

**Axmouth Parish Council**  
**Chairman's Report 2014/2015**

**April 2015**

**Planning Matters**

The Parish Council supported most of the applications received this year but continued to have concerns about the application for development of the old Dive Centre. The style and height of the proposed building does not seem to fit with its surroundings and access for the neighbouring businesses is compromised. However the application received approval from East Devon District Council (EDDC).

Recently, EDDC have issued a revised version of their Local Plan for consultation and scrutiny. There are substantial changes in relation to the policy for Villages. Under the plan there would no longer be a "Built up Area Boundary" which previously restricted development on the outside. This and other changes have caused Councillors to reconsider the desirability of drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) to potentially help protect the Village from unwelcome developments. The Parish Council have already arranged to have the Parish designated as a NP area but, undertaking a project such as the Plan would mean considerable commitment from the Council and many members of the community. It would be even more challenging than the Parish Plan 5 years ago.

**Traffic and Highways Issues**

One of the key outcomes of the Parish Consultation that led to the Parish Plan was the desire expressed by many residents for a safe walkway from the village through to Seaton. Devon County Highways were asked to consider ways to achieve this and thanks to the support and encouragement from Cllr Jim Knight, eventually came up with plans for a scheme which met the safety considerations. The Church Street Footway is now fully operational and has been hailed as a major success for residents. Our only disappointment was the behaviour of the contractor during the installation. We felt compelled to complain on numerous occasions that the part finished scheme was regularly left in a potentially unsafe condition.

Linking with that, we have received a commitment from Highways to remove the encroaching verge from the footway along the estuary, thus widening the footway along most of its length. Elsewhere, Highways also responded to our request for the roadside erosion to be repaired on the lane between Springhead Cross and Bushes Lane and similarly along Kemps Lane. The decorative lights on the old Axmouth bridge have also been repaired.

**Lengthsman Services and the Community Volunteer scheme**

During the year we were made aware of likely significant cuts to the services provided by Devon County. In the event, only critical services will be provided; ditches and grips will be maintained and safety critical sections of roadside verges will be mowed. However, it will be necessary for us to supplement this work in order to maintain the appearance of the Village. We have taken two courses of action. Firstly we have combined with Uplyme and Combyne Rousdon Parish Councils in the Parishes Together Funding scheme and will take advantage of the grant to engage a contractor in this financial year. This grant will be supplemented from the Parish Precept. Additionally, we have recently launched the Axmouth Community Volunteers scheme which encourages residents who have expressed an interest in helping around the village. We already have something to show for it, with the vegetation cut back around the bus shelter. There will be plenty more to do during the growing season!

**Funding**

As I have mentioned, the Precept was increased this year to cover the cost of a 'lengthsman' contractor but we have also made an allowance for contractors to provide extra work in the event of severe weather disrupting, for example, access around the village. If unused, this funding will be carried over into the next financial year.

As is customary, grants have been awarded from the Precept to village groups, this year including the Parochial Church Council and the Village Hall.

For the current financial year we have teamed up with Seaton Town Council and secured Parishes Together funding for replacement Axmouth Signs which will feature the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty logo.

From the Devon County Localities Budget, controlled by Cllr Knight, we have been able to fund a new noticeboard at Coronation Corner to display Tide Timetables and arrange for the telephone box to be repaired and repainted. We were also given funding for the reprint of the Village leaflet.

We supported a request from Axmouth Football Club for monies from the S106 developers fund to be used to purchase new floodlighting and goalposts. Should the development of the old dive centre go ahead, we have been reassured that the S106 contribution would be paid and it is hoped this will be used to provide new facilities in the village.

Devon County 'Investing in Devon' funding has been used to pay for beige surfacing to be applied to the complete length of the new Church Street footway.

### **Best Kept Village**

We didn't improve on the previous year's runner up performance in the County as a whole but still managed 2<sup>nd</sup> place in East Devon this is despite being 'promoted' from Small Village to Large Village. A big thank-you to all those residents and villages groups who helped so much to make our village special.

### **Footpaths**

We have applied to join the Devon County Parish Paths Partnership scheme (P3). We will take on the responsibility to undertake an annual thorough survey of all the rights of way in the Parish and with the assistance of a modest grant from County, take on responsibility to maintain the surface. This could mean adding surface materials to sections that tend to waterlog or repair steps but does not include styles, fencing and hedging that remain the responsibility of the landowner.

### **Other initiatives**

We are grateful to District Council officers who have arranged some essential repair work to the retaining wall at Coronation Corner but we are still concerned about the degree of undercutting erosion to the footings and will be looking to identify funding for a long term remedy.

The Council would still like to improve pedestrian and cyclist access and safety along the estuary and had formulated some ambitious plans for walkways and viewing platforms. However in consultation with the Environment Agency (EA) we have been advised categorically that any work which involves any interference with the river bank and river bed would not be allowed. Although disappointing, this has not prevented consideration being given to the idea of viewing areas, traffic calming measures, parking areas and crossing points.

In studying the riverbank it was noticed that a section of the bank near the slipway has eroded badly and the bank has been undercut. County Highways have been consulted but they judge that the roadway is not yet under threat they need not take action. We may need to consider some sort of defensive structure but this would of course need special permission from the EA

In liaison with Seaton Rotary Club, a Blue Plaque has been installed on the former toll house at Axmouth Bridge. The old road sign indicating the B3172 towards Lyme Regis has been repaired. The Stepps Cross bus shelter has undergone essential maintenance and now sports a public noticeboard. The Parish Council noticeboard has also been maintained. All of these activities were undertaken by a Parish Councillor.

The trial wildlife verge adjacent to the brook in Southcombe Terrace was not a success and will not be repeated.

To conclude, we are grateful for the support of our District Councillor Ian Thomas and County Councillor Jim Knight and we would like to thank again all those who help keep our village feeling somewhere special by organising village events and by keeping the neighbourhood looking good.

Keith Lawes  
Chairman Axmouth Parish Council  
April 2015