

Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council

We at Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council will be celebrating our Platinum Jubilee in May 2025. The resident petition was made for a merger of Severn Stoke Council and Croome d'Abitot Council in 1953 and this was ratified by the county council in May 1955. Thank you to all residents, councillors (past and present), clerks, lengthsman and volunteers for a wonderful 70 years serving our joint communities!

As we head towards Spring in 2025, we are keeping our fingers crossed that this year's 'once in a 100 year flood' won't be affecting the residents of Severn Stoke, Sandford and Clifton once again. The continuing project for the construction of the desperately needed flood defence bund was further highlighted on Wednesday 29th January at a public meeting at St Denys Church organised by County Councillor, Martin Allen. Attended by representatives of the Environment Agency (EA), Worcester County Council (WCC), Malvern Hills District Council (MHDC) and the Parish Council, local residents were given an update on the current status of the project and provided with an opportunity to ask questions.

To summarise, the Environment Agency has been unable to find an affordable contractor within its frameworks for delivery and government procurement rules but is now exploring a contract with Worcester County Council and their contractor, Griffiths, for construction of the bund. Discussions between the EA and WCC will take place over the next 7 weeks to, hopefully, finalise a contract to enable construction to begin this coming summer.

It was emphasised to all parties the need for a definitive answer to be given to the community as to whether the flood bund will be built or not by the end of April. A further public meeting is scheduled for 7th May when residents will be informed of the decision.

Elsewhere in the parish, we have agreed a contract for the repair and repainting of the old BT telephone box in High Green which was purchased by the parish council. That will be done over the next few months as the weather warms up. Consideration will then be given to how best the telephone box might be used in the future. Using a grant from the county council, we are also arranging for the seat and white railings by the War Memorial in Severn Stoke to have a 'freshen up' following requests from residents. Thank you to Martin Allen for arranging the tidy up of the pavement there.

Thank you to all that responded to the recent questionnaire about the future of the lease of the now demolished parish hall land. We are awaiting a few stragglers before really analysing the results and will consult further on refined options. We will also take into account the April flood bund decision.

Thank you to all residents that have cut hedges and made the parish look so tidy ready for the spring. Please could residents, landowners and contractors make sure that they tidy up cuttings and remove debris and mud from the road afterwards. This avoids the parish and county councils having to arrange to clear drains and gullies and reduces the risk of flooding.

A number of complaints have been received about dog mess in residential areas and also contaminated animal sawdust being dumped along the A38. More signs will be going up, arranged by the District Council. Malvern Hills District Council can issue a fixed penalty notice for dog fouling. Dog fouling can be reported online via the district council website. The number of complaints about dogs being exercised off the lead through crop fields is also increasing. Farmers cannot sell or use crops /grass etc that has been contaminated with dog waste.

Our new footpaths officer is in post and working hard to inspect our network of public rights of way. Please let the parish council know if you spot any issues – remember to take a photograph – and we will forward the report to the county council for action. Landowners and occupiers can help too and are responsible for: maintenance of stiles and gates; clearance of overgrowth i.e. vegetation growing from the sides or above; re-instatement of paths after ploughing; keeping paths clear of crops; making sure they don't obstruct paths in other ways.

What3Words is a really easy way to mark the location of a problem that requires reporting. Using this app, every 3m square of the world has been given a unique combination of three words, which allows the authorities to quickly identify where a problem is. Of course, we also still accept good old fashion map coordinates or addresses!

Residents have written to tell us of concerns about roads and gardens flooding in Kinnersley caused by overflowing ponds and poorly maintained ditches. Please can we remind residents of the matter of riparian duties, which are the legal rights and responsibilities of landowners who own land next to a body of water/ditches etc. These duties include the right to use water, the responsibility to protect property (yours and others), and prevent flooding of land, homes and infrastructure.

The parking signs to aid considerate parking at **Knights Hill** will be installed very soon, now that we have received the go ahead from all concerned and the ok from our insurers. Please accept our apologies for the delay.

In the autumn the parish council wrote to Dame Harriet Baldwin MP to alert her to the threat that regular flooding has to the viability of many churches – where insurance is withdrawn due to flooding. Harriet kindly investigated the matter and has responded with some quite practical advice and options, which has been passed on.

The new parish council website is nearly up and running and a **new parish council logo is being designed**, incorporating the Panorama Tower, with the kind permission of The National Trust. Residents have been helping the parish council research how to make parish council meetings available to watch online live – watch this space! Thank you to all residents that have submitted landscape photos to use on our new website – please keep them coming.

What else have we been up to... we are looking at the '**Safety of Lithium-ion Batteries Campaign**' which hopes to change the law to ensure that e-scooter batteries are tested before being sold and that there is a viable route for safe disposal. We have been working with the Citizen's Advice Bureau and identifying ways to make sure that

residents continue to have access to this service. We have made a small donation (part of an annual commitment) to the **Upton library** to try to help ensure that that service stays open as well.

We hear more and more about **Devolution** these days. The English devolution white paper, published on 16 December 2024, sets out the government's intended approach to accelerate and standardise the processes by which it passes powers, funding and programmes from Westminster to local areas. In Worcestershire this means that ultimately our district and county councils will be abolished to form a single unitary council - this is not an optional process. At present there are no timescales for this that we are aware of. The main message is that nothing will immediately change in the way that services for residents and businesses are delivered. The parish councils are reported to be remaining in place, for now. It would help with the preservation of your parish council if we had all seats full.

Like most small community councils we are desperate for more recruits to help us represent the views and concerns of our local community. If you feel you would like to join us or just want more information about what's involved, please contact the parish clerk who will be happy to help.

NEXT MEETING: Wed 26th March 2025, 7.30pm – Annual Parish Meeting of Residents of the Parish Areas of Severn Stoke and of Croome d'Abitot. Venue: St.Denys' Church, Severn Stoke. A standard Parish Council meeting will occur afterwards. 8.30pm approx. **Items already on the agenda** – M5 diversions along the A38. Sign up for community litter picking. Tell us what other items you would like to discuss.

Lisa Stevens, Parish Council Clerk, T: 07950256363, E: parishclerk@severnstokeandcroomedabitot-pc.gov.uk Your councillors are Susan Faulkner (Chair), Laurence Freeman (Deputy), Royston Garrard, Richard Hill, Pat Preston & Raymond Williams. We have vacancies for parish councillors. Contact the parish clerk if you would like