

Campsea Ashe Parish Council

Chair's Report 2021/22

The relaxation of COVID restrictions allowed for a welcome return to face-to-face PC meetings at the Village Hall and more recently at Station House. The PC managed well using online platforms, but the return to normality has allowed for more lively, meaningful and productive meetings.

It has been a year of change in PC membership. Nathan Wills and Derrick Balaam have stood down, Clare Reid and Gary Lidford have joined the PC, and more candidates are coming through. The PC is attempting to attract members from different parts of the parish and also of more balanced ages and genders in order to reflect the needs of the parish more effectively. The PC gives heartfelt thanks to Nathan and Derrick for their contributions to the PC and village life, especially for maintaining the play area and keeping our roads and paths tidy and safe. Derick will continue to maintain the play area for which we are extremely grateful.

Of great significance this year has been the implementation of a long awaited and hard fought for TRO (traffic restriction order) on Ivy Lodge Rd, funded by local resident and County Councillor donations, which places 7.5 tonne limit on vehicles (accept for access to ILR). Signage was erected at both ends of ILR in February and there is a noticeable reduction in large vehicles, which will improve air quality and safety on Ivy Lodge road, as well as through the main Village.

The impact of the TRO on large tractor trailer journeys to and from Bentwaters will be assessed in the late summer when this activity peaks. These vehicles are deemed particularly dangerous by residents and have caused a number of incidents on local roads. Residents and the PC will monitor the situation carefully, because, whilst regular agricultural traffic serving fields along the road are permitted, these heavy agricultural vehicles coming from far and wide, we have been assured, are not permitted. TRO schemes are notoriously hard to monitor and enforce, with police un-resourced for minor roads, therefore it will fall upon local residents to be vigilant and report contraventions to 'Report a heavy goods vehicle incident' at [Suffolk.gov.uk](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk).

An important initiative for the Village, with the firm backing of the PC has been the wildlife and sustainability project 'Wild about Campsea' (WAC). Originally focussed on the scrubland at Chantry Close, but later shifting to the recreation ground, the project's aims include education, community food production, community cohesion, as well as physical and mental health. The project is spearheaded by Peter Marrett, with the active help of several local residents, who brings a wealth of experience and boundless enthusiasm to this uplifting and highly relevant initiative. A generous grant was given by our district counsellor Carol Poulter to provide the basic materials to establish a community garden.

As a sign of commitment to Wild about Campsea, a PC environmental committee has been formed to allow for a subcommittee to deal directly with WAC, which is headed by Shaun Wilson. A further expression of the PC's environmental commitment was the decision to become signatory to the Climate and Ecological Emergency bill.

This year the PC set up a 'planning committee' comprising 3 PC members who keep abreast of planning applications and make recommendations to the rest of the PC. The rationale for this committee is that the timing of individual applications means it is not always possible to discuss individual applications at bi-monthly PC meetings. It was also decided that a more thorough approach was needed to deal with more complex and larger proposals that might represent a major impact on the village in terms of traffic and the environment – priorities for the PC which need to be reflected in its planning decisions.

The PC has also strengthened links with neighbouring PCs in the form of the 'Joint Parish Traffic Initiative' (JPTI), where PC members from different communities meet in a single forum to discuss ways to gain greater input into planning and highways decisions in response to a rising tide of local development. Traffic problems that affect our neighbours in Eyke, Tunstall and Snape for example are also our problems, with the same traffic moving through all our communities. Several major wind energy substations and the ever more likely Sizewell C will magnify traffic and pollution problems exponentially and we hope that the JPTI (representing many thousands of residents) will give us a louder voice and a better chance of achieving meaningful mitigations in the years ahead. Special thanks to Klaus Fortmann (Campsea Ashe Clerk) for his work on this initiative.

PC engagement in the Sizewell C proposals has been significant this year, most notably, our representation at last summer's planning inspectorate by Klaus Fortmann. Key issues for Campsea Ashe include: concerns over the location and suitability of the Park and Ride facility at Wickham market (which will be visible from Campsea Ashe); noise and vibration associated with night time rail movements (70%+ percent of Campsea Ashe homes are within a few hundred metres of the railway lines); and several hundred additional HGV movements per day, plus thousands of small vehicle movements on the A12 corridor and on our smaller roads which will cause pollution, and adversely affect us all as we go about our daily lives. The PC is working closely with other PCs including Marlesford and Wickham Market on these shared problems. Whilst the PC is not anti-nuclear and not anti-Sizewell C per se, we are very concerned about the detrimental impact of up to 15 years of construction on our rural area, disappointed by mitigation solutions offered thus far, and unimpressed by the level of meaningful communication and listening on the part of East Suffolk council and EDF – a widely held view amongst other affected PCs.

Relationships with community organisations continues. The Village Hall committee, with PC donations, has completed its much-needed toilet renovations work and the PC will support further renovation projects in the pipeline. Thank you to those on the Village Hall Committee for their efforts over the year, especially Todd Strahlow. Also the Campsea Ashe heritage group who will be publishing their own report on our website, and Station House which continues to make a remarkable contribution to the community and which has become a destination for cyclists. With Village Hall improvements, the Station house, an excellently run village shop, and our brilliant local pub, the Duck, Campsea Ashe has amenities to be proud of.

Chantry Close has been an important focus of PC time and effort this year. This parcel of land was informally promised to the PC in around 1991 and it has been the PC's intention to seek adverse possession and make use of the land for community benefit, be that for allotments, a wildlife reserve, or to sell part of the land to invest in the village hall. Unfortunately, the pursuit of legal title

to the land has been beset by difficulties in the last few years, although a renewed focus with a new firm of lawyers may bring the matter to a firm and positive conclusion in the coming years.

The PC remains firmly committed the quiet lanes initiative, which now applies on Mill Lane, Marslesford Rd, and Eyke Rd. This system of signage aims to encourage pedestrian and cycle use of the lanes and greater driver awareness and care on the roads. Neighbouring PCs are also subscribing to the quiet lane efforts, which will hopefully create an extensive network of safer routes for more vulnerable road users between neighbouring villages and town.

PC has been actively engaged East Suffolk's in Community Partnership Scheme which gives PCs the ability to gain funding for activities that support local residents, with a special focus on the youth, the elderly, and issues around rural isolation. For example, the village hall received a grant as a community hub which was used to update its toilet facilities and the partnership has supported community programs such as Youth 42 which supports community outreach programs for young people. Carol Poulter chairs the Community Partnership Scheme and has been extremely supportive of Campsea Ashe. The Campsea Ashe clerk is an elected member of the grant approval panel.

A village survey was commission last year, which provided a targeted survey of residents' views and provided a wealth of insights into the community's needs and desires, in order to help the PC to plan and focus its actions and efforts. On the basis of the survey results we have emphasised community gardening and Wild About Campsea (WAC), and will be focussing more resources on village recreational facilities in the year ahead.

CAPC extends huge thanks to our County Councillor Alexander Nichols and our District Councillor Carol Poulter for their significant ongoing financial and practical contributions this year. The PC feels very well supported in its efforts to enhance our community assets and preserve our unique rural environment.

Ed Berger 12.5.22