

Castle Acre Parish Council Chairman's Report 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

Tim Hubbard, Chair...

Castle Acre Parish Council.

The none contested election for CAPC in May 2023 saw three of our long-standing Councillors retire, not putting themselves forward for a further term. Cllr Martin Hickey, Cllr Martin Tate and Cllr Helen Breach all three in their own way made a fantastic contribution to the Village and the PC. The standout to me, for Martin and Martin, along with other committee members was the deliverance of the 'made' Castle Acre Neighbourhood Plan in 2022 a huge piece of work which took a lot of personal time. Helen Breach who I believe will have been on the PC for at least 20 years always had a very balanced view when it came to planning decisions. Our sincere thanks to all three of them for their sterling work over the years. Later in the year Cllr Sheila Moister also took the decision to stand down, having also been involved with the Castle Acre Neighbourhood Plan and helped with various village events notably the Platinum Jubilee celebration so, yes, our sincere thanks to Sheila as well.

At the end of April, we said goodbye to Libby Firth our then Clerk. Libby gave great support to the PC during her tenure. Our sincere thanks to Libby for all she did while with us, it must also be said, Libby has been a huge support with the transition of duties to Amy Hart our new Clerk since she joined us on May 1st, 2023, and indeed myself when I took the chair in September 2023. Libby has always made herself available when either Amy or my-self have had questions and queries. Thank you, Libby,

As I just said, we were fortunate to be able to appoint and welcome Amy Hart as our new Clerk on the 1st of May 2023. Amy has shown a tremendous enthusiasm for her work as our Clerk and all thing's Castle Acre, I am, as I am sure you all are, hugely appreciative of all that Amy does for our Parish Council, she goes above and beyond in carrying out her responsibilities as Clerk. Thank you so much Amy.

While we have said thank you and goodbye during 2023, we have also welcomed two new Councillors to our group. I want to thank both Cllr Ilga Chakrabarti and Cllr Andy Collins who both put themselves forward for vacant seats and were co-opted on to the Council late last year. Thank you for getting involved.

Planning.... We continue to see a number of applications within the Parish come before us as consultees of the BC.

The most noted are... Castle Acre PC's application for a Visitor Car Park, at the end of Back Lane and Priory Road which was refused by BCKLWN Planning Department. A new site is being sought; however, the process will take time, although I feel sure we as a PC now have more clarity about the required criteria for sites especially from a Highways and Conservation point of view. We also need the continued support of Holkham Estates. Watch this space!

Ranrevir at the southern end of Bailey Street continues to come before us for further consultation. A new application was submitted by the applicant since the standing approval was declared void after the total demolition of the old bungalow. The latest application has once again been called in by our Borough Councillor and has an agreed EOT until July 2024, further delaying a planning decision.

The application for a Glamping Site (originally dating back to 2020) located north of Back Lane and west of the Castle Acre Primary School has now gone to appeal having been refused by the BC Planning Department on two previous occasions.

Numerous other applications have been considered by the Parish Council a record of which can be found in PC minutes 2023/24...

We still await a decision from Norfolk County Council regarding the TRO for part of the South Acre Road and Castle Acre Ford. We are told that the process is progressing!

Village Projects...

The most visual is now what has become the replacement of the Castle Acre Village Sign on Stocks Green. Cllr Laurie Fisher and Amy Hart initiated this project before I took the Chair. It was hoped that we were going to be able to restore the old Village Sign but sadly this was not to be, it had suffered catastrophic damage from rot. I have been overwhelmed by the generosity of some residents which is now enabling us to replace the sign and signpost.

We have a Village craftsman who has donated his time to carving a new sign from Oak, a Village artist who is painting the sign before it is varnished and a number of village residents who have very kindly donated money enabling us to fund the replacement of the sign post and refurbishment of the surrounding steel benches. Our sincere thanks to all who have contributed in any way to this project.

The Castle Acre Heritage Group. Formerly The CA National Lottery Heritage Project.

Volunteers and interested residents continue various projects and activities around the Village under the direction of Anne Mason. For example, Wildlife and Plant surveys which we hope will support the new CA Biodiversity Duty, (an initial plan has been written and published). Work continues at the non-conformist Burial Ground although at a slower pace, the second gate pillar is built but we are currently unable to find capping stones allowing us to complete the rehang of the gates. Work has continued in the Churchyard of St James, the removal of damaging Ivy from the walls and the recording of gravestones. Our sincere thanks to Anne Mason and all volunteers involved in these and other projects, their work is hugely appreciated.

Due to the generosity of village residents a tree has been planted on St James Green in memory of our late Queen, Elizabeth II. Our sincere thanks.

The Village Map on Stocks Green has been repaired and refurbished again by a village resident donating their time. Our sincere thanks.

CAPFA. Castle Acre Parish Council is fortunate to be supported by CAPFA who manage and maintain the Playing Field on behalf of the owners, CAPC. All village groups, Football, Cricket, and Bowls operating on the playing field appear to be thriving. The children's play area continues to be well used both by local children and those of visitors to the village. As a result of committee planning and fund raising, we saw the opening of the newly completed MUGA earlier this year. I am sure it will be a great benefit to different age groups for various activities as time goes on. The management of booking procedures for the MUGA are still being considered. Castle Acre Coronation Bowls Club has modernised its club house with the provision of new toilets, it is a building the club can be proud of. Along with CAPFA we continue to investigate the possibility of EV charging points in the area of the Pavilion / St James Green. Thank you to Nigel Chambers, Chair, and his committee for their continued hard work, once again all they do is really appreciated.

Village Hall.

Another committee that has been hard at work with planning and fund raising.

The Hall has seen Solar Panels installed on the roof with the hope of reducing energy costs and their carbon footprint. A new kitchen has been installed, the inside of the Hall has been re-decorated and acoustic curtains hung. All improving the experience of those who hire the Hall for many varied activities, from yoga sessions to wedding receptions, Horticultural Society meetings to live music. Thank you to the Village Hall committee for all you do.

Finances.

Castle Acre PC has three bank accounts, one a business account used for all PC payments and receipts. The other two are interest bearing accounts, one which holds restricted and unrestricted donations of **£4,188.24** the second holds funds allocated to what was the CANLHP, **£2,212.22p**. Total combined balances / reserves at the year-end were **£15,012.20p**. Of which **£8020.50p** are restricted, including CIL receipts **£1,620.04p**.

Streetlights. Electricity Supply. We are still in dispute with SSE regarding their incorrect charges for 2023/24, we, I believe are still due a refund. Our 2024/25 contracts signed in January 2024 have not been correctly applied to our account, although on this point I think progress has now been made.

Volunteers.

Thank you from the Parish Council on behalf of the Village to all our volunteers, the litter picking group led by Paul Slocombe, the unseen helpers and neighbours, those in many village groups and clubs without who, the Castle Acre community could not thrive as it does. To all who help in any way by making Castle Acre a better place to live for us all. Thank you.

In summary we as a Parish have had quite a busy year. My thanks to all Councillors for your continued support and help, our Borough and County Councillors, Cllr Beales and Cllr Moriarty, for their help and experience with issues that go beyond our Parish boundaries. And a special thank you to Amy for all your hard work, it is much appreciated.

Thank you.

Tim Hubbard. Chair, Castle Acre Parish Council.