



Farthinghoe and Steane Parish Council

19/04/2023

## Chairman's Report for the 2022/2023 year

At this time last year life had just reverted to more normal times in Farthinghoe, as in many places, following the seemingly endless affects of Covid. Unfortunately the tenuous situation in Ukraine was already seen to be developing very quickly.

Few of us were anticipating the affect it would continue to have on the world more than a year later, both in human terms and in financial terms.

As an example, which is close to hand, electricity for the streetlighting is the Parish's largest continuous expense and this cost has already increased 3.2 times since the same period in 2022 with our annual streetlighting electricity now well in excess of £3000.

We have all seen similar affects on our own domestic energy costs along with the cost of items which we regularly buy in the shops.

Let's hope that good sense will soon prevail, allowing the people of Ukraine, with Global help. to rebuild their country and their lives.

Their courage and resilience is an incredible example to us all.

This year has again been tinged with sadness in Farthinghoe with the loss of Dave Hancock, Peter Tucker and Beryl Allen.

Dave, Peter and Beryl have all been long term residents in our Parish and their memories will always live on in our hearts.

Our love and prayers go out to their friends and families to help them to cope with their sad losses.

Continuing on with subjects mentioned in the 2022 report

1 Farthinghoe and Steane Parish Council

It is important to begin this report with an expression of thanks to Dave Weston for his fine efforts in the development and control of the Parish Council's accounts.

Dave's job title is Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer, but as many will know he continues exceed these duties by some distance.

The Parish is really very fortunate to have him.

I would like to express my personal thanks to all of our Parish Councillors for their efforts and input during the past year. Efforts which are much appreciated.

The Parish Council had begun this financial year with a Councillor vacancy, a situation which was rectified when we were pleased to invite Wendy Hancock to join the Council at our June 2022 PCM.

## 2 Bypass

In 2021/2022 progress on the Farthinghoe bypass received a boost with WNC Cabinet approval, to be quickly followed by this progress being put on hold "paused" by Council Officers for reasoning which was never fully explained and with which we did not agree.

It caused considerable confusion and consternation with the Parish Council and throughout the Parish.

However, we are pleased to advise that an ill-conceived plan to introduce permanent 2-way traffic light controls at the pinch-point on the A422, along with a one-way traffic systems in Baker Street and in Chapel Lane appears to have been consigned to the history books where it clearly belongs.

To cut a long story short, after much dialogue, work has recommenced on the bypass plan and we have been promised a detailed update during May 2023. In the course of a couple years the estimate for the completion of a working bypass receded from 2024 to 2026 to 2028 and then to "turn of the decade" With this slippage and uncertainty in mind the Parish Council has pushed hard for an interim scheme to tide us over until the real McCoy can be planned and constructed,

The favoured interim scheme being an A422 Weight Restriction, a logical idea which had been brushed aside numerous times in the last 30+ years. This would virtually eliminate the through route for thousands of HGVs on the A422.

Our fortunes changed considerably when we were introduced to WNC Councillor Tony Bagot-Webb on December 9<sup>th</sup>.

On that day Tony saw, with his own eyes, the full force of the traffic problems which we experience regularly and he could not believe the mayhem on that morning.

His endeavours since that day have resulted in him asking that FPC make an official request to the Chief Executive of WNC for a Weight Restriction, a request that seemed to meet with Cabinet favour.

That request was duly complied with and recorded as item 03/23/231 in the minutes of the FPC meeting in March 2023.

We are awaiting details from WNC concerning the procedures which must be followed along with a timeline detailing when this can be made to happen.

It is this Parish Councils intent to fight on until the much needed Farthinghoe Bypass is in place, although we are sure that the adoption of an interim A422

Weight Limit is a meaningful step to bring some of the important benefits of a Bypass a little earlier.

### 3 Bus Shelters

The word New has now disappeared from the description of the bus shelters as they have now become an integral part of the village scene.

As many will have noticed Barry has designed and installed a map into the bus shelter adjacent to the church, a map which indicates the locations of all houses within the village.

We thank Barry for his endeavours and hope that everyone finds the map useful.

During the course of this year we had lost the Sunday and Evening 500 bus services, although the former has now been reintroduced for a period to assess its viability for continued operation.

The Government supported trial scheme of £2.00 journey fares, now extended to the end of June, seems to have boosted bus use considerably between Banbury and Brackley and we hope that this increase will continue and thus allow a complete return of the Sunday service and even be a stimulus to further thoughts about the evening services.

WNC has identified the design of our bus shelters as a public building and thus enforceable “No Smoking” signs can soon be put in place.

We would also respectfully request that users do not treat the bus shelters as rubbish disposal areas especially for cigarette butts—it is not conducive to the reputation of our village.

### 4 Village Hall

The Parish Council are extremely appreciative of the fine efforts put in by the Village Hall Committee and by the separate Events Committee all of which are combining to maintain the hall in such fine fettle

A separate report has been written by the Village Hall Committee and is available for all to read.

As mentioned in that report there is a pressing need for more residents to consider joining or working with that Committee to help with a variety of tasks which constantly need to be addressed.

### 5 Farthinghoe Primary School

No Annual report has been received

### 6 Farthinghoe Chronicle

A big thank you to Rosemary, Vivienne, Nick and James for ensuring that we get our monthly news and information come hell or high water

## **7 Farthinghoe Dashwood Playpark**

**John Grant has kindly prepared a separate report concerning the children's Play Park**

**I would like to reiterate the following from paragraph 3 in John's report**

"We suspect that in the next couple of years we will need to replace the main wooden supports of the climbing frames, due to damp. This will not be a cheap option but if we wish to retain this valuable asset then we will need the support of the village in fund raising for this eventuality."

I would also like to make reference to John's final paragraph

John and James Harrison went to considerable efforts to produce and install a sign on the main gate

There are still a considerable number of instances where the message on this sign is not being adhered to.

My two extracts from John's report are very clearly related

## **8 Cope Lodge Solar Farm proposed on the Parish borders with Greatworth:**

As mentioned last year the Solar Farm developer had presented a new Planning Application in February 2022 for around 190 acres of mostly good agricultural land, also affecting views, footpaths and wildlife.

The full cost of this representation was borne by the Council Tax payers of West Northants

The Application was rejected by West Northants Council Strategic Planning Committee in October 2022.

In February 2023 the developer appealed against this WNC decision and the Planning Inspectorate will now decide upon this Appeal in June 2023

Full details of this subject can be viewed on the West Northants Council Planning Portal under Planning Application reference WNS/2022/0557/EIA

## **9 Link to the Spring Message from Dame Andrea Leadsom MP**

Dear Resident,

At last it feels like Spring! It has been a long and difficult winter for many, and I

hope that the lighter evenings and the warmer days will give us all a renewed sense of optimism. One of the ways many residents have celebrated the better weather has been with litter picking - making our area beautiful ready for the King's Coronation on May 6!



*Clockwise from top left: Aimee, Isabella, Mia, Daisy, Billi, Brook and Havan from Deanshanger spent some of their half term break helping to make the local area look clean and tidy, a top team in Abthorpe that collected 7 bags of litter, and volunteers in Hinton in the Hedges following their successful litter pick!*

It has been a pleasure for me, as always, to visit schools across South Northants, including Blakesley C of E, St Luke's C of E, Caroline Chisholm, and Northampton School for Girls. Anyone wondering if children and young people have an interest in politics these days need only look at the questions asked by the students - from Gary Lineker's tweets about the small boats, to climate



change, to the war in Ukraine - their awareness was only too apparent, and they kept me on my toes!



*Clockwise from top left: with pupils at Northampton School for Girls, visiting St Luke's Primary as part of the Google 'Be An Internet Legend' assembly, a snowy scene at Blakesley Church of England School, visiting Caroline Chisholm School.*

There are many highly successful businesses in our area, and from Small Business Saturday to local engineering and tech companies, it is clear South Northants is a highly desirable place to live and work.



*Clockwise from top left: visiting Forge Coffee and the Evenley Shop during a recent Village Action Day, at Performance Projects in Silverstone, chatting with the residents of the Brackley Care Home*

A trip to the new Brackley Care Home to meet residents and hear some of the challenges around adult social care as well as to answer questions on government policy was a real pleasure - particularly the tea and cake part...

Much time in the last year has been spent in helping and supporting Homes for Ukraine - trying to get visas approved for refugees escaping Putin's aggression, and also supporting the fantastic local efforts to get aid and vehicles out to Ukraine - St Lawrence Church in Towcester recently held an exhibition detailing all the local efforts. I have hosted a Ukrainian family myself so understand well how traumatic and terrifying their experience has been. Let's hope this year sees an end to the invasion.





*At the Towcester Ukraine Aid exhibition*

## **Towcester Relief Road**

Many constituents are in regular contact with their continued concerns about progress of the **Towcester Relief Road**. Whilst Persimmon are making progress with its construction, I remain concerned with the slow speed of delivery against the section 106 commitments, and I have written to West Northamptonshire Council to raise this issue. I have asked the Council to instruct their enforcement officers to prevent Persimmon from building further homes until they have fulfilled their existing commitments under the planning permission. I am waiting for a response on this.

## **HS2**

I also continue to raise the considerable issues of residents affected by **HS2** with the Department for Transport and the Minister for HS2, Huw Merriman MP. He has recently visited our area to see for himself the problems that residents are experiencing and I will be pressing for these issues to be resolved.



My team and I have dealt with over 6500 pieces of casework on a range of issues.

## **Parliament**

In Parliament, the timetable has been busy, with many late nights of multiple votes. I have spoken in the Chamber on a variety of topics including on the economy, the Windsor Framework and the treasury's childcare proposals. I chaired a debate on 'the energy trilemma', which had wide cross-party support and raised the important issue of energy security and decarbonisation. I also presented a petition on behalf of residents about ongoing problems with Anglian Water.

All my speeches can be found on my [YouTube channel](#). I also regularly upload my contributions in the Chamber [on my website](#).

I have recently been elected to the Treasury Select Committee, which scrutinises the Treasury, the Bank of England and the Financial Services Regulators. The Committee meets on Tuesday mornings and Wednesday afternoons, and we run several different inquiries at the same time. Currently we are considering the most recent budget, the proposed changes to financial regulation, the prospects for crypto currency and will shortly begin an inquiry into quantitative tightening by the Bank of England. Public meetings of the Committee can be found on [parliamentlive.tv](#).

And finally, I was delighted that in February the Prime Minister and I launched a progress update on the rollout of the Vision for the Best Start for Life - a project I have been chairing since July 2020. We visited a Family Hub in Cornwall meeting parents, babies and early years professionals to discuss the work that has been done so far on implementing the Vision, and the funding that has

been awarded to 75 local authority areas. Further information can be found [here](#).



*With the Prime Minister and his wife, Akshata Murthy at a Family Hub in Cornwall.*

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

**During the last 15 years we have seen an exponential growth in the amount of Logistics Warehousing in Banbury and elsewhere around the district.**

**Both West Northants Council and Cherwell District Council are over run by the number of such Planning Applications still being received and because of Government regulations it becomes increasingly difficult for both councils to defend against such over development.**

**All of these developments have made a profound contribution to the increase in the already excessive number of HGVs which come through our village causing danger, pollution and ruining the quality of our lives**

**Please give this serious consideration with a view to submitting your personal opinions to the relevant Planning portals.**

**I apologise in advance for my continued badgering but I truly believe that it important for the Parish Council to have a vehicle in place on which it can communicate important information to the whole Parish at the touch of a button.**

