

Notes of CAWS Annual General Meeting – Thursday 12 September 2024

The Community Action: Whitley & Shaw (CAWS) Annual General Meeting 2024 was held at Whitley Methodist Church, commencing at 1900hrs.

1. Welcome / Apologies:

Peter Richardson (Chair) welcomed everyone.

1.1. **Attendees:** Peter Richardson, Pippa Richardson, Joan Boorer, Lesley Sibbald, Mike Booth, Dan Pike, Alison Candlin, Maureen Hibbott, Melinda Adcock, Cllr Phil Allford, Lesley King, Susan Evans, Hugh Pakeman, Denise Pakeman, Cecily Brownrigg, Bob Brownrigg, Daniel Scane, Bev Castle, Helen Burns, Steve Little, Bill Harrison, John Marshall, Amanda Fitzgerald, Darryl Hoad, Claire Hoad, Mary Pile, Christopher Buss, Stephen Cole, Jan Landon, Paul Frowde, David Wales, Malcolm Duddridge

1.2. **Apologies:** Kirsty Jamieson, Jonathan Rumens

2. Officer reports:

2.1. **Chair:** With the backing of a visual presentation, Peter provided an overview of CAWS role in the community and a summary of what the group had achieved since the last AGM.

He explained that CAWS exists to represent local residents and businesses, achieve changes and improvements to the quality of life and wellbeing of local people, promote community cohesion, coordinate community action, increase awareness and consult on future developments, and provide a link between residents, businesses and the local authorities.

CAWS is run entirely by volunteers without formal funding and is committed to recycle any funds raised through local events etc. back into the community. CAWS has no formal authority or power.

Peter gave an overview of some of the current projects that CAWS has undertaken in the last year including the following:

- Providing responses to the Wiltshire local plan and to the Neighbourhood Plan
- Ongoing Speedwatch activity and other road safety activity which includes 'marginal gains' such as SLOW signs on Corsham Road and Shaw Hill and engagement with the school travel plan
- The history book which has sold out and the 2nd edition is due to be published in 2025
- Litter picking – the Whitley and Shaw Wombles
- Planting of trees around the village with proceeds from the Jubilee Fete in 2022 – a significant logistical exercise requiring consultation with the Highways engineer (where to plant), Gardening club (which trees) and contractors (planting)
- Chatty benches funded by Melksham Without Parish Council – one at Ever Green Meadow and one at Whitley Stores

- Topography signs for the top of Littleworth Lane and at Shaw Village Hall playing field (since the meeting these were installed 17/9/24)
- Telephone boxes – Top Lane library which needs volunteers to help repair/paint and the Corsham Road box (opposite Shaw School) which is going to have empty frames put in to it to use for art work, exhibitions and competitions etc
- Car boot sale - planned for August but had to be cancelled due to lack of both interest and volunteers

Peter advised that he had now completed his two year service as Chair of CAWS and therefore the role would need to be re-elected. The roles of Secretary and Treasurer have just completed their first year of service and both have a further year to run. Peter put out a plea for new volunteers to come forward, both for the Chair and general volunteers to help with activities including the organizing committee for the summer 2025 event, speedwatch, telephone box painting and technical experts for the BESS Stage 2 (more details of this covered later in the meeting).

Peter concluded his report by congratulating the successful opening of Whitley Stores. He also passed on his thanks to:

- Mike and Leila Sarson Rowe (Ever Green Meadow)
- CAWS committee and officers
- BESS working group
- CEG (Community Emergency Group)
- Members, residents, volunteers, local businesses, local councils and other community groups

A copy of the full slide pack is attached to the covering email sent along with these minutes.

2.2.Treasurer: Joan provided an update on the CAWS accounts for 2022 – 2023. Full details are shown in Appendix A but a summary is as follows:

Overall financial position:

On 1st January 2023 the opening balance was £6915, broken down as follows:
CAWS - £6367, CEG - £548.

The closing balance on 31st December 2023 was £7526 broken down as follows:
CAWS - £6680, CEG - £846.

Roger Hatherall audited the accounts and certified that the above is a true record.

Joan concluded her report by advising that a grant has been applied for (circa £1500) on behalf of CEG and Peter advised that if received it will be used for several things including a further first aid course, placing an antenna on Shaw Village Hall to give greater radio coverage in the event of an emergency and additional racking for storage purposes.

2.3.Secretary: Dan gave a brief overview of his role which included the following:

- Supporting Peter in his role as Chair
- Involvement in the BESS (as an engineer)
- Managing the CAWS email (whitley.and.shaw@gmail.com)
- Liaising with MWPC on matters such as pot holes, overgrown hedges etc – anything that isn't actually on the highway (Dan asked for details to be sent to him if people identify issues – he also pointed the audience to details of My Wilts)
- Liaising with the government re Project Gigabit to get acceptable Internet to all properties. Peter added that Wiltshire Council are in discussion with Openreach as part of a deal to provide superfast broadband service to 9000 properties and he is in discussion with Cllr Phil Alford as to where those properties are.

3. Election of Chair:

Peter advised that his term of Chair had now ended and again offered the opportunity for other individuals to volunteer. No-one came forward so in the absence of any other candidates he agreed to serve for one more year only.

Peter noted that the Treasurer and Secretary both have one more year to serve.

4. Election of Committee:

Peter advised that the committee stands for 2 years and all have one more year to serve.

Mary Pile has requested to stand down. Peter passed on his thanks to Mary and asked if anyone else would like to join the committee. No-one came forward.

5. The Lime Down Solar BESS Campaign:

Peter talked through the following key points (full details attached in the covering email sent along with the minutes):

- Approach has been as agreed at the outset – lobby, meet, reinforce, repeat
- Been noisy and deliberately repetitive that Whitley is the wrong site for a BESS
- Fighting on 2 fronts – articulating why Whitley is the wrong location for a BESS (flooding, impact on landscape, Neighbourhood plan etc) and reinforcing why Whitley is wrong eg BESS are unsafe, not properly regulated, do not contribute to Net Zero etc)
- Activity between March and June – included meeting the developer, MP site walk, CAWS submission, working group set up and met, meetings with Lime Down Solar (LDS)
- Most recent activity – met with the local MP Brian Matthews (and he in turn is going to the Secretary of State), asked lots of questions of many people / organisations, creating the groundwork for stage 2 of the campaign and supporting the campaign against a further solar farm and BESS at Little Chalfield
- Many papers have been written and the list of who has been approached includes Ofwat, the Environment Agency, HSE, Essex Water, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue, Planning Inspectorate, House of Commons, dwiQ and many more. All communications have included evidence of our investigations.
- Brian Matthews is also meeting with LDS and is taking information from Peter and Dan. Brian will update them after the meeting.

- If one battery catches fire then it takes 140 fire engines up to two days to control the fire (it does not put it out). If all 200 were to go out that would require 28000 fire engines – that's 50 million litres of water which is then contaminated and where does it go?!
- The response received from IGP (Island Green Power) did not provide answers to any of the questions raised by CAWS and they declined to provide a formal written statement. They advised that the decision point is now January 2025 and will tie in with the Stage 2 consultation.
- If Whitley is selected, we will need to get expert advice and may need to raise funds for this
- IGP will not engage directly with CAWS – we will need to be via Wiltshire Council as CAWS is not a statutory organisation
- Factors in CAWS favour – we have strong technical engineering, environment and planning position
- Factors against CAWS – include Net Zero policies encourage such schemes, there is a lot of money at stake and the land available is in the same ownership as the likely cable run, proximity to substation
- 3 NSIP were approved by the Secretary of State just some 3 or 4 days after the election and at least one was against the recommendation of the planning inspectorate
- CAWS must ensure that whatever is implemented is done so properly with all risks considered and we must hold the developers to account
- The other site being considered (Hullavington) may not have as many objections as us but their case is similar. What is not in our favour is the proximity to the substation.

Peter's personal view – its 50/50 and could go either way. If based on CAWS objections he would be 90% on our side but the factors against CAWS bring him back to the 50/50.

Questions raised at the meeting

1. Have there been any BESS fires in the UK?

Yes – Liverpool 2020 when a battery exploded and shrapnel went in to a nearby battery. The local area had to go in to a lock down situation due to toxicity.

2. What is the likelihood of a change in location to the land to the right of Westlands Lane?

There is no evidence that they are considering it. Most of that land is owned by the National Grid which was purchased when the substation was built. There is a parcel of land that could accommodate a BESS but that would come with the same objections as Whitley.

3. Has there been a conversation with Fullers yet?

Not as yet but Ginnie Dallard is going to try to do this.

4. Is it worth individuals lobbying the local MP?

Yes and ask your neighbours to do it too!

Peter's summary – don't give up!

- We must continue to develop our understanding, continue talking to people and hold the regulators to account
- If anyone thinks we should be doing something and are not then please do tell us
- If you think someone can help us in any way please say

Please come forward to volunteer (especially if Whitley is selected) as we need help with

- Water/ drainage/hydrology
- Financial modelling
- Chemistry/safety
- Marketing and communications

The audience thanked Peter for all he is doing on behalf of the community.

6. Community Emergency Group (CEG):

Peter explained that the CEG is made up of volunteers who look after the community in terms of flood, bath weather etc. The team is held in high regard by Wiltshire Council and he played a video a CEG exercise in action which was produced by the Council.

7. Wiltshire Council Update:

CLlr Phil Alford gave an overview on behalf of the council as summarised below. It was necessary for this presentation to be condensed as the meeting was over-running.

- Lime Down - is the biggest thing the council are working on right now and they are working very closely with Peter. Once a decision is made by Lime Down Solar, Wiltshire Council planning department will go through it and present their view to their cabinet (which Phil sits on) and this will be what is adopted for the planning enquiry.
- Openreach – have the contract for North Wilts. They are undertaking an open market review to agree the 9000 homes that this superfast broadband is to be rolled out to. There will also be a portal that the public can access for people to put in postcodes to see if they are going to be connected. If more information is required please let Phil know.
- Planning – there are complexities around the 5 year land supply. If anyone wants more details please let Phil know.
- Highways – there has been a £20.7m investment above what was planned and what was received from central government. Two new pieces of equipment have been purchased for resurfacing – the dragon patcher and the bobcat.
 - Dan raised the issue of one of the potholes at the northern end of First Lane. The road surface is continuously and significantly undermined, perhaps by an underground water course, despite continual attempts to patch it up. Phil agreed to follow this up.
 - A question was asked as to why there are still issues on the main roads yet smaller roads, eg Eden Grove, get resurfaced. Phil explained the different approaches of planned maintenance (Eden Grove) and reactive repairs (issues reported and assessed for priority) and they are handled by two different teams.
- My Wilts – specific issues can be reported on My Wilts and photos can be included to aid the process. Peter offered that any such issues can also be notified to him as he can progress them with the council.

8. CAWS Committee meetings – proposed programme for 2024/5

- Wednesday 30th October 2024

- Remaining meetings to be agreed by the new committee

9. Date and venue of next meeting:

The next CAWS committee meeting will take place on Wednesday 30th October 2024 at 1900 at The Head Shed, First Lane. Whitley.

10. Closure

Peter wrapped up the meeting and apologised that the meeting had over run. He again asked for volunteers for the Chair (possibly splitting out the Chair for BESS and the Chair for CAWS in to two roles) and other committee members but no-one was forthcoming at the meeting. He advised that standing for one more year was a compromise as the constitution requires CAWS to have a chairperson and for that person to stand for 2 years. He urged people to think about what they could do to support CAWS in the future.

The meeting concluded at 2115.

Lesley King
Minutes Secretary
1 October 2024

APPENDIX A

TREASURER'S REPORT CAWS ACCOUNTS 1st JANUARY TO 31st DECEMBER 2023

- On 1st January the opening balance was £6915, broken down as follows: CAWS -£6367, CEG - £548.
- CAWS:
Income included a grant from MWPC of £1220 towards the cost of topography signs. These will be sited at Shaw Village Hall and Littleworth Lane.
Expenditure included £333 for insurance, £60 for auditing the accounts, £420 for a plinth to display the Jubilee crown at Shaw School and a donation to Shaw and Whitley Gardening Club to purchase compost.
- CEG:
Income included a grant of £1,797 from SSE towards the purchase of a generator, and First Aid training.
Expenditure included purchase of a generator for £1300, as well as a total of £199 for various purchases.
- Music Fair:
This very successful event held in June 2023 included music from various groups as well as the Rock Choir. There was also a Dog Show, Climbing Wall, Bouncy Castle and various games around the field, a BBQ and Raffle.
Income included proceeds from the BBQ and raffle as well as generous donations from AL King and Jaine Whitfield. Also donations of very generous raffle prizes. Lowden Garden Centre donated sausages and burgers; The Harris brothers supplied a number of straw bales used for seating and wouldn't accept a donation.
Expenditure included paying the various groups and choir, we also paid £750 for a PA system and sound engineer. Other main expenditure included £850 for hire of the climbing wall, £275 for a stilt walker/circus workshop, £290 to the Community Bus who provided transport all day. Although expenditure for hire of the BBQ and supplies was high, this was offset by the very generous donation from Lowden Garden Centre.
We only just made a very small profit but think it was worth it for such a successful community event.
- Therefore, the closing balances on 31st December 2023 are as follows:
CAWS - £6,680 CEG - £846. Total closing balance £7526.
- Roger Hatherall has audited the accounts and certified that the above is a true record.

CAWS Accounts FY2024

To Date:

Income: CAWS £1419; there has been no income for CEG

Expenditure : CAWS £5287; CEG £687

Totals: CAWS £2812; CEG £160. Account balance £2972.