

VILLAGE NEWSLETTER

Natural England

The Parish Council have just come to the end of a 10 year funding agreement with Natural England to restore the Meend back to natural acid grass land. Due to funding cuts and Brexit uncertainty the PC has so far only been able to secure additional funding until the end of May 2020. We had been in discussion with Gloucester Wildlife Trust but failed to meet all the criteria for funding from this group.

Grazing

In 2012 a conservation grazing scheme was introduced. New fencing, gates, cattle grids and an animal pen were installed partially funded by Gloucestershire Environmental Trust and the Wye Valley AONB Sustainable Development Fund. The Meend then became home to six rare breed ponies from Exmoor's Moorland Mousie Trust. The hope was that they would tackle the bracken and brambles and reduce the amount of manual volunteer labour that was needed.

This year it has been decided to leave the Meend fallow during the spring period whilst we reviewed the future conservation policy and the ponies were temporarily taken off at the end of March. They will be returning shortly. We would like to thank Cheryl Hockey for her hard work in all winds and weathers looking after the ponies.

Next Steps

The PC is commissioning a full Ecology Survey and Conservation Plan to take the Meend Regeneration Project forward for a further ten years. We will shortly be appointing a new committee to implement the plan. If you're interested in volunteering or joining the committee please e-mail us.



<http://www.geography.org.uk/photo/2171868>. Copyright Peter Randall-Cook and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence

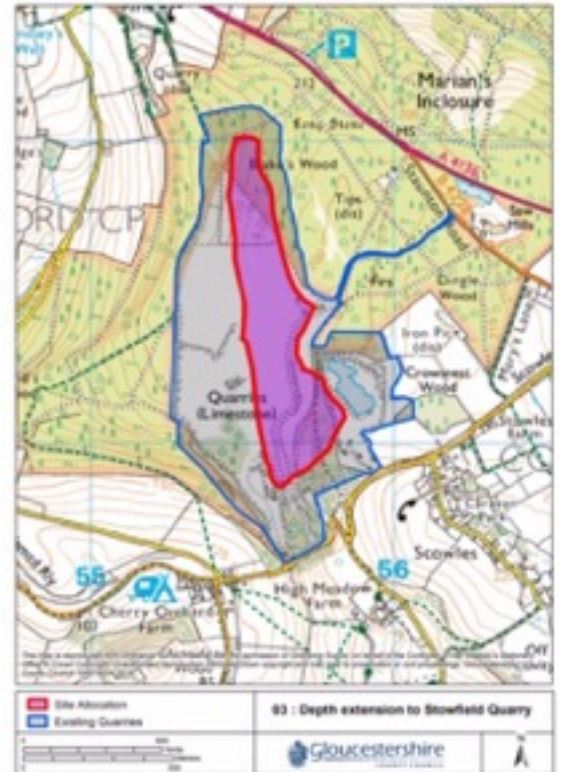
Staunton Meend

Staunton Meend is owned and managed by Staunton Parish Council, it covers approximately 26 hectares of gently sloping common land to the south of the village. The Meend is a mix of neglected acid grassland and mixed broadleaved woodland, where birch has been the dominant species. Commons are parcels of land that have historically provided the community with certain rights to access and use the land. The 'right to roam' on common land means you can use it for activities like walking, sightseeing, bird watching, picnicking and running. Commoners at Staunton Meend have additional rights over the land which include grazing for horses and ponies or other livestock and to gather turf, bracken, firewood, brush, gorse and game. In recent times these rights have rarely been exercised and the lack of grazing and management has negatively impacted upon the nature conservation value of the land. By 2004 the land was overgrown with bracken and the Staunton Meend Restoration Project was started with local resident John Flynn as its Leader, John has voluntarily given his time and energy to manage the project over the past 14 years along side volunteers. This group has raised funds, secured grants and generally worked to restore the Meend. In recent years this has included introducing grazing, re-instating dry stone walls, planting new hedges, clearing bracken and silver birch saplings as well as planting heather cuttings to encourage the re-establishment of this important plant, so closely associated with the acid/grassland or heathland which is the desired outcome of the work. John stepped down from this role at the end of last year and the PC would like to thank him for the tremendous amount of time, tenacity and toil he has given to the project.

Stowfield Quarry

The quarry lies to the south of the village. Quarrying at Stowfield began in the early 1960s and it has been extended several times since. The Gloucestershire Mineral Plan has identified that a depth extension to Stowfield would make a contribution towards the maintenance of steady local aggregate supplies by as much as 9 years' worth of additional working beyond that already permitted. If the operating capacity of Stowfield were increased, this would be reduced to six years. The current operating capacity is 800,000 tonnes per annum with the right legal agreements this could rise to 1.2 million tonnes. We understand that there is currently no planning application for this depth extension. The Parish Council is mindful this may change.

The Stowfield Quarry Liaison Group is made up of representatives including those from Tarmac, Gloucestershire County Council, Coleford Town Council and the Parish Council. The group meets on a regular basis to review blasting and work on measures to reduce the impact of quarry operations. We would encourage you to report any blast vibrations via the PC website. These are collated and the data reviewed by the planning authority.



Parish Council Elections

The Parish Council currently has fewer members than vacancies. All candidates were returned unopposed and no election took place. The members are;

Chair- Jean Sadler

Vice Chair - Jess Horler

Councillors -Cath Elsmore, James Langdon-Down, Mike Parker, Andy Richards

We currently have one vacancy on the PC, if you would like to know more or are interested in joining us please come a long to one of our meetings or e-mail us.

New District Councillor

As part of the old ward of Christchurch and English Bicknor for the past 14 years we have been represented at the District Council by Marrilyn Smart OBE.

Following the electoral review of the Forest of Dean ward boundaries we now sit in the Newland and Sling ward and our new District Councillor is Dave Wheeler. We would like to thank Marrilyn for her unwavering support and service to our village during her time on the District Council.

We look forward to working closely with Dave and seeing him at the next Parish Council Meeting.

Vehicle Activated Speed Sign

The VAS continues to deter speeding motorists through the village. Reports are collated regularly and forwarded to the local police. Many thanks must go to the volunteers who continue to charge and change the batteries.

**Speed Watch Team**

Five volunteers were trained to use the road safety equipment at Coleford Police Station in February, they then completed 2 weeks of random speed checks and measured a number of vehicles going over 40 and 50 mph. More volunteers are now waiting to be trained and we are exploring whether we purchase our own equipment.

Road Safety

The A4136 continues to get busier (Gloucestershire's Local Transport Plan 2015-2031 identifies the A4136 as one of its primary route corridors for HGVs). We conducted a survey earlier this year, delivering 110 forms via door posting, e-mail and collection at the pub. We received 35 replies and used this information to collate the village's concerns. This was sent to Brian Watkins the Local Highways Manager at Gloucestershire County Council Highways who subsequently attended our January meeting. Brian advised us that all the standard qualifying road safety measures and works to this stretch of the A4136 were completed in 2012, however he did take away a list of traffic calming solutions that had potential to be used in the village, a list of these can be found on the PC website under 'Agendas and Minutes' Jan 2019. We had a very positive meeting with Brian in early May and he has agreed to progress a number of these measures.

Neighbourhood Watch Scheme

Following a burglary and attempted one, local resident Mattie Pugh decided to restart the Staunton Neighbourhood Watch scheme. After a couple of well-attended meetings, a number of volunteers have agreed to be Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators. They will be in contact with you to introduce themselves and explain the scheme.

New signs will appear around the village shortly to further publicise the scheme.



Village Hall Committee - The annual village BBQ will take place 6pm to 8pm on Saturday the 13th of July. Weather permitting it will be held at the Pound (or in the Hall if inclement). For any Hall bookings or enquiries call Ray on 01594 832199.

Friends of All Saints Church - The inaugural meeting took place in July last year, Chair John Richards and his fellow group members are working on plans to repair and improve the Grade 1 listed Church.

Finally.. Thanks to Marion Flynn and a group of volunteers for setting up a litter picking team that regularly goes around the village working to keep it tidy.