

# Char Chat News

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

January 2020

## Welcome to the Char Valley Parish Council newsletter

### Welcome to 2020...

Char Valley Parish Council (CVPC) wishes you all the best for the new year and, with so many 'challenging' events happening locally and worldwide, we hope you can find the time and space to appreciate the Char Valley from countryside to sea.

In this newsletter, in addition to the regular updates on CVPC business, we have articles on local history, raffles and glides, local farming, and the climate and ecological emergency.

CVPC deals with many issues during the year, but this year, two challenges stand out as having the potential to affect everyone within our Char Valley parishes.

The first is the potential threat presented by climate and ecological change and consequent effects on our environment, economy, and local way of life. Following on from our articles in the September 2019 Char Chat News, we have been working with other local organisations to provide our residents with factual information and practical advice that is relevant locally.

In this newsletter, we provide details of our afternoon of talks and presentations on SATURDAY MARCH 21st in Whitchurch Village Hall, which we hope will help to prepare for the environmental and climate changes that are anticipated. *It's open to everyone so please come along with your families and friends too.*

The second is Brexit. Whether you were pleased with, disappointed by, or indifferent to the election results, this year the country will be moving towards exit from the EU. Char Valley parishes are a mixed community of big and small farms, tourism, local businesses, working and non-working families and individuals.

We don't know yet how Brexit will affect us but many are very worried about their futures. As a community, we need to be aware of the stress that many will feel and be tolerant of each other, as, regardless of past differences, we share the same neighbourhood.

Lastly, we have a vacancy for a Parish Councillor—please see the details in this newsletter.

*The Editor*

**Char Valley Parish Council (CVPC)** is a group council made up of the civil parish councils of Stanton St Gabriel, Whitchurch Canonorum (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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If you have any issues, concerns, suggestions, or questions about our local parishes, please contact our parish clerk, Annette, who will be able to direct you to a member of the Parish Council.

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 held in each of our village halls in rotation—James Hargreaves Hall in Morcombelake (JH), Whitchurch Canonorum village hall (WC), and Wootton Fitzpaine village hall (WF). All our meetings are open to the public and we welcome participation. The meeting minutes and agenda are posted on parish notice boards. You are welcome to come along to any of these meetings.

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

10th Feb 2020 (WC) 9th Mar 2020 (WF) 6th Apr 2020 (JH) 11th May 2020 (WF)

8th June 2020 (WC) 20th Jul 2020 (JH) 14th Sept 2020 (WC) 12th Oct 2020 (WF)

16th Nov 2020 (JH)

## Staying in touch

It will really help us save (your!) money and get news to you faster if we can communicate by email. For example, we would like to send future issues of this newsletter by email. We will never give or release your email address to anyone else and we promise not to bombard you!

If this works for you, please send an email to our clerk, Annette, at: [charvalley@dorset-aptc.gov.uk](mailto:charvalley@dorset-aptc.gov.uk)

If you're not a fan or user of email, we will continue to produce the printed version of this newsletter. And if you cannot access any of the online articles mentioned in this newsletter, please contact our Clerk for a printed version.

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### Talk with your Councillors

Parish Councillors will be available to talk with local residents and visitors individually in the half hour preceding the CVPC meetings being held at the times and venues listed above

# The Climate and Environmental Emergency

What does it mean and what can we do about it?

## A public meeting on Saturday 21st March 2020 from 2:30 to 5:30pm at Whitchurch Canonorum village hall

Last June, Char Valley Parish Council voted unanimously to acknowledge the worldwide Climate and Environmental Emergency. Dorset Council, Bridport Town Council and many others also did so at around the same time. So far, 265 District, County, Unitary & Metropolitan Councils in the UK have declared a Climate Emergency, as well as the Scottish and Welsh Assemblies, the UK Government and the European Parliament. So CVPC is in good company.

But: *What can we do as a small Parish?*

Shouldn't we just shut up and leave it to the Government to sort things out for us? Obviously, the Parish Council are not the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (though we're lucky to have farmers on the council who understand the issues at ground level, a leading climate change professional with many years' experience of the policy issues at national and international level – and others in between).

Since June, we've been gathering information, seeing what other councils and organisations are doing, talking and reading. It turns out that we also have a surprising level of climate change expertise in our parishes – professors and other academics, well-known authors, consultants, film-makers and activists.

So we have gathered two panels of local experts to discuss the Climate and Environmental Emergency in the Char Valley at the 21st March meeting. We will ask them to discuss:

- what the risks are in this area
- what we can do to reduce our impact on climate and ecology
- how we can adapt to changes that are inevitably coming
- what the opportunities are for building a stronger and more resilient community in the process.

We will also present the Parish Council's list of detailed proposals for what we can do as a community – *and ask for your responses and suggestions.*

Finally, we hope to present some of the initiatives that are already under way locally:

- at Woodroffe School
- in Bridport and at Dorset Council
- along the River Char (see article on page 7)
- across the Char Valley – to reduce and eventually eliminate the use of chemical pesticides, herbicides and fungicides on the land (including all our gardens).

Make a note of the date: *Saturday 21st March, Whitchurch Canonorum Village Hall, 2.30 – 5.30pm* – and look out for more notices about the event.

*Please come if you possibly can (if only for an hour).*

We hope to have information displays and films and we warmly invite people of all ages, with a reminder that these are troubling issues that we have to address together.

We hope that panellists will include:

- Dr Ruth Fuller (WWF - International Development Policy Advisor)
- Dr Owen Day (coastal and marine scientist and ecosystem-based adaptation expert)
- Professor Jim Rose (University of London -- long-term climate change & impacts)
- Kelvin Clayton (Dorset Council/Bridport Town Council)
- A National Trust speaker
- Kit Vaughan (Ex WWF, local woodland farmer)
- Miles King (writer/conservationist)
- Simon Fairlie (author/editor/campaigner)
- A W. Dorset Friends of the Earth speaker
- An NFU representative



## Our neighbourhood

We are a neighbourhood of mixed professions and activities. While each of us has a life style that's individual to us, we all live together in the same area and share the same services and facilities. A large part of our land is farmed and, living locally, you will have met at least a few of the people who live and work on the farms, even if only when face-to-face with a tractor on a narrow lane.

Each farm is different but, for those of us who don't farm, here's a short diary from one local farmer describing what will be happening in their fields and sheds over the next 4 months:

**January** – Generally a quieter month but the everyday milking, feeding, cleaning out of cattle, bedding up sheds still goes on. Some early lambing of sheep takes place indoors. Sheep need moving according to the weather and grass growth available.

**February** – Activity increases as, now, if the weather is better, early lambing ewes and lambs are let out if there is enough grass growth. Some slurry can be spread on fields now if the ground is dry. It protects the grass from spring winds and is taken up by the plants ready for growth as the days lengthen.

**March** – Lambing takes place now either indoors or outside depending on the weather and will continue in different parts of the country for April and May. More ground work takes place with ploughing and working the land for spring barley, wheat and oats to be sown, dressings with fertiliser, slurry and farmyard manure will be spread to be ploughed in for crops and for maize to be sown later in April and May. Some herds of cows that have been in all the winter months can go

out for early grass if the weather is good and ground conditions dry. Spring calving herds of cows will be seen out doors.

**April** - Lambing continues and spring herds of suckler cows calf outdoors, dairy cows are let out to grass by day and younger cattle go out after the winter in their sheds. Ground work continues with farm yard manure spread on fields to be ploughed for a maize crop. Late spring barley and grass seed replacement crops are sown. Some spraying of winter cereal crops takes place if the agronomist advises and only done by competent people who have sprayer certificates and the machine has sprayer pass certificate. Soil samples are taken by agronomists to check for ph, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium and lime and any deficit is treated. This can be done at any time of the year and now every field must be tested every 5 years and records kept. The daily chores around the farmyard continue with milking, feeding calves, stock to learn to fend for themselves are let out at grass.

Westhay Farmhouse a while ago—but not Digory Gorge



## Request for articles

We don't all work on farms— what do you do? Do you work locally? Do you commute? Do you go to school or college? Do you provide holiday accommodation? Are you retired? Are you a carer? What does your day or week or year look like? What local facilities and services do you use or avoid? Let us know—contact Annette, our clerk, if you'd be willing to share something about your life or interests here in Char Valley. Generally, we like to name our authors but we can publish anonymously too (as long as the contents are verified).

## Digory Gordge—many of them...

The first Digory Gordge (Digory I) we know of was a merchant privateer in Cornwall. Digory died in about 1645. Digory's fourth child (and only son) was also christened Digory Gordge (Digory II). He was born in Cornwall in 1629. He married Elizabeth and became a farmer in Stanton St Gabriel (at Westhay Farm, which was then known as West Gabriel's) and a Customs Agent by the age of 30. Most likely, he was granted the farm (which had been ransacked during the civil war) for his services to Cromwell's Parliament. He died in 1708 and was buried at Whitchurch Canonorum.

Digory II's eldest son was also christened Digory Gordge in 1659 (Digory III). He took over his father's farm and ran it with his wife Ann. But he only outlived his father by seven years and was buried at Whitchurch Canonorum in 1715.

Digory III's eldest son was also christened Digory Gordge in 1694 (Digory IV). He took over the family farm at Westhay and also became a customs officer. He died in 1755 and he too was buried at Whitchurch.

Digory IV's eldest nephew was christened Digory Gordge (Digory V). He was born and died in Charmouth (just outside the parish of Stanton St Gabriel) and was prosecuted in 1765 for aiding and abetting smugglers. The parish council seems to have paid his fine.

Digory Gordge (VI) may have been his son. He was parish clerk in Charmouth for 56 years and his gravestone can still be seen in St Andrew's churchyard. He died in 1861 at the age of 76 and lived for many years at the corner of Barrs Lane and the Street in a cottage called "Streets", which was the village post office until recently.

In 1903, at the age of 94, a Digory Gordge (possibly Digory VII, pictured here) was interviewed in the South Wales Evening Post. He told how, as a boy, he smuggled tubs of French brandy and once hid with his brother in a church and heard the preventive men shouting 'Where be they? Which way be they gone?'

The smugglers who the Digory Gordges were either trying to stop or trying to help (or both) were largely based at nearby Chideock and marked the hills above their favoured landfalls with copses of trees, to make navigation easier (the copses can be seen quite easily from the sea when there is even a sliver of a moon). These copses grew on Stonebarrow and at Seatown, Eype's Mouth and Stanton St Gabriel.

[The information on Digory Gordge VI comes from Neil Mattingley's wonderful local history site, [freshford.com](http://freshford.com). The image comes from wikitree and was uploaded by Sarah (Euren) Jordan.]



## Gravel extraction from Hardown Hill and Road Construction

Gravel extraction from Hardown Hill was an active industry at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and for many years after. At one time six to seven hundred tons of gravel, from four to five quarries, were extracted annually. This was mainly used on the roads around the Marshwood Vale. At the peak of the industry twenty men were employed all the year round.

Roads around the Whitchurch parish and out into the Marshwood Vale were unsealed until the late 1920s. The local quarrymen who worked on Hardown Hill had contracts with the local council to gravel the roads by putting down large gravel which was then covered by finer gravel. A water cart sprayed the gravel which would make the road surface go down "nice and tight" and bind it all together. Finally, a steam roller came along to flatten and level it all.

Very wet weather, just after a new gravelling took place, didn't have any adverse effect on the roads as

the gravel was still bonded well together so that the water drained off into the ditches and the surface soon dried out. After a while, wagon and cart wheels would gouge out ruts and potholes, made worse by the rain.

When the ruts were particularly bad on the hills people driving horses with wagons or carts used to chain one back wheel and keep this wheel in tight to the hedge to ensure that the horse and vehicle didn't slide down the hill at high speed. Total re-gravelling took place every two to three years. Some of the less used lanes, done less frequently, had grass growing down the middle of them.

One realises now why children wore heavy boots to school in those days! It must have been quite treacherous negotiating all the ruts and potholes for an infant child trekking along the byways of the Marshwood Vale, sometimes up to three miles. Slipping over on these un-gravelled roads on the way to school after a rain storm mean that the child was covered with yellow mud for the rest of the day.

## Please reduce your use of peat-based compost

Many people do not realise the damage caused by the widespread use of peat-based garden compost.

Peat is the semi-rotted remains of plants, mainly various types of *sphagnum moss*, laid down to a depth of between 30cms and 6 metres in bogs over thousands of years at a rate of only about 1mm a year. Sphagnum moss has an amazing ability to absorb and retain water. Interestingly, it is also antiseptic and was used to dress wounds during the first world war.

Peat bogs naturally retain huge reservoirs of water, preventing rapid run-off and allowing water to drain away very slowly without causing floods after heavy rain. Not surprisingly, they host a very special mixture of plants and animals, and can also preserve plant, animal and even human remains for very long periods

allowing, for example, archaeological study of *Tollund Man*. (Tollund Man is a naturally mummified corpse of a man who lived during the 4th century BCE.)



Tollund Man wikipedia

Until the 1960s, peat was used mainly as fuel (turf), particularly in Ireland, where there were vast areas of peat bogs. Then, in the 1960s, the horticultural trade realised that it was an ideal medium

for growing plants for sale. The plants did well and, because the peat was much lighter than the materials previously used, it was much easier and cheaper to transport. The scale of this commercial use is enormous and international.

*Like coal, peat is not a renewable resource and a huge percentage of the UK deposits (possibly 95%), has now been destroyed.*

In the 1980s the charity Plantlife drew attention to the environmental damage that was being caused by commercial peat extraction:

- *Commercial extraction can remove over 500 years' worth of 'growth' in a single year*
- *Amateur gardening accounts for 69% of peat compost used in the UK - we currently use some three billion litres of peat every year in our gardens*
- *32% of our peat comes from the UK, 60% from Ireland and 8% from Europe*

The concern then was mainly about the loss of rare plants and the creatures that depend on them, but subsequently an even more serious issue has been identified.

If kept wet, an acre of peat bog is equivalent to an acre of Brazilian rain forest in its ability to store carbon. Once the peat is dried out, the carbon escapes as carbon dioxide and contributes to global warming

In 2011 an inquiry report from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature concluded:

- *A significant amount of carbon is leaking into the atmosphere from drained and deteriorating peatlands.*
- *This is particularly alarming as a loss of only 5% of the carbon stored in peat would equate to the UK's total annual greenhouse gas emissions. On the other hand, healthy peatlands and those that have been restored and enhanced can make a positive contribution to tackling climate change.*

The Inquiry identified a clear strategy for action to bring UK peatlands back from the brink and, although slow, is being carried out in parts of the UK, enabling moss growth to start again and begin to build up reserves for the future. This is inevitably a very long-term project but, by keeping the land wet and allowing sphagnum to grow on the surface, carbon leakage is reduced, sometimes even reversed, and environmental value restored.

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) properties use only peat-free composts and the National Trust has had a peat-free policy since at least 2007.

The Government issued white paper in 2018 called "A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment", but no legal framework has been put in place, and, very recently, the January/February 2020 issue of Gardening 'Which', the consumer magazine, stated "the 'Which' testers still found it very hard to find many peat-free composts on sale to the public".

Awareness is growing, and manufacturers are working to develop mixes as good as the peat-based ones and at a comparable price. As demand increases, the price of peat-free composts is coming down and greater variety is becoming available. We can all speed up this process by exercising our power as consumers by, where possible, going peat-free in our own gardens and choosing plants grown in peat-free composts.



## Our local river—The River Char

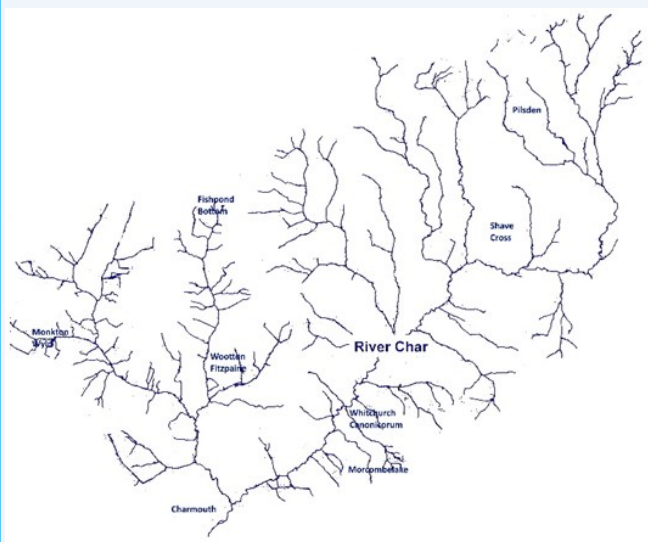
The River Char is an important part of our environment and ecological system. CVPC, along with local volunteers and organisations, is working to improve the quality and maintain the effectiveness of this river within our Parish-es.

### A Broccoli Runs Through It

At 10.4 miles long, the River Char is far from being a record-breaker. The Nile is about 400 times longer and the Danube about 170 times longer. Even the humble Axe is twice as long.

But our idea of a river as a snaking line with a fixed length is as misleading as thinking of a human being or buttercup or country as a detached and autonomous 'thing'.

In fact, a river looks less like a snake and more like the blood vessels in a human lung, or a piece of broccoli. Once you factor in the tributaries and streams and ditches and drains that make up the River Char Catchment (far more than appear on even this next map) you have hundreds of miles of water. And, if you walk the footpaths near the river in winter, you find that almost the whole marshy landscape of the Marshwood Vale has become one with the river. There is water everywhere, waiting to find its way into the Char and out to sea – a



reminder that the river is a complex ecosystem, intricately entangled in its surroundings.

Looking at the 'broccoli' map, another thing becomes clear. The River Char doesn't just run through a handful of farms – rather, we almost all live 'amongst' it. Few of us can be far from a ditch or drain running into one of its tributaries. That means we're all involved in the health of the river.



A survey by the Environment Agency in 2014 showed the river's overall status was 'Moderate' (the middle of 5 classifications ranging from 'High' to 'Bad'), but 'Poor' in one water quality category. Since then, there have been pollution incidents at the mouth of the river, with raised levels of *E. coli* and other dangerous bacteria. The river has also suffered from declining biodiversity, increasing agricultural run-off and slurry, mud from roads and land use practices, waste from overflowing septic tanks, overgrown bankside vegetation and algal blooms coupled with high levels of flooding.

### The River Char Community Project—Phase 1

For most of their journey to the sea, the River Char and its tributaries flow through the parishes of Wootton and Whitchurch. So, in autumn 2019, Char Valley Parish Council met members of the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT) teams to discuss how to start to make changes and improvements.

These organisations and local volunteer groups have undertaken various small projects aimed at improving the Char over the past years, but CVPC wanted to know what should and could be done to raise the river's status to High and so improve its contribution to the ecological and environmental well being of the Char Valley.

This followed a successful community project led by the same teams on the River Asker. At their suggestion, we applied for funding for our own River Char Community Project and we heard in December that we had received a full grant of £1,350 from the Dorset AONB 60th Anniversary Fund and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Our Parish Council will contribute a further £750 in cash and additional Councillors' time.

In Phase 1 of this Community Project (to be completed by October 2020), we will use the money to pay for a snapshot study of the River Char to get a picture of the health of the river, identify problems and draw up an improvement plan.

...continued over page

## The River Char Community Project—Phase 2

In Phase 2 (which will need significantly more funding) we will implement the plan, which is likely to involve working with experts, volunteers and residents to do some or all of the following:

- raise awareness of the issues facing the river and keep people up to date about progress
- teach residents to undertake river monitoring and fish surveys
- involve local school children in exploring the history and zoology of the river
- control invasive species (e.g. clear Himalayan Balsam)
- use natural measures to manage flooding (e.g. gully blocking and installing woody debris dams) and reduce erosion (e.g. installing fencing, cattle drinking bays and cattle crossing points)
- clear some riverside tree cover to enhance the habitat for plants, insects and other wildlife
- remove/bypass barriers to help fish populations in the river
- help neighbouring landowners to install silt traps and plant hedges to reduce run-off.

Phase 2 will look at ways to help landowners and residents make improvements and seek funding to enable them to do so. But that's for the future. For now, we aim to present the Survey results at a public meeting in the autumn.

## Past examples of River Char Improvement Activities

There have been irregular activities aimed at improving stretches of the River Char - here are two examples.



### Daylighting and Canopy-Reduction.

West Dorset Conservation Officer for Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT), Nick Gray, surveyed a short stretch of the River Char to see how more light could be made available for the surrounding habitat and to encourage more wildlife.



Shortly after, at 9am on a fine winter's day – just right for the work ahead on the river banks—Nick arrived with several tree surgeons to cut back the Black Alders, followed at 10am by 17 DWLT volunteers to clear the banks.

By the end of the afternoon the whole area had been opened up with several piles of wood in place and a minibeasts' home constructed. The technical name for this is a habitat pile which is interspersed with larger diameter pieces, to make a nice, tightly-packed pile full of niches for invertebrates and birds. One of the tree surgeons cut a hole high up in one of the alders to encourage woodpeckers, and niches were made on the tree to encourage the roosting and nesting of bats and birds.

As well as finding fossils, one volunteer discovered an unusual piece of barbed wire, which had been wound anticlockwise. Traditional

barbed wire in the UK is twisted in a clockwise. whereas anticlockwise wires seem to be more common in France.



The last time the alders were felled was in 1967 when George Creed, a local farmer, had to make a "staddle" as a base for his new hay barn. A staddle is a wooden frame to support a rick or bales of hay and prevents the hay closest to the ground from rotting.





### Riffles and Glides?

About two years ago, when Nick Gray, (DWT) was near Stockham Bridge where it crosses the River Char just north of Whitchurch Canonorum on Gassons Lane surveying and testing for wildlife, he talked about *riffles* and *glides*. No, not ballroom dance moves, but, as he explained, if fish are to spawn, they need some encouragement and the



creation of artificial pools, riffles and glides can help. DWT, with the help of volunteers and support of landowners, had been engaged in a project to improve and enrich the river's overall biodiversity.

The objective was to enhance naturally occurring features or to mimic them by creating new ones. In nature, a river's flow will alternate between pools, stretches where the water flows flat and slow, and where it tumbles. And, where there are pools, there are riffles and glides!

Riffles are where the shallow water runs fast. Only creatures that cling well, caddisflies and mayflies for example, will gather here where there is plenty of gravel for them to hide in. Plant life might be restricted but will include algae.

A glide, as its name suggests, is the opposite of a riffle. The water is deeper, runs slower and there is little turbulence across its surface. It offers a different habitat and different opportunities for plants and wildlife.

CVPC's Community Study of the River Char will provide more evidence as to its health and inherent biodiversity. There may well be work to be done but there is much to delight and intrigue in, on and around the water. Most precious, perhaps, is that flash of bright blue that signals a kingfisher. That blackbird you thought was bathing, wait until it turns and you'll see the white bib: it is a Dipper, and have you seen a Heron, Egret or Cormorant (or, a very similar but endangered bird, the Shag)? Clouds of Beautiful Demoiselles, iridescent, peacock-blue in the sunlight, dance above the water in summer. Perhaps the small flocks of mallard that paddle in the shallows have swum up from Charmouth to avoid the crowds of holiday-makers.

These are just a few of the things to delight and intrigue and good reasons for us all to take an interest in the little river that runs just yards from where many of us live and which gives this parish its name.

### Hop on the free bus—Dorset PlusBus

Make hopping on the bus one of your 'save the planet' actions this year!

The fare is £6 return but **free** with a senior bus pass from January 2020.

Register with the community bus ( 01258 287980 ) and book it by midday on the Tuesday before. If the numbers increase, the bus will run weekly.

The bus will pick you up from your home about **10.30am** on alternate Wednesdays and take you to Bridport by **11am**. Return is **1.30pm** from Bridport.

*Not only does it save some 500 miles each year on your car but it is an enjoyable social event too.*

The bus is particularly useful during the peak times of Christmas, July and August when traffic and parking can be difficult. For more information visit: <http://bit.ly/DorsetPlusBus>

It's much more pleasant to sit back and be driven!

There is room on the bus for shopping but, if you shop at Waitrose while in Bridport, you can also arrange in advance for your shopping to be delivered to your door. (£3-£5)



See you on the bus....

## CVPC Updates

### Source and use of CVPC funds

CVPC receives funds from Dorset Council in the form of a precept collected through the local rates and these funds are used to benefit the residents of the civil parishes that make up Char Valley. Additional funds may be received from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) applied to building activity within the Parishes and intended to improve local infrastructure.

CVPC contributes to the upkeep of the burial grounds at Whitchurch Canonorum, Wootton Fitzpaine, Monkton Wyld, Stanton St Gabriel, and Morcombela. These burial grounds are for use of all residents regardless of any religious affiliation. CVPC also donates to the upkeep of our local village halls – for example the acoustic panels in Whitchurch, playground equipment, playing fields, public benches, finger posts, and notice boards.



Here's a recent addition already attracting use—a climbing frame at the local playgroup. [Thank you to playgroup and parents for permission to print]

**Public Telephone Boxes.** There is only one public telephone box within the Char Valley parishes. This is outside the Whitchurch Canonorum village hall and has been identified by BT as only being used 4 times last year. Along with others with zero or very low usage across the County, BT plan to remove the telephone service. CVPC has written to BT asking for this service to be kept as it is in a position close to the Defibrillator where mobile phone signals are poor and could be critically useful in an emergency.

**Morcombela post boxes and Post Office.** There are currently no plans to replace the Post Office in Morcombela. The current view of the Post Office is that the facilities at Chideock and Raymonds Hill are sufficient. In addition, the post box that was at the Post

Office will also not be replaced as the current rules for siting of boxes suggest that the box at the James Hargreaves Hall is all that is needed. CVPC are challenging this.

**Speed limit in Chideock.** The trial of a new 30mph and 50mph section of the A35 in Chideock is in response to concerns about air pollution as Chideock is a designated Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The trial could last up to 18 months.

**A35 in Morcombela.** Highways England have undertaken a Severance Study along the A35 of three villages in West Dorset – Winterbourne Abbas, Chideock, and Morcombela. The A35 is considered one of the most dangerous A roads in West Dorset, and CVPC has been working to obtain improvements to make the road safer in Morcombela. This includes the extension of the speed limits at either end, changes to road markings and a pedestrian crossing at the east end (the crossing at the west end will be implemented regardless, hopefully

in early 2020). Disappointingly, the study rejected any reduction to a 30 mph limit and CVPC are challenging that. However, there are no funds available currently so no action or decisions will be taken until new funds are made available, probably in 2020, along with an A35 safety study planned to look at the A35 'Fulven bends' on the west approach to Morcombela.

**Buses.** The winter timetable for the X51 and X53 bus services caused great problems. The rescheduled X51 no longer links to the early train to Exeter from Axminster for commuters and has caused livelihoods to be threatened.

The X53 Sunday service east of Bridport was stopped completely and only continued west of Bridport to Weymouth through a donation from a private individual (see [www.sundaybus.org](http://www.sundaybus.org)). Dorset Council seem unable to take any action so the Western Area Transport Action Group (WATAG [www.watag.org.uk](http://www.watag.org.uk)) have requested costings from First Wessex to see if further funding of links and re-scheduling is viable.

CVPC intended to have a bus shelter constructed for the bus stop on the A35 at the east end of Morcombela. Unfortunately, although the local landowner kindly agreed to installing it off the footpath (as required by regulatory restrictions), the costs proved higher than our budget.



## CVPC Updates ctd

### Dorset National Park.

The Dorset National Park team sent out an update suggesting that there is a raised likelihood of establishing a Dorset National Park to encompass many of the AONB's and SSI's along the coastal stretch. For more information please see [www.dorsetnationalpark.com](http://www.dorsetnationalpark.com).



**Dorset Recycling is No. 1.** Dorset did well last year in its efforts at recycling – which is just as much about the efforts of our local residents as it is about the services provided by Dorset's waste management teams. Apparently, we are number one nationally in providing the greatest carbon benefits with the equivalent of 108kgs of carbon dioxide saved per Dorset resident. For details see <http://bit.ly/Dorset-re-cy-awards1>

**Digital Champions.** Something you might consider for yourselves or someone you know. The Superfast Dorset team at Dorset Council are running a Digital Champions scheme with a 75-strong team of volunteers who operate in the Dorset libraries to help people with computers, tablets, phones and more. The volunteers offer free tuition to all members of the public, helping them to get online and gain the digital skills that are increasingly important in our everyday lives. Some Dorset residents say they feel excluded if they are offline and that learning with a Digital Champion boosts their confidence and helps them stay safe and independent. People without a device can learn too, free of charge on the library facilities. The sessions are held in a friendly environment and you go at your own pace. You can call their central 01305 221048 hotline from Monday to Friday (9 am - 5 pm) and book to see your nearest Digital Champion.

**The White Gates at Wootton Fitzpaine.** The White Gates are now fully restored and back up in position at the junction of Champenrhayes Lane, Wootton Fitzpaine and the B3165 Raymonds Hill to Marshwood Road, marking the old entrance to the Pass estate. They are an iconic symbol of the local area and are of important historic interest as they are only 1 of 3 such gated entrances in all Dorset. Local residents, local action groups, relatives of Alfred Pass, and CVPC have funded their restoration.

### CVPC Councillor Access.

Following a successful day hosting a CVPC information stand at Whitchurch Canonorum Flower and Dog show in August, the councillors would like to provide residents and visitors the opportunity to talk to us on a regular basis.



We intend to have a CVPC Councillor available for about half-an-hour prior to, and in the same location as the regular Council meetings. If you wish to talk privately with a CVPC Council member, please come along before a regular Council meeting to talk to us—the dates and locations are on page 2.

Char Valley Parish Council welcomes feedback and suggestions on all aspects of our local life, including suggestions for articles and topics for inclusion in Char Chat. Please contact the parish council through our Clerk:

**Annette Marks 01308 459268 E: [charvalley@dorset-aptc.gov.uk](mailto:charvalley@dorset-aptc.gov.uk)**

Char Chat Newsletter is edited by Chris Noon, CVPC Councillor



## WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY?



### CHAR VALLEY PARISH COUNCIL

#### CURRENTLY HAS A VACANCY FOR A PARISH COUNCILLOR IN

#### Wootton Fitzpaine

**The Char Valley Parish Council** is the first tier of local government in this area and your councillors work together as the team at the heart of the Community, making a difference by providing a grass roots voice on many local issues.

#### **PARISH COUNCILLORS :**

Have responsibility for Parish services which include play areas, open spaces  
community property and community enhancement projects

Decide how much to raise through the Council Tax in order to deliver those services.

Influence and shape the long-term development policy for the Parish and comment  
on planning applications.

Work as part of a team to identify and address local residents' issues and concerns.

#### **YOUR COMMITMENT WOULD BE:**

To prepare for and attend monthly full council meetings (10 per year).

To participate in Working Groups as required or as your personal time allows.

**TO BE ELIGIBLE YOU MUST BE:** Over 18 years of age and meet one of the following criteria: a) Be an elector in the Parish b) In the previous 12 months owned or rented property/land in the parish c) During the previous 12 months your main place of work has been in the Parish. d) For the previous 12 months you have lived within 3 miles of the Parish.

If you are interested and would like more information, please contact the Clerk, Annette Marks on 01308 459268, email [charvalley@dorset-aptc.gov.uk](mailto:charvalley@dorset-aptc.gov.uk) by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020 [WWW.CHARVALLEYPC.CO.UK](http://WWW.CHARVALLEYPC.CO.UK)