

## Parish Council Activities 2020-2021

Each year we usually hold an Annual Parish Meeting in the Parish Hall for Hemyock parishioners to receive from the Parish Council an update on activities over the previous 12 months. We are unable to host such an event again this year needing, instead, to communicate through a Zoom meeting held on the 4<sup>th</sup> May and printed below. Firstly, an introduction to the Parish Council team:

Tim Barton, Chairman  
Sean Ritchie  
Lance Povah  
Alex Russell

Paul Doble, Deputy Chair  
Jo Fouracre  
Nick Moon  
Donna Evans, Clerk

Simon Clist  
Penny Lawrence  
Roy Calcraft

**General.** As you probably know already, all the councillors are unpaid volunteers and were elected onto the Council in May 2019. The Parish Council (PC) have held online meetings every month during the restrictions, only missing one in April 2020. We have formally commented on over 30 planning applications to Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) Planning Authority, including suggestions for the Cavanna development of 40 houses on Culmstock Road (now included by Cavanna in their final plans). We have also started legal arrangements to take over from Cavanna the public open space land associated with the development. We responded to the Public Spaces Protection Order to deny dogs from childrens play areas and to ensure that they must be kept on leads in some public open spaces. The Parish Council pages of the village website, ([Hemyock.org/parishcouncil](http://Hemyock.org/parishcouncil)) have been updated to improve accessibility and ease of navigation. General maintenance around the village has continued and the public loos, the only ones in the Blackdown Hills and appreciated by many delivery drivers, have been kept open and clean throughout. Additional bins and dog poo bag dispensers have been provided and grit bins were distributed around the village during the winter months. We lobbied Devon Highways to mend the roads at Ashculme (completed) and Castle Park (underway), improve drainage at Lydensign on Cornhill and reported potholes and other problems. The extensive network of footpaths in the Parish has been surveyed and maintenance arranged. We have monitored the Connecting the Culm project and have given grants to Mid Devon Mobility, Citizens Advice, the Poppy Appeal, St Marys Church, Blackdown Support Group, Lights Brigade, Football Club, Christmas Club and provision of wildflower areas on verges. The local contribution to the MDDC council taxes for 2021-22, the Parish Precept, will be kept the same as last year. This is the money that we spend on your behalf on maintenance, projects and other work in our parish.

**Commons.** As part of the care and husbandry of Hemyock's 5 commons, additional trees have been planted at Shuttleton Common. At Hemyock Turbary a hard standing area for additional parking has been created and a picnic bench and seats are now available on the Turbary for the enjoyment of visitors to use. The fingerpost and Turbary sign at the road junction have been painted.

**Parish Assets.** Hemyock Parish has a considerable number of assets, acquired over many years and managed by the Parish Council. As part of our asset management plan, we have had them all professionally surveyed and we are progressively tackling the recommended actions. The Blackdown Healthy Living and Activities Centre (BHLAC) has received a considerable upgrade by replacing the heating system, installing air filtration to some of the rooms, PV panels mounted on the roof and loft insulation renewed. Heat conserving, wooden panels have also been mounted below the building to reduce airflow under the floors. Finally, an asbestos survey has been undertaken, improved fire safety equipment installed and safety signage mounted where appropriate. The Blackdown Hills AONB team now have their office in the BHLAC building, a mutually beneficial arrangement for both constancy of building use and allows the AONB team to remain based in the area. We look forward to the BHLAC returning to full use again. In the Garages, we have facilitated the establishment of the Blackdown Community Shed by moving the Scout store from an underutilised room to an area within the main building. At Longmead, the play area has been completely renewed with top-of-the-range equipment, the BMX track has been maintained, the foot bridge is being refurbished and we have supported the excellent work being undertaken in the Longmead environmental area. The drains around the Longmead pavilion have been cleaned.

**The Future.** Projects that are progressing or now being considered are: providing an extension to the Station Road footpath below the Spar shop (progress has been slow due to legal hold-ups); an improved path/trim-trail around Longmead; possible siting and development of a skateboard park; and for 2022, adopting, managing and establishing possible uses for the public open space to the north of the new Culmstock Road development.

**People and the Community.** We mustn't forget to mention and thank our excellent village maintenance team, Ian, Kate and Rod, who continue to keep the village looking neat and tidy. Thanks also to everyone who support the smooth running of the council assets such as the Longmead Committee, The Garages Committee, the BHLAC team, Commons Management Group, Environment Area team to name only a few. On a negative note, however, there has been an increasing amount of vandalism and lack of consideration for others from a small number of people. Around Longmead, waste bins have been repeatedly damaged, the new football dugouts have had the 'Home' and 'Away' lettering ripped off and the new play area fence was demolished in less than a week. Other waste bins in the village have also been targeted and the stocks of emergency salt have been used by some younger people to throw at one another. It's sad to reflect that we are spending £1,000s of your money to help keep the village nice only for much of the good work to be deliberately ruined. Just one more moan together with a plea to all dog owners to keep their dogs off the sports pitches and to clear-up all their dog litter from around the village and to dispose of it properly. The Parish owes the Football Association £163,000 to keep a structure of football teams using the ground for 25 years; if the pitches can't be used due to dog-fouling then we are in breach of the terms and may be required to pay back the money!!! Now back to the positive again, Hemyock has a great community that is only due to a lot of good, dedicated people who

contribute much effort and time to carrying out the many and varied tasks around the village. This was much in evidence during the covid lockdown where the Blackdown Support Group, the Churches, the Blackdown Medical Practice, the village shops, other clubs and organisations, good neighbours and many others kept our community going by ensuring that everyone was alright. Well done and thank you to you all. For the future, we will always need the help and assistance from people who feel that they would like to become more involved in the community, possibly by planning a project, especially when we take over control of the new public open space land to the North of Culmstock Road. If you have a good idea or are interested in participating, please get in touch.