

Pluckley Parish Council

Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2008

Andrew Buchanan's

Chairman's report

It now seems a long while since Janet stepped down as chairman and a lot has happened since. There have been a number of notable successes in the last year of which I must be careful not to take the credit for.

First and foremost the success of the Brickworks appeal which is a great relief to us all, secondly it appears that Pluckley Railway Station finally has funding for the long awaited platform extension. The new Dering Organ is operational and the Sports Pavilion is very nearly completed – we hope to be having a Grand Opening day very soon. The newly reformed junior football club is up and running again and has secured a sizable grant from the Football Association.

On the not so positive side you will have noticed that the parish council element of your council tax has risen by £2,247: shared between the 460 houses in Pluckley it's just £4.88 per year – the price of 8 copies of the Kentish Express or 8 copies of the parish magazine. The reason for the increase is threefold, first of all we need to maintain the new sports pavilion, secondly the village hall and other projects within the village are suffering from a lack of new investment so we are now putting monies aside to rollover for

**Annual Parish
Assembly
Friday 16 May
8pm
Pluckley
Village Hall
Everyone welcome**

future improvements, thirdly the administration of the council has increased (due to the demands placed upon us) and a correction has been made to come a bit nearer to the true cost. Also there has been a high turnover of council members since the elections last year due to a mixture of health, professional and personal issues. Luckily a

number of new people have been willing to step into the breach.

We have two big challenges ahead of us now. Firstly we need to do something about the village hall, the current building was built in the 1960s and, whilst being the best that could be afforded given the post war conditions, the hall no longer meets the needs and expectations of a vibrant modern community. Funds are now being accumulated from a number of sources including profits from the Halloween fundraising and, with grateful thanks to Jeff and Simon, the highly successful fireworks event held at Elvey Farm. To add to this the Hog Fair 2008 is being run by the Village Hall Committee and I hope to see a good number of villagers offering to assist this year.

Secondly there is a problem with the parking at the station. Assuming that we get the platform extension – combined with proper connecting links (to the CTRL fast link to Stratford, King's Cross, the Olympics, as well as the traditional London Bridge, Cannon St and Charing Cross services) this is likely to result in a dramatic increase in demand for the railway station. In order to be able to meet this challenge and to regenerate the whole area nearby the station it has been suggested that Pluckley Station Action Group be reformed and I hope that commuters and those living near the station will take an active role in this exercise.



**Pluckley
Hog Fair**

**Sat 5 July
11am until late**

Can you help?

Please telephone Mike on 840044

Books needed for the book stall

**This year all profits for
Pluckley Village Hall**

Pluckley's Paths

Jenny Newman

We are very fortunate in Pluckley to be well-endowed with footpaths leading through some of the most beautiful scenery in Kent.

Two long distance paths cross the parish: the Greensand Way, which follows the outcrop of sandstone known as Greensand; and the Stour Valley walk, following the river Stour to Canterbury. Then there are many shorter, local paths all around the parish.

On the whole, the paths are well maintained by farmers who ensure that the ways are kept clear through planted crops. Less well maintained are the wooden stiles which weather quite quickly. Most paths are well signed from the roads although some of the tall finger signs have

blown over and need repairing (a list of these is currently being put together to send to KCC, whose responsibility they are).

One or two of the paths are tricky to follow as they are not regularly way-marked, such is the one from Saracens Cottage to Rooting Manor. The realigned path from Lambden Road to Chambers Green Road (now starting from Smarden Road) is also difficult to find once having left Smarden Road.

Over the years the odd path has been re-routed, such as the recent change of alignment of the path from Malmains to

Rushbrook Farm. This, though, has in no way spoiled the amenity value of the path that still cuts the corner but now avoids going through the farm yard.

The long distance paths tend to be well used and are very well maintained, but some of the short paths on the edge of the village are less used and quickly get overgrown in the summer. The answer is for more of us to get out there and enjoy them.

It is a delight to have this facility in the village and a resource to be highly valued.



Honouring a resident

Following on from last year's award to Peter Russell of an award as Honorary Resident of Pluckley for outstanding contribution to the village, it's now time to vote for this year's recipient.

The award confers no material honours, or special privileges, nor does it entitle the person to participate in the proceedings of the council meetings or in any ceremonial events. It is purely and simply for merit. It is open to any village inhabitant, except for parish and district councillors, and paid employees of the parish council. They must be nominated by an elector.

There is only one vote per resident and nominations should be forwarded in writing (letter, fax, or email) to the Clerk to the Council at the address on the back page by 9am Saturday 10 May. Please state your reasons for your nomination in not more than 50 words. In the event of no suitable names being forwarded, Pluckley Parish Council reserves the right not to grant the award in any given year.

Recreation Ground

Please would all users remember that:

prohibited are all unauthorised:

- golf practising
- motor vehicles, including go-karts and scooters, with the exception of wheelchairs;
- overnight camping;
- metal detecting;
- the flying of model aircraft; and
- horse riding

Dog owners are expected to clear up after their pets.

The entrance to the recreation ground is to be kept clear at all times to allow access for emergency vehicles.

Thank you

Pluckley Junior Football Club

Meets Saturdays at

10am on

Pluckley Rec

Contact Vicky Buchanan on 01233 840353 for more information.



Local homes for local people

In 2006 we asked 'Does Pluckley need affordable housing for local people?'

And the answer came back:

Yes we do need some. Approximately 8 to 10 houses in fact.

Pluckley Parish Council

has continued working with the English Rural Housing Association and Ashford Borough Council to find a suitable site – one that would normally not be allowed for building upon.

Commonly known as 'Local Needs/Affordable Housing' this is a scheme for homes for local-only people. It is run on a shared ownership (up to 80% owned by the resident and the balance owned by the housing

association) or rented basis in partnership between a Housing Association, Ashford Borough Council, and Pluckley Parish Council. The aim is to give local people (and only local people), who have strong connections with the parish and who cannot afford open market housing, a chance to stay or return.

Many villages in the area have benefited from schemes like this, which are generally small-scale and carefully designed to fit in with the existing architecture. It helps to sustain village communities by providing schemes, which reflect the needs of local people.

Local needs houses are built on what is called 'exception sites' – that is sites that would not normally be granted permission for development of any kind. When local needs homes are built on such a site this means that there will not be any possibility of further development on adjacent land in the foreseeable future.

Pluckley Parish Council Housing Committee met with a representative from the English Rural Housing Association [ERHA] in January 2007 and suggested a possible 15 sites that might be worthy of consideration for the proposed scheme. The majority of sites were thought not appropriate by planners at Ashford Borough Council. A feasibility study is being carried out as to the suitability of the ABC owned land at Pluckley Thorne.

Pluckley Parish Council, resolved at their meeting of 12 February 2007 to "pursue the recommendation of the Housing Survey carried out last year that local needs housing of 8 to 10 houses is required in Pluckley and that this council supports the said project." At their meeting of 8 October 2007, "the email from the Rural Housing Enabler and the ABC recommended sites, was discussed and it was resolved not to support the Westfields site. It was further resolved that, if access could be made off Lambden Road and not via The Thorne Estate Road, then the parish council would support the Thorne Estate site."

Since then an informal meeting with officers from ABC and ERHA took place in March 2008 when members present were updated on the progress of the scheme. Out of which it was learnt that Kent Highways had no objections to an access via the Thorne Estate Road and this would be the preferred route if the scheme goes ahead on that site.

Nothing so far has been decided. There is still a lot of work to be done and nothing will happen before there is a full consultation with the local community. Once both ABC and ERHA feel they have a workable scheme, there will be a Village Information Day in Pluckley Village Hall, allowing all residents to have a free and open discussion as to the merits or otherwise of the proposals.

Rubbish

The parish council continue to be concerned about the amount of rubbish not only scattered from passing cars and people just disregarding litter etiquette but also grass cuttings and hedge clippings dumped in farmers' fields and in hedgerows opposite households.

There are facilities for recycling glass, waste paper, cans and recently clothes and shoes at the village hall. The parish benefits by approximately £2,000 a year from these. A further skip, which takes not only paper but also cardboard, may be found at Pluckley Thorne. In this instance the proceeds go to Riding for the Disabled.

Please ensure that all items are placed in the skips provided and NOT left on the ground as this is 'fly-tipping' and the offenders may be prosecuted.

Pluckley Village Hall

Mike Whatman

Our village hall is one of the villages assets that has been a social meeting point throughout the years of its existence, in its nature of being used by many organisations it actually does bring people together and contribute to the community spirit that every village needs.

I am glad to report that the village hall is now being utilised more than it has been over the past few years with several organisations and clubs using the hall during the day for ongoing weekly events and meetings.

Children's parties are now more abundant and during this coming summer this will increase as the enclosed lawn area will come into its own, giving a lovely area for them to safely play, all for a very reasonable hourly rate.

Our wedding package offers the hall and lawn facilities from 4pm on a Friday, Saturday through to midday on the Sunday, give plenty of time to organise wedding plans for that special day. Our pricing is giving good value on an already expensive occasion. We are seeing an increase in bookings.

The village hall committee continue to upgrade its equipment and its facilities, for more improvement to its users.

Why not hold an event at your village hall? We can always arrange a visit for you to see if it will suit your requirements. Please contact the parish clerk who will be glad to organise your visit and your booking.

Parish council budget for 2008/9

Budgeted Income	Budgeted Expenses
Working capital..... £5,108	Admin..... 18860
Vat refund£2,932	Donations..... £550
Grants.....£1,356	Highways£1,364
Rents£820	Rec running costs £2,087
Recycling credits £2,000	Village hall running costs £9,669
Village Hall£3,300	Sports pavilion running costs. £2,000
other income.....£200	Wealden Wheels donation.....£1,000
Total Income..... £15,716	Working capital 2009/10 £309

Projects fund at 31 March 2008 ...	New Projects for 2008/9
Contingency fund£1,553	Parish plan..... £450
Bus Shelters£294	Equipment store..... £2,000
Play area £2,163	Contingency fund..... £2,000
Parish Plan£1,001	Bus Shelters £300
Village Hall Fund£5,204	Play area.....£75
Total reserves at 1 April 08 . £10,215	Total Exp..... £40,663
Expenses over income£24,947	Precept required £24,947

On a calculation of 460 houses in Pluckley, the rise in council precept of £2,247 this year works out at an average of £4.88 per household.

Pluckley Village Hall Wedding Special

4pm Friday to 12 noon Sunday

£160

(plus £200 Damages Deposit)

01233 840575

Wealden Wheels

Alan Davies, Finance Director, Wealden Wheels

In April of this year our four-year grant funding from the European Community came to an end. We spent considerable efforts last year seeking other sponsors and I'm glad to say that Kent County Council has stepped in to fill the gap and we are therefore secure for at least another year!

Our fleet of three vehicles continues to be well used. This year we are looking to replace at least one of these but will continue to have both large and small vehicles as well as one equipped with a wheelchair lift. Don't forget that we can carry small or large parties on a self drive basis or you can be driven by one of our volunteer drivers at a slightly higher cost. So if you've got a wedding, family event, or just want to get out into the beautiful Kent countryside in a group then ring Kevin our coordinator on 01233 713613 and we will do our best to help.

Pluckley Brickworks

Jackie Allen

In 2001, a year before I moved to Pluckley, Pluckley Parish Council were notified by Ashford Borough Council that Kentish Weald Properties, (applicant later became Rivermile Ltd), had applied for a Certificate of Lawfulness of Existing Use or Development for the continuation of “firing and storage of bricks.” Although the brick making had ceased for at least 15 years and the kilns and machinery removed, members believed that a small enterprise would not cause too much disruption to the community.

In 2002 an application for a Certificate of Lawfulness was submitted to ABC by Rivermile for a waste recycling centre: the parish council being notified of the granting of permission in August 2003, with no opportunity for consultation or to challenge this decision. I was made aware of the situation by an irate Bethersden resident who had spotted the decision when researching other applications, and fighting the Brickworks issue became a way of life.

The public meeting on 2 October 2003 was attended by over 400 people who requested that the parish council strenuously oppose the development.

There was much to-ing and fro-ing between ABC, KCC, and the Environment Agency (EA) with intense lobbying of all the agencies by the parish council and members of the public. Had it gone down the usual planning application route it would almost certainly have been refused by KCC.

It turned out to be a very unusual case with the EA being required to take into account those matters normally undertaken by a planning authority. The parish council were mightily relieved when the EA found that controls could not be enforced to protect the amenity of the local area and refused the Waste Management Licence necessary to carry out waste recycling on site.

Six months later we were notified that the prospective tenant of the site had appealed against the decision, choosing the most complex and time consuming method of appeal: a full inquiry. It then fell to the EA to produce a case in support of their reasons for refusal.

Pluckley Parish Council is grateful to the EA for including them amongst the consultees; to KCC for supplying information as consultees regarding the

inadequate road infrastructure leading to the site; the support of Richard King, our KCC Councillor who liaised with KCC; our resident local planning experts who gave freely of their advice; Nick Mengham for the Tree Preservation Order; and last, but not least, all the local people, not only from Pluckley, but the surrounding villages, who wrote to the Planning Inspectorate and supported the parish council in their fight in a multitude of different ways.

I was with Jackie Grebby, the Parish Clerk, packing up the information for our case for dispatch to the Planning Inspectorate when Jackie received the telephone call confirming that the appeal had been withdrawn: we live to fight another day!

So what happens next?

In February the appeal against the refusal by the EA was withdrawn. But is that the end?

What will happen to the site now?

Currently there is an application for a light industrial unit on the site. This is linked to an application to build a terrace of 7 houses on the station garage site. This has been opposed by the parish council for a number of reasons.

But what will eventually happen on the brickworks site? It is certainly a brownfield site, but the temporary planning permission granted by KCC for clay extraction runs out in 2042 and the conditions state that the whole area from Smarden Road to Station Road must be landscaped.

It has been suggested that the area nearest to Station Road might be suitable for housing, but with the landfill site so close there is the problem of leachate – something nasty could leak into homes and gardens unless a lot of money was spent on making it safe.

One project the parish council might support, if it was properly managed with adequate security, car parking for the station.

We shall keep a constant watch on developments there.

But for now, both the parish council and residents are very grateful to everyone who supported the campaign, and all should take a virtual pat on the back.

The parish website

www.pluckley.net continues to keep residents and visitors to the parish up-to-date with the latest news from the parish council, and information about local clubs and village activities. The events page is updated weekly and all Pluckley events can be found there (as long as the parish council is told about them) Also updated, as soon as the information comes in, is the Neighbourhood Watch page. It can be found via the Council pages.

There are two photo galleries: village events, and village scenes – if you have a photograph you feel may be suitable do please email it to clerk@pluckley.net together with details of who took it.

Advertising on the classified pages is free to all residents.

The cost of the site is minimal but gives invaluable information, with an average of 3,500 hits a day from around the world. It is hoped that, with local businesses paying a small charge for either a page on the site, a link to their own site, or both, the website may eventually become self funding.



Pluckley Sports Day

**Bank Holiday Monday 26 May
from 11am**

**In aid of New Sports Pavilion
and Sports Association**

Promoting Pluckley sport activities

Football coaching by Pluckley Junior FC coach

Emma a professional lady footballer

Kick the ball through the tyres on the goal.

Bouncy Castle

BBQ

Beer tent

Tennis Courts open for the day

Petanque Pitch open and some games organised.

Vision for Pluckley 2020

Ann Murray

A grandiose name for The Parish Plan. The Village Appraisal came out in 2000 and now needs to be updated. Funding has been made available from the KCC and Action with Communities in Rural Kent. Your help is needed filling out a short survey. This will help to plan how the village develops – or does not develop – over the next 10 years. The new Ashford Plan is called *The Local Development Framework [LDF]* and the villages will be mentioned in the section *Tenterden and the Villages*. This will be published towards the end of this year.

The survey covers topics such as: are more recreational facilities needed, how difficult is it to get to surgeries or the hospital, are the cars and lorries going too fast, what kind of housing is needed and so on.

The results are analysed and an information day – with lunch! – takes place in the village hall and everyone can see the results and discuss what they think. It is the villagers that decide how the future develops.

The Village Meeting Place

This pop-in coffee morning, on the first Tuesday of the month 10am to noon, was started to encourage people in Pluckley to meet, chat, and get to know each other. Pluckley is a diverse mixture, a long, spread-out village. To work well as a community, village members need to get to know others, especially newcomers, to Pluckley.

The Village Meeting Place is separately funded by several charities but is quite independent of the church for its running costs. The church was chosen as a centre as it is warm, has a small kitchen and, very importantly, a toilet and is near the shops. The cost of a real cup of coffee and a homemade piece of cake is just 50p!

Toddlers, mothers, and grandparents of the preschool children being picked up at noon are most welcome. Dogs coming back from their walk with their owners often visit.

Do come, you will be made most welcome.



The Pluckley Sports Pavilion

Alan Davies, Pluckley Sports Association

Our fund raising and building activities for the village's new sports pavilion are almost at an end. We believe we have raised enough money now to complete the pavilion and with the generous help of the cricket club members in finishing off the work we are working towards sign off by Ashford Borough Council's Building Regulations Inspectors. We anticipate a formal opening when this is completed so keep your eye on the parish magazine and village notice board for news of this event.

Bonfires – a code of practice

Ashford Borough Council has a code of practice which advises people to burn between sunset and 10pm only. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 states that bonfires should not cause a smoke nuisance. If they do, then an abatement notice can be served against those individuals causing the nuisance.

You can direct your complaint to Ashford Borough Council, Environment Health Office, phone numbers 01233 330225.

Please be aware of others that live in the village wishing to enjoy village life during the day time.



Noise

The parish council often receives complaints about noisy neighbours, usually barking dogs.

The advice is that residents should contact Ashford Borough Council Environmental Health Department on 01233 330225 and keep a log of all instances of disturbance for a month. This will help the authorities consider what action they are able to take.



Beware children playing!

The increasing number of vehicles parked on Westfields' roads is causing concern.

The parish council draw residents' attention of the need to consider children's safety in that area.

Service Bus 523 and Kent Karrier

Ann Murray

The Post Bus which visited the station area and went on to the Thorne Estate and the bus shelter there and then up the hill to The Street, was cancelled by the Post Office in May 2007.

The service bus has a peculiar route: it comes from Hothfield to the bus stop on the Egerton road; on to Egerton and down to Egerton Forstal; along Rose Farm Road; and then to Smarden and Biddenden. On its return, it turns left at Rose Farm Road and on around Egerton, and stops at the end of Egerton Road in Pluckley. It then goes to Ashford. The result is that the station area, Station Road, and the Thorne Estate do not have any bus service.

KCC was asked if, some of the out-rush-hour services could be diverted. Coming from Smarden, it was suggested that the bus turned right along Chambers Green Road, left up Station Road, and left again along Lambden Road before turning left yet again and back to its route along Rose Farm Road. This 'they said' would not be worth it and would pick up very few passengers.

However, they offered that the Kent Karrier, which acts like a taxi service, could include Pluckley as one of its villages on Mondays as well as Fridays. (Remember, the free bus to Tesco visits the Thorne Estate on Friday.)

It works as follows: the Kent Karrier office is phoned the day before one needs to travel – Friday if travelling on Monday; and Thursday if travelling on Friday. The bus which is low loading and also wheelchair friendly, will call at the address and take the passengers to a set route around Ashford. Free bus passes are acceptable. The cost is £5 a year. Travel is anytime between 10am and 1pm during school term time. This bus is now available to anyone in Pluckley who lives more than 500 metres away from the bus stop on the Egerton Road.

Pamphlets will be available at the Annual Parish Meeting on 16 May, at the Post Office and from Ann Murray 840166.



Unsocial parking

That is perhaps the best way to describe the current parking problems around the village.

The parish council continues to monitor the situation in the area of the station, and are urging the police to take action, prosecuting those drivers who leave their vehicles in areas considered dangerous.

The council is also having talks with Kent Highways, Network Rail, and SE Trains in the hope of finding a solution.



Pluckley Parish Council Meetings and Committees

Pluckley Parish Council usually meets on the second Monday of each month, at 8pm in Pluckley Village Hall.

Details of meetings will be published on the Pluckley website (www.pluckley.net) as soon as they are available. You will need Acrobat Reader® to access them. All meetings of the council are open to the public and everyone is welcome to come along.

An agenda is displayed in the village a minimum of three working days before each meeting. On the agenda is a 'public session' – this usually lasts 10 minutes and allows any residents to address the meeting.

Council members regularly attend meetings of Ashford Borough Council's Parish Forum, Weald Police Forum, and Kent Association of Parish Councils.

2008 Meetings dates

(these dates are subject to change and there may be further meetings if a need arises.)

* = Annual Meetings TBA = Date to be agreed

May 12	Full Council *
May 16	Annual Parish Assembly
May 27	Plans Committee *
June 9	Full Council
June 16	V Hall Committee *
June 23	Plans Committee
July 14	Full Council
July 28	Plans Committee R & A Committee
Aug 11	Full Council
Aug 26	Plans Committee Hall Committee
Sept 8	Full Council
Sept 22	Plans Committee R&A Committee
TBA	Finance Committee
Oct 13	Full Council
Oct 27	Plans Committee V Hall Committee
Nov 10	Full Council
Nov 24	Plans Committee R & A Committee
Dec 8	Full Council

The parish council holds an open morning (9:30 to 10:30am) on the fourth Saturday most months either in the village hall or the sports pavilion.

Council minutes and current planning applications are available for inspection. Other documents within the public domain may also be viewed if an application is made in writing to the Clerk to the Council at least 5 days before the surgery. All residents are invited to attend.



Contacts

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