

Chair's APM Report for Bures St Mary March 2025

This report refers largely to the Bures Joint Parish Action Plan for the past year which is drawn up by the two Parish Councils. Reviewed annually, it sets out our short- and medium-term aspirations for the village.

The BSM Parish Council meets every two months on a Thursday evening here in the Community Centre in the Garrad Room. Members of the public are always welcome; the agenda is usually very busy and some perennial issues seem like permanent items and can, at times, be a challenge to resolve.

Highways

Highway matters have kept both the Clerk and the Council well occupied over the past year.

Prolonged water leaks, road closures and persistent potholes understandably try everyone's patience but the Parish Council determinedly pursues some of these matters, working closely with our County Councillor, James Finch.

Some concern has understandably been raised about the proposed closure of the road bridge over the river during the summer months for long overdue refurbishment and repairs. Suffolk County Council will be overseeing this programme and will be working with the contractors to minimise disruption to the village. We have asked for overnight working where possible, that the work avoids the duration of the Bures Music Festival and that pedestrian access is maintained. We will keep other Parish Councils informed as diversions will inevitably impact on our neighbouring communities. The Parish Council will share any updates as soon as they are received and I assure residents that we are the more reliable source of up-to-date information, rather than the speculation that sometimes appears in social media.

The B1508 between Cornard and Bures has been included in the SCC rotation use of an ANPR to monitor motorists' speeds. Unfortunately, there was a significant setback to this initiative when all three units along the B1508 were vandalised and dumped.

As stated in the Joint Parish Plan, a councillor now attends the Suffolk Enhanced Partnership which meets periodically to discuss all matters relating to public bus services across the area. If any resident has an issue regarding the bus services, please share these concerns with the Parish Council so that they may be addressed at the next SEP meeting.

Community SpeedWatch

SpeedWatch can only take place with the continued support of a brilliant but very small team of volunteers. In order to continue monitoring the speed of traffic at the Millennium Crossing and by Holly Barn on the Sudbury Road, more helpers are very much needed. The site at the Holly Barn has been stood down for the time being due to the lack of volunteers. Regrettably, Sudbury Town Council has also decided to discontinue managing the Speed Indicator Devices for all outlying villages. The STC team provided a much-valued service, at a cost obviously to the Parish Council, but we are plan to resume the coverage on the Sudbury Road, Nayland Road and Cuckoo Hill on a volunteering basis. This is obviously not without

some risk on the B1508 site in particular. The SID does not influence serial speeders but acts as a very helpful prompt for generally compliant drivers who have just not noticed that they need to adjust their speed.

We have endeavoured to raise the public concern with Suffolk County Council Highways about the increase in HGVs driving through the village. Video evidence has been passed onto the department but recent surveys have shown that the majority of HGVs (5 to 1) are in fact using the A134. The Parish Councils have recently joined a working party with nearby parishes, Wormingford, Fordham and beyond, to monitor the impact of HGVs on the community and the fabric of the highways. We have also agreed to collaborate with Little Cornard on a similar exercise to monitor especially the anticipated HGV traffic involved in the National Grid Reinforcement Project.

Community

Parish Councillors now regularly attend the Bures Market each month to engage with residents in a more accessible way, to make themselves known and to listen to concerns and suggestions. We are very happy to take issues raised to the bi-monthly meetings as before.

When available, the police officer assigned to Bures St Mary, PC Brendan McKenna, tries to also attend the monthly markets which provides a great opportunity to address any current issues in the village. Both Parish Councils will continue to work closely with their respective Constabularies, especially over the busy summer period when the village attracts more visitors. As well as our own Jenny Wright for Bures Hamlet, we also link closely with Mark Smith, the Neighbourhood Co-ordinator for Little Cornard, to keep up to date with any ongoing incidents or problems. Mark is always on the lookout for volunteers to join him in expanding this valuable network across our communities to keep us all safe and secure.

At the APM last year, it was asked if the Parish Councils had any plans to install staunch kits in the village. A few months later, Bures Hamlet received an offer from County Councillor Schwier of three bleed kits donated by the charity known as the Daniel Baird Foundation. We are delighted this evening to welcome Louise Mason who will explain later the background to this generous offer. It has been decided to create a first aid station here on the Sportsground by installing one of the donated bleed kits next to the defibrillator on the Football Club building. The second kit will be installed inside the telephone kiosk housing the defibrillator next to the Post Office. The location for the third kit is still to be decided. The Parish Councils are very grateful to County Councillor Schwier and County Councillor Finch for both kindly agreeing to fund the cabinets in which to house the kits. The bleed kits are an important addition to the existing emergency provision in the village.

Environment

The Parish Councils continue to support wildflower schemes and tree planting around the village wherever the opportunity presents itself. This can involve a difficult balance between safety, convenience and what looks aesthetically pleasing whilst being environmentally sensitive. We are very grateful to Andrew Ward of the Environment Agency who has supplied wild flower seed for distribution at key locations around the village.

The Parish Council is consulted on any work involving trees in the village. There are a number of trees protected by a Tree Protection Order. We are grateful to Ken Jackson, our Tree Warden, for his advice concerning such matters. Sadly, the diagnosis of an incurable fungus attacking the Copper Beech tree by the Three Horseshoes P.H. meant that it was necessary to reduce the canopy of this very special tree in the interest of public safety and to remove any risk to adjacent properties. Over the coming months, the Parish Council will be consulting with Babergh District Council on granting other trees in the village, the protection of a TPO. Many trees, currently unprotected, have been identified as important in the Neighbourhood Plan and these would benefit in the future of being given this extra protection.

For those on foot, Councillors monitor and try to keep our PRowS accessible with the help of our team of contractors. We are especially grateful to our team of contractors who all work very hard to keep both sides of the village looking well-tended and cared for. Access to our lovely surrounding countryside is enjoyed by locals and visitors alike. We are grateful to local landowners for maintaining the permissive paths which make an important contribution to the existing network.

The affairs of the Joint Cemetery Authority, under Jenny Wright's careful eye, are overseen by representatives from the two Parish Councils. The Cemetery also provides a pleasant place to walk, much appreciated by many. Our contractors continue to care for the grounds on a rolling maintenance programme spread over the year. The wildflower area is becoming established in the grounds and, over time, should produce a carpet of colour for pollinators. Despite our best efforts to protect them, the standpipes seem particularly vulnerable in the cold weather, so it has reluctantly been agreed to shut off the water supply in future over the winter months. We hope that this will not cause undue inconvenience.

The Joint Sportsground Committee has been in conversation with the County Electric Vehicle Plug-In Team to explore the possibility of installing charge points in the Community Centre car park. This was decided to be impractical but we have been assured that Babergh District Council is currently investigating the possibility of installing EV charging units in or around the Tawneys Ride / Claypits area and we look forward to news on the progress of this initiative.

Projects

The bus shelter on Bridge Street has been missed by many since its removal last May due to rot attacking its fixing timbers. The Suffolk Enhanced Partnership, which supports the improvement of all local bus services operating in the Suffolk County Council (SCC) Local Transport Authority, has agreed in principle to help with the replacement costs for a new structure with some new capital funding soon to become available specifically to improve infrastructure. We will also be submitting another bid in the forthcoming round of Community Infrastructure Levy funding from Babergh District Council. Unfortunately, the delay of yet another year means inevitably that costs will very likely have increased in excess of last year's quotation of just over £16,000.

The Parish Councils would like to thank District Councillor Reece on behalf of the Bures Cricket Club for her contribution to another important community project. Isabelle has kindly donated £1000 from her Locality Budget to the Pavillion Rethatch Project.

Planning

The proposal for the development of the former Chambers Bus Yard was submitted in March 2024. The developers have been addressing the planning conditions over the last year and it is anticipated that the Full Planning application will be considered by the Planning Committee on 16th April. This date has to be confirmed but indicates that the village may begin to see real activity on the site in the coming months.

Conclusion

Georgie Turner officially took up the position as Clerk to the Joint Sportsground Committee in September 2023. She then took on the mantle of Parish Clerk in January 2024. She has worked tirelessly in guiding and supporting the Bures St Mary Parish Councillors in their work for our community, often going above and beyond the role of a Parish Clerk. We are very sorry to see her leave the position at the end of this month and wish her every success in her future endeavours. We will be welcoming Mr Keith Money from 1st April and hope that he settles into his new role with us. He is also Parish Clerk for Mount Bures and Little Cornard so it is hoped that this will lead to even more inter-parish collaboration in the months ahead.

Both Richard and I would like to thank our respective team of councillors and our two Clerks for their commitment to the community over the past year, and, as always, for their contribution, patience and good humour. We are also very appreciative of the advice, guidance and support given by our County Councillor, James Finch, and Isabelle Reece, the District Councillor. We are confident that they will continue to ensure that the voice of the local community is heard in the months of change to come.

Jan Aries (Chair Bures St Mary Parish Council)