointing out characteristics of the Char and scope for action

Dates for riverfly monitoring training for local residents in 2022 will be announced at this meeting.

On **17th January** at 7.30pm there will be an evening's 'Char Conversation' led by Ian Rees and Nick Gray. This will be online and a chance to discuss the report and plans for action with the report's authors. To join, please email charvalley@dorset-aptc.gov.uk

A first 'daylighting' working party (to clear a section of the river and its banks) will take place on **Saturday 22nd January**.

Other **workshops/walks** will be organised between **January and April 2022**.

Work on invasive species will start in June 2022.

On Agricultural Land Management there is funding for an initial four advisory visits to local farms looking at farm economics and suggesting how to make them more sustainable environmentally & economically.

We are preparing a leaflet to help residents to look after their septic tanks better.

From **April 2022**, Dorset AONB will look for additional funding to allow the project to be widened to include the entire catchment.

Other actions will be announced in January.

PUBS THAT ARE NO MORE IN WHITCHURCH, RYALL AND MORCOMBELAKE

It is amazing to think how many public houses there were in the area in the early 1900s and that there were enough consumers of alcohol to keep most of them open until WW1.

Perhaps the most interesting one is the Old Ship Inn, with the attractive French Mansard roof, which is a building just off the A35 along the road Ship Knapp.

It was a beer house so it was not licenced. It is thought that it may have closed in the 1820s when the Act (1824) for the road realignment was passed to alter the route to create the "bypass" which is now the A35. This new road meant the lanes which had been used for centuries to travel from Chideock to Stanton St Gabriel and then onto Charmouth were much less important, and so the fishing village of Stanton went into sharp decline. The building is now called Ship Farm.



A new Ship Inn was built on the opposite side of the A35 and opened sometime after 1830. This building burnt down in the 1880s and was subsequently rebuilt. Records shown that Palmers (the local Bridport Brewery) were supplying beer from the Old Brewery to this pub and that in fact it was leased to the brewery, the lease being renewed in 1891. It remained a beer house for many years, with Palmers failing to get the magistrates to exchange the licence for The Star for a full licence for the Ship. It was not until 1919 that a full licence was given. The landlords of this pub can be traced back to at least 1848. The pub closed in 2006.

Before the advent of buses and cars the Ship Inn was a coaching inn whereby coaches stopped en route from Exeter to London. Later there was a horse bus which ran daily from Lyme Regis to Bridport.

In 2009 the building became Artwave West, an innovative



open plan art space.

Just along the road there was the Sun Inn. The earliest records for this are 1772. In 1817 it was burnt down, but was rebuilt in 1824 and was valued at £300 and renamed the Rising Sun. It changed hands several times in the 1800s and in 1870 was valued at £600. It closed in 1972 and has since been a restaurant, dog grooming business and at the moment is Annie's tea shop.



A third public house along this stretch of road was the

Star Inn, adjacent to Felicity's Farm Shop. This was a beer house on a lifehold lease. It dates from about 1830. It was closed in 1917 in an attempt to get a full



licence for the Ship Inn. It is now called Star Cottage.

In Ryall there was a pub called the Masons Arms. It was probably thatched, and burnt down in the 19th century but was up and running in 1881 when two single ladies, Edith and Matilda Staples, (both in their mid-50s) were inn keepers. It was closed during the early part of the 20th century. The present property name, Ryall House, is now in place of the public house title on the house front.



Travelling down into Whitchurch at the crossways leading to Wootton is the property Old Cross Cottage. This used to be the old New Inn. The lower end of the building used to be blacksmiths.



When Mr Glyde, the landlord, died in 1902 it ceased to be a public house but

Mrs Glyde continued to run her shop until her death in 1918. Several of the older people I interviewed in the early 1980s bought sweets from Mrs Glyde on their way home from school. My great grandfather John Huxter owned this property after he retired from farming at Cutty Stubbs, on Bluntshay Lane.

Legend has it that there used to be a tunnel from the cellar of the old New Inn leading down to the nearby River Char, which was used by smugglers after they had rowed their kegs of brandy up the river from a ship at Charmouth. Unfortunately no-one in the last 120 years has ever been able to find the tunnel!

Palmers Brewery immediately built a new "New Inn" (on the closure of the old one) opposite the old one and this

was well supported for many years, and was involved with the Char Valley Horse Show and



the local football teams. For years the landlords were the Murleys. It closed in the 1970s and is now called New Cross House.

Then there is Edgehill Cottage at the top of Goodens Hill on the Whitchurch/Morcombelake border.



Over the years it has been called Jerome Cottage and Upper Cockwell. But before that in the 1800s it was called the Bull and Bones, previously a

farm and a pub! Nothing is known about the pub (probably just a beer house without a licence) but when interviewing Mr Izod, the owner in the early 1980s, he had plenty to say about the building.

Heavy thick beams found in the ceiling were believed to come from a wreck of the Spanish Armada when a galleon was ripped to pieces in St Gabriel's Bay. Local residents were quick to gather the flotsam and jetsam to incorporate into their buildings. Mr Izod also discovered gravestones taking the place of flagstones on the cottage's floor. In the garden he came across a small grave which contained the remains of several cockerels with spurs on the skeletons of their legs. It may be supposed that the birds were victims of an ancient cockfighting bout. Elizabethan coins were also found in the immediate area so there could be a direct link with the bones!

Another surprising discovery was a Catholic shrine which was found behind a modern fireplace. The shrine lay under a pile of very old rubble and was not intact. One can only assume that it was hurriedly buried when Judge Jeffreys' men were in the local area.

In the dim distant past there were even more pubs in the local area, those being Vale House (off Cardsmill/Gassons Lane) and Peace Farm House (on Bluntshay Lane). It seems that the latter lost its licence because the landlord sold some brandy to a local farmer to treat an ailing cow which he took off the premises and didn't drink it in the pub!

Last one standing...



It is important to end this piece of writing with the only public house that has survived and is still going strong in 2021 – and that is the Five Bells Pub in Whitchurch. Long may Pat and Stacey continue to pull pints for the locals!

Char Valley Transport & Travel

Community Speedwatch

In response to local residents' concerns and enquiries, CVPC contacted our local police community officer and discussed various issues concerning our local village roads, including whether vehicles were speeding. The process for verification of speeding and any subsequent changes to limits, is fairly lengthy and involved. However, a starting point is to provide evidence.

The accepted method for creating reliable evidence is data collected by a Community Speedwatch team. This comprises a minimum of 6 volunteers who would be trained by our local police to use and accurately record data from hand-held speed radar cameras. The team would work in teams of three, sometimes with a police officer with them who would take action with speeding vehicles. They will keep a record of how many vehicles were checked and how many were observed exceeding the speed limit thresholds (25 mph in a 20 mph area and 36 mph in a 30 mph area and 47 mph in a 40 mph area).

If it can be shown that the speed limit is consistently exceeded, then a speed strip can be installed for 24hr monitoring, followed by application for any speed changes.

If you are interested in volunteering and being trained, then please contact our clerk, Tamsin.

Dorset Council BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (BSIP)

Dorset Council have submitted their Bus Service Improvement Plan to Central Government for funding, along with all the other authorities across the country.

The plan can be read on Dorset Council's website at www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/bus-service-improvement-plan

There plan recognises the challenges of providing a public transport service in rural areas and for a population that is older than the UK average living in an economically challenged area: to quote "the proportion aged 65+ in 2019 was 29% versus 16% in England", "The county's economic output remains

below national and regional averages, GVA per capita for Dorset in 2018 was 23% lower than the national figure").

The Plan links improvements to the bus services with a desire to reduce carbon emissions from personal transport but recognises the difficulties of persuading people to switch "with rural areas having 85%+ of households with at least one vehicle" to public transport, especially for access to education, employment, hospitals and services. Rural Tourism – The Jurassic Coast and Dorset AONB also get a mention.

There is an interesting analysis which shows that using a bus is more expensive than a 10-mile car trip and using car parks—basically any trip from Char Valley to our local towns. Part of the solution appears to be to raise the parking costs (quote "It is fully recognised that future parking policies will have a significant positive or negative impact on the use of local buses and so the council will continue to work to ensure parking charges are not set so that people choose to drive rather than using a more sustainable form of travel") - hopefully also reducing fares?

There are plenty of interesting statistics spread through the report concerning current age of buses, pollution from current buses, poor service quality, and very low passenger numbers. No surprises here but it does show how previous policies have sadly failed us all.

However, the proposed Improvement Plan has some encouraging objectives, which, if they are achieved, could provide our area with a usable public transport system based primarily around "Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)" services, and to keep it trendy and on-message "Digital DRT". Basically, an on-demand bus service that you can get within 1 hour, any day of the week, and in evenings, to take you to a hub (eg Bridport or Lyme or Beaminster) which would then connect you to a regular bus service to elsewhere in the County or further afield.

Lets hope Dorset Council succeeds in getting the funds to implement a viable system, and then has the skills, resources, and determination to implement these plans.

CVPC Bench looking for a home

One of the benches that CVPC owns has become available for relocation somewhere in our Parish. The bench is for public use and so needs to find a home somewhere that will be of benefit to our local residents and visitors. Please contact Tamsin, our clerk, with suggestions (do I need to say 'sensible' suggestions?)...



Hedges and safety

Following input from our residents, CVPC liaised with National Highways (previously Highways England) to cut back the hedges and clear the pathways alongside the A35 in Morcombelake. Now it is possible to walk the length of Morcombelake from Felicity's to Tizard's Knapp without needing to step into the road. Many thanks to Highways—very much appreciated.



If you live along a road - A35 **or other roads**—it **is your responsibility** to maintain the road-side of your hedge so it is safe for vehicles and pedestrians to use. If the highways authority (Dorset or National) have to cut your hedge because it does not meet the regulations, **you may be charged for their services**. Of course, it could be far worse and your lack of hedge maintenance could cause a serious accident.

Please act responsibly and maintain your hedges within the legal requirements. The rules are available on our CVPC website www.charvalley.org/hedges and you can ask for a copy from Dorset Highways.

GRIT BINS IN THE CHAR VALLEY

The Dorset Council has been supplying grit bins to rural areas in Dorset for about thirty years. They are typically placed on roads that are not gritted by gritting lorries. The Council will make sure, annually, that each bin is



completely full during the autumn. A survey has recently taken place of the 33 grit bins in the Char Valley and it was found that 11 needed replenishing. Any member of the public can use the grit during icy times on a public road or path but not on their private premises. Typically a spade or shovel is used to spread a thin layer of grit onto the road surface, covering any snow or ice.

There are two types of bins currently in use, the older type (198) and the modern type. (286) Five new ones have just been purchased to replace old ones that have broken bases, hinges, corners or lids. They should be installed before Christmas.

Grit is actually rock salt and it is used on our roads because it lowers the freezing temperature of water. Rock salt is used to prevent ice from forming in the first place, but it can also be used to melt snow and ice which is already on the ground. Once the temperature falls below -5 degrees C the rock salt will stop serving its purpose on the roads. Stone grit is only usually used on hard packed snow and ice. In conditions where snow has already settled, stone grit can be mixed with salt to provide traction and help break up frozen surfaces.



RIVER CHAR COMMUNITY PROJECT PHASE 2



State of the River Char and
Monkton Wyld Stream
Dorset Wild Rivers Partnership
09/11/2021



PLEASE HELP BY TAKING PART IN THESE EVENTS

Saturday 11th December 1.45pm

The report will be launched at Becklands Farm, Whitchurch
Canonichorum DT6 6RG.

Please join us. (parking on-site or at Whitchurch Hall):

1:45pm ~ coffee/tea

2:00pm ~ a talk by Ian Rees of Dorset AONB

2:30-3:30pm ~ walk led by Nick Gray of DWT pointing out
characteristics of the Char and scope for action

Dates for riverfly monitoring training information for local
residents in 2022 will be announced at this meeting.

Monday 17th January at 7.30pm

There will be an evening's 'Char Conversation' led by Ian Rees and Nick Gray. This will be online and a chance to
discuss the report and plans for action with the report's authors.

To join, please email charvalley@dorset-aptc.gov.uk

Saturday 22nd January

A first 'daylighting' working party (to clear a section of the river and its banks) will take place

Work on invasive species will start in June.

Other **workshops/walks** will be organised between **January and April** next year.

Other actions will be announced in January.

Vacancy for new Parish Councillors

Char Valley Parish Council has vacancies for two new Parish Councillor from December onwards. The Council is a group Parish Council representing Stanton St Gabriel, Whitchurch Canonichorum North and South, and Wootton Fitzpaine parishes. These are civil parishes for the administration of local government duties without religious and generally without political affiliations. These are voluntary positions and require attendance at 10 parish council meetings annually and participation in various duties to do with local issues and laws.

Parish Councils are more important than ever now to represent local interests since West Dorset District Council has been replaced by Dorset Council which covers a hugely greater area. Parish Councillors are now the main authority on matters locally and are consulted on planning and other issues to do with living in these parishes.

If you are interested in joining the council, please contact our clerk Tamsin, or a Councillor to discuss what's involved, and come along to observe one of our meetings.