



In the depths of winter, it is encouraging to be able to report good progress on various fronts. The village hall, recreation ground and biogas HGV threat have all moved forward positively. What is also heartening is the success of several events in the village in the past few weeks: the harvest supper, Remembrance Day, and the antiques fair all drew significant support and raised welcome funds for their organisers. The carols around the tree (pictured below) were also much enjoyed and demonstrated that life in our community is flourishing.

A very happy New Year to you all.

Martin Newman (Chairman)



courtesy Emma Selling Photography



Many thanks to the Black Horse for providing the electricity to light the tree

BIOGAS PLANT

Ashford Borough Council's Planning Committee rejected unanimously the application to build a biogas plant at Westwell Leacon. Our argument was that the Pluckley/Charing road, although being a designated lorry route, is not fit for the purpose and that the 5,000 additional HGV movements would have had an unreasonable impact on our quality of life. The fact that so many of you signed the petition, and attended the Committee meeting, helped to impress upon councillors the strength of feeling locally. A significant factor too was that we worked closely together with Charing and Little Chart Parish Councils in preparing our case.

It remains to be seen whether the applicants appeal but the planning case against them now is a strong one.

VILLAGE HALL

The redecoration of the hall has duly been completed, and the pelmets, new wall lighting and new sound system are being installed now. The planting scheme in the garden has also been carried out. New curtains have been ordered and these should be up early in the New Year. We are very grateful to the Pantomime Society and to the Senior Citizens Club who have promised donations.

Phase 2 (extension, and modernisation of toilets and kitchen) is expected to cost around £120,000 so cannot happen without grants.

Applications have been made and we await the outcome.

In the meantime the improved hall is already attracting many compliments and more bookings. This is important as the hall makes a loss each year. To help remedy this we are raising the hire charges with effect from 1st January. It is some years now since the charges went up and we remain very competitive with other halls around. The new charges will be:

For Pluckley residents: £6 per hour, Mon–Fri, £8 per hour weekends

For non residents: £8 per hour, Mon–Fri; £12 per hour weekends

Children's parties: flat fee £20 for residents, £30 non-residents

Evening hire: £75 for residents, £125 for non-residents

Weddings: Fri.pm–Sun.am £250 for residents, £350 for non-residents

Requests to hire the hall should be made to Graham Smith (01622 890596) or at clerk@pluckley.net

With effect from January also, as explained in the last Communicate, the Trustees for the hall are changing. The new trustees will be: Debbie Breach, Dave Hocking, Chris Housman, Martin Newman, Judy Poole, and Emily Short.

SALT

Extra salt has been ordered from KCC Highways to keep the roads through the village safe during the winter. An additional salt bin has been purchased and positioned at the junction of The Street and Forge Hill.

DOG FOULING

Complaints have been received about dog mess on the Recreation Ground. All dog owners are reminded that this is an offence and are asked please to observe the practice of removing any mess left by their dogs.

TRAFFIC

Our Speed Review is still being considered by KCC Highways and by the Police. There would be a cost entailed in advertising the impending changes and in implementing the new signage around the village. So that the cost does not prevent KCC moving forward with the project, the Parish Council has agreed to contribute. We are pleased to say that both County Councillor Richard King and Borough Councillor Clair Bell are finding some funds towards this so that the cost for the village would be no more than £2,000.

Whether or not we obtain the new limits, we can now turn our intention towards ensuring they are adhered to. Now is not the right time on cost grounds to be asking KCC for costly measures such as interactive signs, gates at the entrance to the village, and road narrowing. These are the measures you favoured and which the Parish Council will pursue as soon as the financial situation improves.

For the moment, however, we propose to re-institute a Speed Watch whereby motorists exceeding the limits will be reported to the Police. Several residents have said they are happy to volunteer to carry out the Speed Watch, which will be done in a strictly controlled way. A list of volunteers is being collated. If you would be happy to give some time to help ensure traffic is calmed, please contact Martin Newman.

SIGNS AND ADVERTISING

We are seeing an increasing number of signs and advertisements going up around the village to the extent that it is becoming visual pollution. We are not talking about notices promoting village events which are temporary and a necessary announcement of social activity. Many signs promote commercial operations, often outside the village. The Parish Council supports limited advertising, in the proximity of the business, particularly for the village's own businesses, but opposes widespread advertising. If we are not consulted beforehand, such notices will in future be removed.

Did you know....

...that there is a new contact number for the Police? It is 101. This is for non-emergency calls and enquiries.

THE QUEEN'S JUBILEE

After discussions with the Church and the School, we have agreed to hold a Street Party to celebrate the Jubilee in June next year. It will be open to all residents of Pluckley and it is hoped that as many of you as possible will come along. Details will be announced in the next issue.

MIKE WHATMAN

Given the pressure of his business commitments, Mike Whatman has reluctantly decided he can no longer devote the time he would like to being a Parish Councillor and has stood down. Mike has put in an immense effort over the past four years and the village has benefitted greatly from his energy and expertise. Thank you, Mike.

DIGITAL TV

The digital TV switchover is starting in Kent from May 30th 2012. Analogue TV signals will be turned off and Freeview services boosted to reach all areas. After switchover, virtually all homes will be able to receive digital TV free via an aerial, including those served by local relay transmitters. When you switch depends on which transmitter your TV gets its signal from.

To find out when you switch and what your digital options are, you can visit www.digitaluk.co.uk or call Digital UK on 08456 50 50 50.

What do you need to do?

If you have Freeview, Top Up TV or BT Vision, you will need to retune your digital TV or box at switchover or you will lose channels. Switchover is a two-stage process and you need to retune at both stages.

If you have a satellite or cable service on all your sets, you will not need to retune as these are not affected by switchover.

If you have 5 channels or fewer (i.e. analogue TV) on any of your sets, you will need to convert them to digital.

If you're 75 and over, or eligible disabled, call the Switchover Help Scheme – they can provide everything you need to keep watching your TV. The Switchover Help Scheme is run by the BBC under an agreement with the Government. If you are eligible for the Help Scheme, they will write to you to offer you practical help to convert one of your TV sets to digital.

For more information ring 0800 40 85 900 for free or e-mail info@helpscheme.co.uk

You can also get more information at www.helpscheme.co.uk

STOP PRESS

We have just been informed that a 2 bed Local Needs House has become available on Westfields. It will be advertised through Kenthomechoice Choice Based Lettings Scheme from 23 December. Anyone with an appropriate Pluckley connection who is registered on the Ashford Housing Register can apply.

YOUR PARISH COUNCIL

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The Parish Council meets in Pluckley Village Hall at 7.30pm on the third Monday of each month.

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