

Porlock Parish Council – Portfolio Report September 24

War memorial (Dunster Steep)

Weeding - Weeds remain an ongoing problem at the war memorial. The PPC Caretaker has spent several hours removing the weeds by hand which is time consuming and requires regular attendance. The weeds are causing the mortar between the cobbles to break up, they have been repointed using a lime-mortar mix. This is in line with The War Memorial Trust, CADW and English Heritage best guidance - which is to duplicate wherever possible the original materials and techniques on such historically important monuments. The idea of using lime-based mortars have always been that they are "sacrificial" - so that they are softer than the actual masonry they bind so that if there is any movement etc the mortar fails rather than it adhering so strongly to the masonry sections that it could risk the masonry cracking or breaking. There are some marvellous resin based pointing materials currently available, these cannot be used as it would be in danger of not respecting the historic construction of the monument. An ongoing maintenance programme contract is on the agenda for consideration.

Bench - The request to have a bench re-installed at the memorial is currently being looked into, however safety needs to be a priority as access to the area is off the main road, which would require the reinstating of hand rails, gate and trip rails.

War Memorial Working Group – There is an item on the 11th September agenda to consider the future working group.

Doverhay Toilets

Water bill - Monitoring of the increase water bill shows that usage has reverted to normal levels. Wessex Water came and inspected the facilities for any signs of underground water leaks, which none were found. The high usage between September 23 and Feb 24 has been put down unresolved. Monthly meter readings are now taken by the PPC caretaker to enable better monitoring. The most recent bill for the last 6 month period is within expect levels.

Cash Donation Boxes - Vandalism to the cash donation boxes had stopped for a few months but this has started again, with the out of use box being prised open. New preventative measures are being investigated.

Cashless donations – Cashless donation points (QR codes) will be installed alongside the cash donation boxes to offer an alternative way of collecting donations (this will be applied at all current cash donation points).

Asset Review - A recent asset review the facilities found a number of items that need attention, some of these are regulatory to comply with Health & Safety others will require decisions by council. A full report with recommendations will made to council in October in the meantime actions required under regulation will be completed.

Public and staff toilets – Quotes have been received to instal covered bins for sanitary items and similar. PPC would need a contract to dispose of the clinical waste. To be considered during the budget process.

St Dubricius Closed Churchyard

Yew Trees - Planning application has been submitted to ENPA to carry out the paring of the Yew trees in the Churchyard. Budget already approved. Currently waiting to hear back from Bath & Wells Diocese regarding requirement for permission to carry out the work as required under the church faculty rules

Memorial Inspection - The inspection was completed on the 26th July and Council are now waiting to receive the report.

Finial Repair – Still waiting for a date when the finial will be repair by West Country Blacksmiths, an alternative contractor may be required.

Damage caused by tree roots to path behind St. Dubricius Church - ENPA have provided advice regarding the damage caused to the path behind the Church due to tree roots primarily from the oak in St. Dubricius First School. Suggestions including retarmacking some patches, filling cracks with liquid tarmac and/or using temporary coverings to make the footpath safer to walk on.

Hawkcombe Cemetery

Memorial inspection – The inspection was completed on the 26th July, the report has now been received. The test involved a visual and manual test. No mechanical device has been used during this inspection.

All memorials over 24” high have been tested, which conforms to the safety requirement under British Standards. Due to the sloping in Porlock cemetery any memorial that was under 24” but due to its location, like on the slope or by a path edge has also been inspected.

Safe 350 - No further action

Loose 75 - Periodic inspection required

Unsafe 102 - action needs to be taken ASAP due to the risk to the public and workers.

All memorials are erected at the sole responsibility of the owner and remain their responsibility during the lease period of the grave. Following the safety inspection we now have the task to identify current owners of the graves of any necessary works to make the memorial safe. The Council has the right to temporarily make safe any memorials that pose a threat until such works are completed and if needed the Council may repair or remove the memorial at the owner's expense.

This is a major piece of work with unknown costs attached, as records may not be sufficient to identify owners. A full report will be presented to Council in due course.

The Kingdon Memorial Bench - the family have submitted the below design and specification of a memorial bench which with Council's approval the families preference would be for a bench to be made by a member of the family.



Specification - Made from Yew a very hard and long lasting wood. Yew has a long connection with Church yards and Cemeteries.. It is local yew by the way. As long as it meets with the parish councils regulations.

Benches - Three bench seats in cemetery require rectification/replacement. Hazard tape has been used to highlight to the public.

Old School Centre (Building)

Window cleaning – Window cleaning at the OSC has been changed to every eight weeks to save money. In addition the Clerk has tested the market and is satisfied with current rates. It has been recommended that an annual clean of the solar panels (to maximise their efficacy) and guttering (to minimise vegetation

growth and keep the rain water flowing) should be undertaken which will be included in the budget process for 25/26

Flagpole – The flag has been put back, one section is missing while a solution is found that will enable it to be safely secured.

Library redecoration – The Library hasn't been decorated in 10 years and is in need. Quotes have been received from three local contractors. Quotes will be considered by FHR and then recommendation put to the Council in October.

Library 10 years – A plan has been shared with council to celebrate the 10th birthday of the Library

Community Library Partnership Contract Renewal – 17th October 24 a meeting will take place to begin the contract renewal discussions with Somerset Libraries.

Library Ceiling Lights - Light bulbs on the ceiling in the library need replacing. Storage for a lightweight moveable tower/platform for future use by PPC is being investigated so that PPC could purchase. Shed behind OSC will be available by 16th November 2024. This is to be arranged using the equipment available from the village hall. Following a risk assessment additional man power will be required to ensure safety at work. Volunteers welcome.

Steps – Anti slip edges have been fitted to the steps leading down to the building

Green waste – Currently PPC do not have a green waste collection, a proposal will be put to council for consideration during the 25/26 budget process.

Storage and workshop - space remains a problem for the PPC and the Caretaker. A review will be undertaken once the PVCIC has moved out in November. PPC still have a shed part paid on hold with Taunton Shed Company.

Caretaker Tools – The PPC caretaker currently uses his own tools for all council work. A wish list has been requested which will be presented and considered by council.

OSC Community Garden

Clearing - A recent cutback of the overgrown bushes has been undertaken by the Maintenance Contractor, this is not on the monthly/annual requirements and will be considered in the grounds maintenance contract renewal process. It has been recommended by the that the trees are pared back, removing dead branches at the appropriate time of year and inspection carried out each year. In addition the PPC caretaker has cutback and removed the brambles that have been allowed to grow through some of the trees and around the carpark.

Garden purpose/use - A full review of the OSC Community Garden and recommendations will be undertaken by the OSCCG working group and presented to Council in October.

High Bank Car park

Fence Panels - A contractor has been engaged to fix the two broken fence panels adjacent to the fire station car park, the work is planned to take place in October. Date TBC)

Occupancy - All spaces are now fully occupied. Council will be asked to review the charges during the 25/26 budget planning process.

Car Park at the Village Hall

Entrance Gate & Post - It has been reported that the entrance gate and post has been damaged. The post and gate have been put to one side. The PPC caretaker will inspect this and make recommendation. It is likely a contractor will be required to put right. Although the gate is seldom used it has been requested that it is put back as it is used when private functions are taking place.

Car Park Lamppost – the lamppost in the car park has been damaged, a quote is being obtained to repair or to replace with a more up to date energy efficient / solar powered lamp.

Lease - Despite several attempts there has been no response from Savills since the initial meeting in June regarding the renewal of car park lease. The lease ran out in 2020 . The current paid rental period will end the end of December 2024.

Engagement

Love Where You Live – A new email address and Facebook group has been set up to support the LWYL campaign and working group. The Working Group is calling for more willing volunteers.

Social Media – All council meetings are posted on the Council Facebook page and website. Following recent social media feedback regarding the Future of the Old School Centre all council meetings have been raised for posting on the Porlock Facebook page. Despite the first few posts being accepted recent posts have not been authorised by the Porlock Facebook page administrators and past posts have now been removed.

Street Furniture & displays

Planters – One of the multi-tier planters required replanting and compost refresh as plants were dying despite an organic feed being used.

Water Bowser – The water bowser at Doverhay has now been secured outside the store area to the railing.

Idverde shed – A request has been made to idverde about the purpose of the ‘shed’ as it is empty and the street cleaners cart is secure to the railings behind the Doverhay Toilets. The shed is starting to fall apart and either needs replacing and using or removing.

Notice boards at OSC – A quote has been requested to replace the notice boards at the old school centre

Finger signpost Medowhayes – This has been reported to ENPA for fixing

The Parks bridleway – This has become very overgrown and is making it impassible in various parts. PME and ENP have been approached however no action will be taken due to funding. PPC maintenance contractor has assessed what is required and a funding request to address the issue will be put to the FHR committee in September.

Benches maintenance – Need sanding down and oiling or revarnishing. This work will be timetabled and undertaken by the PPC Caretaker who has provided feedback on best course of action. A request to approve the purchase of mechanical sander will be put to FHR committee in September as manual sanding will be too labour intensive.

Flood Equipment – A recent audit of village flood equipment has been undertaken by Alistair Campbell. There is now a comprehensive stock list. Resources are now being split equally between the Village Hall and Doveray Museum locations. Redundant out of date equipment has been disposed of and an order to replace out of date batteries and a gas cooker spanner has been placed.

Traffic and Road Safety Working Group

The latest working group update is covered in a separate report to council for the 11th September meeting.

Highways – Provided by Cllr. S Colson,

Traffic Regulatory Orders (TROs) - TROs were due to be submitted in August for the High Street kerb ticks, disabled parking bay and shortening of the double yellow lines on Redway. Due to unforeseen circumstances this didn't happen, and they will now be submitted in October.

Lines - Work orders for the white line painting for the ‘keep clear’ section on Parson's St and the virtual footpath on Dunster Steep were submitted in June. The work hasn't been done yet, and is being chased up by the Traffic Management Team.

A request was made in May to complete the yellow line painting on The Meadows. The work hasn't been done yet and is being chased up by the Traffic Management Team.

Signs - Cleaning of the road signs on Porlock Hill has been requested. It will be too expensive for Highways to do this themselves, and lower cost options are being explored. We await advice.

A work order was submitted in June for reinstatement of the information sign near the Castle. This is being chased up by the Traffic Management Team.

The design has been agreed for the new road signs at the Dunster Steep and Meadowhayes junction, directing westbound traffic to Sparkhayes campsite via Meadowhayes Road. A work order is expected to be submitted in the near future.

To manage traffic on Sparkhayes Lane and avoid damage to buildings, a request for a further change in road signs has been made, to direct eastbound traffic to the Sparkhayes campsite via Meadowhayes Road. The design for the signs is under review and should be ready for submission in late September.

Parking - There has been no progress on the reinstatement of parking restriction signs outside the hardware store or by Splat Barn/High Bank cottages. Lining has been a priority in the summer months; now we are in September, this is being chased up again.

A request for information regarding the rationale for the Exmoor Coaster bus stop outside St Dubricius church has been made.

Other road improvements (widening of virtual footpath at top of Dunster Steep, dropped kerbs on High Street, informal pedestrian crossing areas). No progress has been made with the Somerset Improvements Team, who have a very high workload and currently no model for responding to unfunded requests from Parishes. Follow up will now be made independently, with advice being taken from the Areas Highways Manager in the first instance.

Late Night Shopping Working Group

The latest working group update is covered in a separate report to council for the 11th September meeting.

Working Group updates

No other updates received