

**Cllr. Margaret Phipps, Dorset County Councillor for The “Commons”  
and Environment Portfolio Holder at Christchurch Borough Council**

I thought I would write about a few issues in which I have been involved recently, and which I hope are of interest.

Highway Verges

Cutting of highway verges in Christchurch is carried out by a combination of the Borough Council's in-house Grounds Operations (GO) Team and the County Council. Generally the GO Team cut the urban verges while the County Council cut the more rural areas, such as in Hurn, Roeshott Hill and along the Christchurch Bypass.

This year a combination of very wet weather early in the season, followed by very mild spring weather caused problems with timing of cuts, and resulted in some areas becoming overgrown very quickly. This was the case not only in Christchurch but in other areas across the County. Both Christchurch Council and Dorset County Council realise that this situation is not acceptable and cannot be repeated next year. Fortunately, this year, the County Council injected £100,000 of additional funding into their grass cutting budget and after the initial slow start in Christchurch, with the help of the County Council, the Teams caught up with the workload.

At County Council a review of grass cutting County wide is taking place, and I have been chairing the panel which is looking into this. We are looking at the different requirements of urban and rural areas in consultation with local Councils, as we know that some areas may need more regular cuts than others, and may need extra resources. We are also looking at a new approach to managing some roadsides with wildflowers. As an example, you may have seen the Stony Lane Roundabout this year which was sown with wild flower seed, looked absolutely beautiful when flowering, and was only cut at the end of the season. It is not suggested that this would work everywhere, but it is one of the ways that we can manage roadsides in some areas and promote wildlife as well. Verges can also be seeded with low growing wildflowers where appropriate. If you can suggest any areas near you where this approach might work, let me know.

For 2015, Christchurch Council and Dorset County Council will again be working together and having learned lessons from this year, will ensure that highway verges in the Borough which need regular cuts are dealt with to an acceptable standard, especially highway junctions.

“Ask Dorset”

Over the summer The County Council has been visiting every District with their “Ask Dorset” Roadshow. They were in Christchurch in July, and I was on the stand all morning with 2 other local County Councillors and County Officers. Residents were asked what was most important to them in Dorset and were invited to put buttons in labelled boxes to point out which issues concerned them most. In Christchurch we had a record turnout of people coming to talk to us and give us their views on County services. Overall there were 36 public roadshows in 19 towns across Dorset. Altogether over 34,000 buttons were posted in topic boxes at these events by the 6,800 people who took part. Also residents could post

comment cards highlighting specific issues or concerns, and 560 did so. These were passed on to relevant departments for action or response. In addition, residents could complete the survey on line, and on paper. It is hoped that there will be a grand total of around 10,000 responses, and full results will be available later in the year.



The County Council Roadshow in Saxon Square,  
Christchurch, July 2014

Can you spot a WCRA Committee Member  
who was there too?

#### Bournemouth Airport Consultative Committee

I regularly attend this Committee as the Dorset County Council representative, and I have also now agreed to represent the Residents' Association as well. Meetings are held quarterly at the Airport, and I will let the RA Secretary have notes from each meeting. I am also happy to raise any issues at the Committee, on behalf of residents, so if you have any queries, let the RA know.

#### Community Projects, Events and Good Causes

The County Council has allocated each Councillor some funds which can be allocated to "good works" within their area. These funds must be used to promote or improve the economic, environmental or social well-being of their Division. These funds are a "one off" and available until April 2015. Any event or activity being nominated must meet certain criteria, so please do contact me if you think you have a suitable project, or require further information.

#### Proposed Navitus Bay Wind Farm

On 1<sup>st</sup> October, the County Council Cabinet agreed their Local Impact Report for the proposed Wind Farm. This document relates to impacts over the whole County. On 29<sup>th</sup> September Christchurch Borough Council also agreed their Local Impact Report, which

outlined the impacts on Christchurch. Both of these Reports have been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for use in the Public Inquiry which is currently taking place into the wind farm application, and both are in the public domain on the dorsetforyou website. Members of both Dorset County Council and Christchurch Borough Council, at their respective meetings, decided to object to the Navitus Bay Wind Farm application because of the impacts detailed in their reports. These impacts relate not only to the wind farm turbines at sea, but also to the environmental and ecological impacts of the 35KM (22mile) long, 40m (135ft) wide cable trenches connecting to the National Grid, which will run through Christchurch Borough.

The Public Inquiry timetable is noted on the Planning Inspectorate website, or you can contact me for details. It commenced on 11<sup>th</sup> September and will continue until around March 2015. A final decision is unlikely to be made until summer 2015.

### Hurn Forest

The “Commons” County Council Division includes Hurn, and you may know that I am also Chairman of Hurn Parish Council, so I thought I would tell you about an exciting project which we have just completed – The Hurn Forest Biodiversity Audit 2013”. You may know that Hurn Forest is a lovely place for both people to use for recreation, and also a wonderful habitat for wildlife. It has long been an ambition of mine to investigate and record the environmental importance of the Forest, so in 2012 the Parish Council decided to raise funds to carry out up to date wildlife surveys, research old records, and produce a Report which would draw together all of the collective ecological knowledge available.

The final Biodiversity Report has finally been completed and is available on CD from me. It is a central reference document and has been lodged with the Dorset Environmental Records Centre. It has certainly been a “labour of love”, but there have been some exceptional findings: 1414 species were recorded in the 2013 surveys and 668 of these were new species for the Forest. I am extremely proud to have been involved in this excellent project.

### Dorset Waste Partnership

Dorset achieved its highest ever recycling rate in the first quarter of this year, recycling 62% of our waste. By recycling an extra 5,800 tonnes we avoided £500,000 in landfill costs – good news for taxpayers as well as the environment.

We can all do our bit to recycle even more. Every little bit that is recycled rather than sent for expensive treatment or disposal really does matter, so please remember you can recycle: leftover food; paper and cardboard (including window envelopes); plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays; tins, cans and aerosols; and glass (in the separate green box).

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