

BARKESTONE, PLUNGAR & REDMILE PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER – SPRING 2021

NEW PARISH COUNCILLOR

We welcome Margaret Bowen onto the Parish Council. Margaret has agreed to be co-opted as a councillor for Plungar. Malcolm Grant, who has served on the Council on more than one occasion, has decided not to continue. We thank Malcolm for the great work he has done for Plungar and the whole parish.

PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

The PC can now no longer hold meetings via Zoom. Although our meetings are public meetings which anyone can attend, there is the possibility that we will not physically be able to hold them if the number of attendees exceeds the number that Plungar Village Hall can accommodate under current COVID rules. Our next scheduled meeting is **Thursday 17th June 2021**. Parishioners are invited to submit questions and/or comments in writing to the Clerk, clerk@barkestoneplungarredmileparishcouncil.org.uk before the meeting which will be responded to after the meeting. Hopefully, all restrictions will be lifted on 21st June 2021.

SOLAR FARM PROPOSAL

There have been significant changes to the Solar Farm proposal in terms of the transport arrangements – currently these are now proposed to be routed through Plungar. The PC has put in a strong objection to these proposals and is continuing to push Melton Borough Council (MBC) to investigate thoroughly all the information provided by the applicant, some of which the PC believes to be incorrect or misleading. Both Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire County Councils also have serious concerns about the proposals.

If the Solar Farm is approved, it is likely that a Community Benefit grant will be payable by the developer to the Parish Council, to fund Community Projects. The PC has already discussed this with the agent for the applicant and has some potential projects identified. This is not finalised and we stress that it is not dependent on whether or not we or others support the project. The sum is likely to be in six figures but this reflects that it would be compensation for the considerable impact which the farm will have on our landscape and our community over 40 years.

The application is expected to go to the MBC Planning Committee – the date is not yet known. In the meantime, any concerns and comments may still be made either via the MBC website, or directly in writing.

APPEAL AGAINST PLANNING DECISION FOR RESIDENTIAL SITE ON BARKETONE LANE PLUNGAR

As many people know, the owner of the paddock land between Barkestone and Plungar has carried out development on the site. Permission for residential development on this site was refused by MBC and the refusal is under appeal. We have yet to be given a date for the appeal hearing, which will be heard by the Planning Inspectorate.

In the meantime MBC have issued formal Enforcement Notices to the owner and are taking all necessary steps to ensure that planning law is enforced.

WILDFLOWER VERGES

Two verges in Barkestone, next to and opposite the phone box, and one verge in Plungar, opposite the junction of Granby Lane and Barkestone Lane, have been designated wildflower zones and marked with a blue heart. An expert from Naturespot has already been to examine the verges to see what species are already growing there.

The plan for these verges is to allow them to grow naturally, and cut them only once, in September (taking away the cuttings so that the verges become more wildflower friendly). As they have been grass verges until now, they will still be predominantly grasses and may take a number of years to develop, naturally, into fully wildflower areas.

Some public-spirited residents in both Plungar and Barkestone, not fully aware of the situation, have taken it upon themselves to “tidy up” the verges. The Plungar resident was not aware of the situation and is happy to leave the verge to grow. We do not know who the Barkestone resident is. We ask people not to mow or strim the verges. The area round the bench on Rutland Square is being kept tidy and we are keeping an eye on the progress of these havens for wildlife.

REDMILE BY-WAYS

Redmile has two ‘by-ways open to all traffic’; one which runs from the top of Church Lane to Long Lane, and another which runs from the end of Easthorpe Lane.

Before the lockdowns, (and indeed, just before Christmas), these by-ways were frequently used by ‘scrambler’ motor bikes and four-wheel drive vehicles, the latter late at night or very early in the morning, as off-road entertainment.

The results of these activities (apart from waking up local residents at night) have been muddy roads, mud-splattered cars and the by-ways themselves being rendered largely unusable by horse riders and pedestrians because of the deep (2-3 feet in some places) ruts in the grass and mud (photos on our web site).

Gates have been left open, potentially allowing the escape of animals, and the 4 wheel drive vehicles have also been seen driving in the fields adjacent to the by-ways.

We have recently had a visit from Melton Borough Council’s Anti-social Behaviour Officer and the local police to look into this issue, but without knowing who is responsible, there is little that can be done. Use of the by-ways is not illegal, but the deliberate damage to them might be, as is the anti-social behaviour.

So, we’re asking all residents to report any such incidents to the local police (making sure to get an incident number) and, if possible, note the registration numbers and take photos of the offending vehicles.

AIRCRAFT FROM LANGAR

Many people have complained about the disturbance caused by aircraft from Langar airfield overflying the villages. The disturbance is clearly worst at weekends, at the precise times that residents wish to enjoy their gardens.

The PC has raised this issue with Skydive on a number of occasions but the issue continues. The PC is in its turn continuing to investigate what can be done to mitigate the annoyance caused by the aircraft.

A representative of Skydive is going to attend our meeting on **17th June 2021** to discuss this issue. Please feed any observations and concerns into your Parish Councillor. Facts about the dates and times of flights and their altitude etc. would be particularly useful.