

Notes of CAWS Annual General Meeting – Wednesday 24 September 2025

The Community Action: Whitley & Shaw (CAWS) Annual General Meeting for 2025 was held at Whitley Methodist Church, commencing at 1900hrs.

1. Welcome / Apologies:

Peter Richardson (Chair) welcomed everyone.

1.1. Attendees:

Mindy Adcock, Cllr. Phil Alford (*Wiltshire*), Myra Baker, Pauline Balfour, Joan Boorer (*Treasurer*), Mike Booth, Cecily Brownrigg, Billy Burns, Alison Candlin, Jilly Chittenden, John Coates, Shirley Coates, Ginnie Dallard, John Darnborough, Susan Darnborough, Malcolm Duddridge, Monica Giddings, Claire Hall, Bill Harrison, Bill Hazelwood, Maureen Hibbott, Richard Hibbott, Darryl Hoad, Kirsty Jamieson, Geraldine Mann, Helen Mitchell, Dan Pike (*Secretary*), Cllr. Peter Richardson (Chair, MWPC), Pippa Richardson, Margaret Roberts, Jonathan Rumens, Leila Sarson-Rowe, Mike Sarson-Rowe, Lesley Sibbald, Roger Sumner, Sarah Thomson (guest - Age UK), Peter Whatton

Also "Mike" (no surname supplied),

2. Apologies:

Ann Harrison

3. A summary of the year in CAWS

A quick summary of some of the things that the CAWS team did last year:

- We installed a pair of topography signs, designed by Peter R., with one at the top of Littleworth Lane and the other in the Shaw Playing Fields, near to the Hall.
- We set up a small Community Gallery in the telephone box opposite Shaw School, with the help of a grant from Melksham Without Parish Council (MWPC). The gallery will be managed by Mike Booth.
- We ran the Speedwatch surveys, with a small team led by Kirsty and Mindy.
- We maintained the Community Library, with Maureen and Peter A. keeping it well stocked, and Billy working hard to make it water-tight and looking good!
- We organized a couple of "Litter Pick" events.
- Peter R. gave a talk on the history of the local area, promoted by the Atworth History Group, and based on his book. He also organized a walk-and-talk visit to

the graves of the Shaw Quakers, with thanks to the owner(s) of the land, Roger Hollest.

- We helped the owners of Ever Green Meadow continue with their plans to turn it into a wonderful Community Resource. For example, we obtained a small grant for a picnic bench, and we arranged for a waste bin to be installed at the entrance (more difficult than you might think!).
- We liaised with the Highways engineers of Wiltshire Council, resulting in several repairs and improvements to the local roads and pavements. We also identified lots of potholes that have now been filled, and Middle Lane now has a new sign! More of these improvements are still in the pipeline.
- We campaigned against several unsuitable planning applications that are outside the Neighbourhood Plan that we all overwhelmingly voted to adopt.
- We liaised with the Parish Steward, in his never-ending fight to keep our footpaths and verges clear of weeds, safe and pleasant to use.
- We campaigned for the whole of Whitley and Shaw to be included in Project Gigabit, and Openreach have announced that they will start the work next year.
- We decorated one of the Christmas trees in Shaw Church's competition.
- We obtained permission to plant trees around the villages, with our thanks to Lowden's and Pamela Hall for the donations.
- Most recently, we have been active in persuading the contractors who are currently digging up Corsham Rd to adjust their behaviour, so that the residents will not be locked out of their own driveways for several weeks.
- We ran a campaign to prevent Lime Down Solar from building a Battery Energy Storage System in the fields north of Top Lane, in Whitley.

4. Chair's report (Cllr Peter Richardson):

Peter defined the aims of CAWS:

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 outline of the structure of the AGM and introduced the guest speakers:

- Sarah Thomson to talk about Age UK;
- Mike Sarson-Rowe to talk about Ever Green Meadow; and
- Jonathan Rumens, to talk about the work of the Community Emergency Group (CEG), which is associated with CAWS.

Peter presented a series of slides that showed many of the things that CAWS has done this year, including:

1. Converting the old BT phone box on Corsham Rd to be a Community Art Gallery.
2. Organising a couple of Litter Pick events.
3. Taking part in the annual Shaw Church Christmas Tree competition.
4. Buying a picnic bench for Ever Green Meadow.
5. Lobbying Wiltshire Council to make improvements to the local roads, including potholes, refurbishing Corsham Rd pavement, repairing the sinkhole at the top of First Lane.
6. Helping the Parish Steward to keep the villages tidy and clear of overgrowth.
7. Planting more trees, including one at the edge of Shaw Playing Fields.
8. Refurbishing the Mobile Library, located in the 'phone box along Top Lane in Whitley.
9. Lobbying for a litter bin to be installed outside the entrance of Ever Green Meadow, which will help the local dog walkers, in particular. Melksham Without Parish Council have kindly agreed to arrange for it to be emptied regularly.
10. And, of course, the seemingly never-ending stream of planning applications that needed to be handled, this year. As well as the ongoing campaigns against being surrounded by Battery Energy Storage Systems, we have also consulted and organized campaigns against a number of speculative and unsuitable housing applications. They were outside the Neighbourhood and Local plans that we all worked on and agreed to adopt in the recent election.

5. Full-fibre Broadband (Dan Pike, CAWS Secretary)

Openreach (the contractor for this area) has announced that they will begin working in this area in 2026. The current plan is to upgrade the buildings shown in yellow on the slide, seemingly every home in Whitley and Shaw, to full fibre (FTTP).

Unfortunately, we don't know whether that means January 2026, December 2026, sometime in-between (most likely!), or whether the date might slip a bit. We don't know which homes will be connected first, or how long it will take to connect all of them. We don't know how much disruption it will cause on the roads, though it seems likely (for reasons of cost) that the cables will be going overhead across the poles, rather than underground. But we do not know that.

So, it is exciting news, but please don't make any firm plans at this early stage. It may take some significant time to get to the point where we know the details and more time before can all benefit from it.

6. Treasurer's report (Joan Boorer)

Joan's reports for CAWS and CEG are attached as a separate document.

Please note that the reports come in two parts, because our accounts are audited from January 2024 to January 2025, but our AGM is in September. Joan has helpfully included details of the costs of the projects that came all outside the last financial year, but that we are talking about in this AGM.

The summary is that we are mostly funded by grants received from MWPC and other sponsors (SSE), with some income from events such as the Jubilee fete and the Music Festival. Our bank balance is in credit for us to remain solvent and reasonably liquid, but we are not a hedge fund. We do try to spend our income as soon as we find something that is worth doing, that will benefit the villages.

CAWS paid to create the Community Gallery, the topology signs and some public benches and other signs. CEG paid for volunteer First Aid training, and some practical equipment, like drain rods, a pump, some cleaning equipment and racking to store them until we need them.

7. BESS Working Group

The CAWS Working Group that campaigned against the Lime Down BESS has managed to accumulate a large knowledge base (thousands of pages) of facts and information by talking to various experts, from watching a lot of videos.

We are continuing to campaign against several undesirable BESS projects in our area, such as: Whistlemead, Halfway Farm and the largest one at Neston (Brockleaze). We do this either directly, in the case of those that are planned for our own area, or by assisting other groups when the projects are in neighbouring regions.

. These things are a threat to health and safety, they are not green, and they are not necessary for our energy sector. They make a huge amount of money for the investors, taken from the green levy that makes your electricity bills so high, and we do not want to be surrounded by them.

The group, along with MWPC, is also talking to the National Grid teams who are working in the Beanacre substation, as they upgrade it to cope with the new connections.

8. Speedwatch

The team leader, Kirsty talked about the SpeedWatch campaign. The team aims to be a visible deterrent against some of the high-speed driving that we see through the villages. The group is small, so there are fewer sessions than we would like, but we do have enough people to man three sites at: outside Beltane Place on Shaw Hill, outside Ever Green Meadow and towards the northern end of Corsham Rd in Whitley.

9. Community Emergency Group

Jonathan described the functions of the Community Emergency Group (CEG): helping people deal with flooding, snow and ice, and with power cuts. The team has generators and water pumps, as well as hand-tools like walkie-talkies and drain rods, and sets of appropriate PPE.

The members of the team are trained in First Aid, and act as Flood Wardens during the heaviest storms that seem to be becoming frequent events.

CEG have an excellent reputation for the quality of their work, both in the local area and further afield. They are known by and affiliated to many organisations and so they were asked recently, by Wiltshire and Swindon Councils, to host a “simulation” of an emergency event. That was held in Whitley Reading Rooms, and it included some key people from as far away as Portland Down.

10. Age UK – Community Support Service

Sarah Thompson introduced the Melksham Community Support Service (MCSS), which aims to improve the well-being of older people in our parish by offering practical help, such as filling out forms, staying safe and well, and with vital life-tasks like shopping.

MCSS also organizes friendship groups to help you stay in touch and feel a useful part of the community. These are similar to the Whitley Community Meetings that are run by the Gardening Club that are held here on most Saturdays (unless it's the Book Swap weekend, of course!).

The many services that MCSS offer are available (mostly free of charge) to anyone who lives in our parish (Melksham Without).

If you wish to speak to someone or would like someone to come and talk to you directly, please call Sarah on 01225 809265. If she does not answer, please do leave your name and number, and she will call you back as soon as she can from her mobile (not that same number!).

If you are familiar with the internet and would like to read more about them, details are on the slides attached to this document and also online at

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/wiltshire/about-us/contact-us/>

11. Evergreen Meadow

Mike Sarson-Rowe gave an update on the progress of the Ever Green Meadow that he and Leila bought a couple of years ago.

It now includes a few benches and a picnic table to sit on, and there are apple and pear trees growing in a small orchard, along with the beginnings of a community vegetable garden.

There are plans to improve the footpath that runs through the field, all the way to Shaw Playing Fields, too. In the meantime, the worst affected areas have received a dose of wood chippings, which has helped to keep the mud at bay.

They hope to be able to protect the land from development in the future by changing its legal status, and they have plans to plant trees in the green areas on the map in the slides, to register it as a part of the Great Western Forest.

12. Officer elections

Peter Richardson was voted in to continue as Chair, Dan Pike as Secretary, Joan Boorer as Treasurer.

Pippa Richardson and Lesley Sibbald agreed to take over as Minuting Secretary; Lesley King has moved away from the area.

13. The future ...

Peter thanked the committee for their hard work over the year and then explained that there are yet more things that we would like to do but, unfortunately, we do not have enough people to be able to organize them.

Several suggestions were presented to the audience at the end of the meeting, with ideas for things that CAWS can do to help improve the villages:

1. There is general support for a 20 mph limit along the narrow lanes in the villages.
2. We would like to see the grass verge outside the Methodist Chapel converted to a layby as the road is particularly narrow there and visibility is poor when exiting Middle Lane, especially when the Chapel is busy.
3. There is significant interest in organising more events:
 - a. another history talk and/or a walk;
 - b. an ecology and wildlife walk;
 - c. another fete, perhaps to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of Shaw Playing Fields;

All of the above require some work, which requires more volunteers to come forward. So, if you are a resident here, and you would like to help us do more, please do get in touch.

Contact Peter and Dan by email at whitley.and.shaw@gmail.com, or when you see either (or both!) of them, typically when they are walking their dogs around the village.

14. Stay safe

Please take care during the dark, wet, windy and, possibly, icy months of winter. Although CEG is a wonderful service and will help where they can in an emergency, it is still the responsibility of each and every home-owner to protect their own property from flooding.

15. The next committee meeting

The next CAWS committee meeting will take place at the Head Shed on 26th November 2025, starting at 7pm (19:00).