

Hope with Aston Parish Council

Newsletter, February 2025

Winter weather

The cold snap in mid-January combined with snowfall certainly provided some fabulous photo opportunities, but was a challenge for many of us getting out and about to essential work, health and education commitments. We know that many of you helped neighbours out, whether with newspaper deliveries, informal meals on wheels or driving people to hospital appointments. Thank you all! Parish councillors are also grateful to Derbyshire County Council Highways department for gritting main roads. We were concerned to note the lack of equivalent safety measures at Hope Station, normally well gritted. Northern Rail have explained that the service is outsourced but that they are requesting an improvement and undertaking quality assurance to ensure that a safe environment is maintained.

Devotees of our minutes will note that our January meeting moved to the Old Hall Tearooms at short notice because of a heating problem at the Old School. Thank you to the Old Hall for stepping into the breach! We are lucky in the village to have such a range of meeting spaces, including the Old Hall, the Old School, the Methodist Hall, Loxley Hall and the Sports Club. This certainly contributes to the liveliness of village life.

Housing needs survey

In the next month or so, residents in Hope and Aston will receive a survey from the Midlands Rural Housing Association which will be gathering evidence about housing needs in our area. Surveys like this play a key role in establishing evidence of housing needs in our community and its results will shape decisions about future housing provision, including provision of affordable housing and housing which is only available to people with existing local connections. We believe this is important work, and we would encourage all residents to participate in the survey.

Even if this survey produces positive evidence that there are unmet housing needs in Hope, that doesn't guarantee what will happen. It would then depend on factors including finding suitable sites on which such housing can be built, planning consent and availability of funding for the work. If any houses were to be built, it is likely to take five years or more from the time of the survey to completion. But the survey is an essential starting point: the more of us who respond, the more evidence there will be to inform decisions about housing need in Hope with Aston and how this might be met.

For more information about the Midlands Rural Housing Association, please go to their website <https://www.midlandsrural.org.uk/>.

Mobile signal outages and power cuts

We depend upon infrastructure for many aspects of our everyday lives. Sadly, before Christmas many of us in Hope were reminded of this taken for granted service, when critical failures took place in the mobile network and in electricity supply.

As many residents will already be aware, from November 18th to 21st there was a serious interruption to the provision of many mobile services in our area. We are writing to our local MP to express our concern that such an extended period of loss of supply is permitted. We are also concerned that it took place without announcement or warning, even though the reason given was scheduled maintenance work. Availability of a mobile signal has become a critical piece of our national infrastructure, and any loss of provision is extremely serious. We encourage all residents who were affected to write to their mobile provider to protest. We also understand that it is possible that you might be entitled to compensation for the loss of provision, so protesting can be well worthwhile.

Remembrance Sunday events

We would like to express our thanks to all residents who rallied round after the disgraceful theft of the soldier silhouettes before Remembrance Sunday and funded the purchase of replacement figures. The replacements were solidly anchored to prevent any recurrence, and will reappear in future years. Our plans for 2025 include repairs to the war memorial itself, so that it will be fully refreshed in time for next Remembrance Sunday when we will be marking the 80th year from the end of the Second World War.

Remembering John Hall and Steve Fox

John Hall who chaired the Parish Council for many years, and Steve Fox who served as Clerk both passed away towards the end of last year. Their long contribution to community life and to the Parish Council will be much missed.

New parish clerk

Hope with Aston Parish Council has a new Clerk.

Alison Wheeler took over from Sheree Smallwood in January 2025. She also works as Assistant Clerk for Hathersage Parish Council, and has long experience running the Glenbrook Outdoor Centre, as well as ongoing voluntary work with Girlguiding.

The Parish Council would like to express our appreciation to Sheree Smallwood who has been Clerk to the Council since September 2023 and who has been an excellent support to the community.

Breedon update

In line with planning permission granted last year, Breedon have been making good progress in developing the capacity to handle Alternative Raw Materials (ARM) for use in the manufacture of cement at the Hope Works. By the beginning of April Breedon plan to have completed the building

which will support the use of ARM. From that point they will be able to switch from the delivery of ARM by road, to delivery of these materials by rail. The result should be a noticeable reduction in the frequency of deliveries by road to the Breedon works. Meanwhile ongoing negotiations initiated by HEARD (the Hope Environmental and Rail Delegation), during consultations with Breedon and the Peak Park planners, should partly mitigate the impact of Breedon's branch line operations. Actions planned include the removal of a set of points close to Earles Viaduct, the continuous welding of parts of their track and the installation of sound absorbent fencing. The latter will require planning permission. If residents observe any significant changes from the beginning of April in terms of either reduced or increased noise, please let us know.

Financial update

High Peak Borough Council was amongst the 10 per cent of local councils that completed its annual audit by the end of November. Prompt completion is generally accepted as an indication of good financial management. It's reassuring to us as local residents, and also gives central government confidence in decisions which involve High Peak that any spending will be well managed (but see below on local government reorganization and the future of High Peak Borough Council).

The Parish Council has completed its budget plans for 2025. These underpin the setting of the precept (a portion of council tax that goes to local parish spending). Despite cost pressures we will be able to deliver our plans for 2025 at an increase which works out on average at less than £1.00 per household.

Mytham Bridge, Sickleholme

At some time in the next few months Derbyshire County Council will be starting work on the long-anticipated repairs to the river walls at Mytham Bridge, Sickleholme. At this stage there is no information about whether this will mean a temporary closure of the A6187, or how long such a closure might last.

The Parish Council will certainly be consulted about this major set of road works and is keen to pass on any views you might have about the potential closure of our most important link with Sheffield.

Do let us know about what you think about this issue. Email clerk@hopewithastonparishcouncil.co.uk with any views you have on timings and ways of minimizing impact, and we will pass these on to the County Council.

The future of the no. 62 bus

Hope, Castleton and Edale now have a valuable public transport link in the form of the no. 62 bus that runs up Edale Road and on over Mam Nick to Chapel and Buxton. This route is secure until at least March 2026. The Parish Councils of the three Hope Valley villages on the route recently attended a meeting convened by Hope Valley Climate Action in which it was agreed to push for improvements to the timetable, and for more frequent services to Buxton. It was also agreed that a major publicity campaign is needed to increase local use of the service. For more information about the new timetable see https://www.highpeakbuses.com/media/4667/hp_62_2024-06-30.pdf

Local government reorganization

Plans are being considered for a major reorganization of local government in which smaller local and borough councils would be merged to become larger entities. The Government believes this has the potential to save substantial sums of money, but it risks creating forms of local government that will be more remote from the citizens they are representing. At this point we do not have a clear picture of the process which will be followed in determining the future structure for local government for Hope and the Hope Valley. However if these plans go ahead, the High Peak Borough Council would presumably disappear, and our local government would be provided by a larger regional council. Different options for what form that regional council could take are being debated, see for example <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c938x05710zo>, in which the possibility of High Peak being merged into a region based around Manchester is discussed. It is not clear whether there will be any effective form of local consultation before decisions are taken on these issues. We will provide continued updates as we learn more. For the moment, though, if like us you do not believe that being part of a region centred on Manchester would be in the best interests of our local community, we recommend that you write to our local MP Jon Pearce to express that opinion (as we have) and to demand local consultation as these decisions are taken.

Registration for recycling centres

Derbyshire County Council have introduced a registration scheme for users of any DCC recycling centre. The rationale for registration and guidelines on how it will apply are given at the DCC website at

<https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/council/news-events/news-updates/news/residents-required-to-register-to-use-household-waste-recycling-centres.aspx> (click on the QR code to access this item).



New noticeboard for Aston

Residents may have noticed that the dilapidated old noticeboard in Aston has been replaced with a smart new one. Our thanks to Joe Dalton for his work in putting up the new noticeboard, which is much appreciated!

Keep up to date

Between newsletters, we send out updates on items which come to our attention. These can include announcements of meetings, notifications of road closures and any other items which are of interest to residents and which will take place before the next newsletter. Why not either watch out for news items being updated on our website <https://www.hopewithastonparishcouncil.co.uk/>, or join our Facebook group at <https://www.facebook.com/HwAPC> which has been inactive for some time but which we are now seeking to build up as a useful resource for the community.