

LOOKING AFTER OUR ENVIRONMENT

All levels of government have a responsibility to look after the environment we live in, and your Parish Council is included in this. Of course, we don't have the statutory powers of other bodies, such as the Environment Agency or the Planning Authority, so we mainly exercise a supervisory role on your behalf via our consultee status.

However, we also maintain directly a great deal of what we see around us within the villages, i.e. our public realm of open spaces, playing fields, parish footpaths, closed cemeteries and other areas. In fact, this work accounts for a large proportion of the money the Council spends, so is a major consideration for us.

The Council has an Environmental Overview Group, which oversees all such activity, setting standards and priorities, and monitoring expenditure. These standards have been set such as to give a good compromise between cost and appearance. We feel that currently, we have the balance right. However, we are always willing to change in response to public feedback, so if you think something is not good enough, or too good, please let us know so we can assess it.

We have a keen interest in making this a nice place to live for all of us. We encourage groups such as the Fairchilds Meadows Group, and the Pond Group, to help us in this aim. These groups work to improve the appearance and usage of the Parish Council's assets, and I am sure that you will all appreciate their efforts.

Last month I mentioned the volume of traffic, particularly HCV's, in relation to road safety. However, our concerns also extend to the effects on the environment of such traffic, due to noise, vibration and exhaust emissions. The most effective way to minimise these will be to keep the pressure on the County Council to introduce weight restrictions at Earith Bridge and Station Road, which we will do.

Planning matters can be very emotive, but what gets built, where it is, and what it looks like is important to all of us. It deeply affects our lives in many ways and has an effect on our local environment. For this reason, we take our role as a consultee very seriously. Some plans, such as small house extensions, are of very little consequence in their effect. However, recently we have seen attempts by remote companies to inflict their major proposals on our community. In these cases, your Council has taken a robust attitude to their applications, in order to prevent their adverse impact on our environment. This is not to say that we are against all development plans. Clearly, we do need to provide housing, along with all the other services that it requires, in order to renew and maintain the vigour of the community. Our local plan includes areas for small-scale housing developments and we are keen to promote these, having regard to their impact on the environment.

Don't forget, if you have any comments you can contact your Council via our Parish Clerk, the website or our Facebook page. Let us know your views!

David Lyon
Chairman
Haddenham Parish Council