

# Blofield and Blofield Heath Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Blofield and Blofield Heath held at Heathlands Community Centre on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at 7:30pm.

## **PRESENT:**

Stuart Smith (chair) and the clerk (Sarah Osbaldeston) presided.  
Blofield Parish Councillors present – Yvonne Burton and Joseph Scholes.  
17 parishioners were present.

## **1. WELCOME TO THE MEETING BY BLOFIELD PARISH COUNCIL**

1.1. Stuart Smith, Chair of the Council welcomed everyone.

## **2. TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 14<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024**

2.1. These were approved by all present and duly signed by the Chair.

## **3. CHAIR / COUNCIL'S REPORT**

The council has had an extremely busy year achieving an immense amount across the whole parish.

### **Additional Play in the Parish**

The Council is pleased to report that with a National Highways grant & parish council funding for play additions and improvements at Heathlands / MHH in 2023/24 and 2024/25 at the old school site. In total this equates to funding of £519,088 of play equipment across all 3 sites.

This was split – £60,000 at Heathlands, £146,514 at the Margaret Harker Hall site and £312,152 at Blofield Park (the named decided on for the 'old' school site going forward) .

Thanks to National Highways and the cooperation of Norfolk County Council Children's Services and the School, the installation of play equipment took place on the current school playing field last summer. This will become accessible to all once the school has transitioned across to the new site and no longer requires the old school playing field. Unfortunately, due to further delays at the new school this may not be until September 2025 at the earliest. Further obstacles still exist to this date, but the Council are working hard to mitigate and eliminate these issues.

The Council is still working on ideas for activity equipment on the area just above the Wyngates development, the land which will ultimately be transferred to the Parish from Broadland District Council.

### **Community Project (at the 'old' school site once Blofield Primary School relocates)**

The Council continues to work towards the development of the old school site.

With significant CIL / S.106 monies accumulated it plans to use them to fund a community hub and is actively being supported by Broadland District Council on this project.

The planning application for the old school site to facilitate a new Community Car Park, new entrance off Plantation Road, the establishment of the new play park, and an outline application for a new Community Hub was approved by Broadland District Council and to this end, as reported above, the play equipment was installed last summer. The commencement of the new access into the site from Plantation Road should begin in the next couple of months, jointly funded by the Parish Council and Parish Partnership Funds from NCC Highways.

Again, in the next couple of months, work to separate the site between the land being transferred to the Council and that being retained by Norfolk County Council will begin with the removal of redundant buildings and fencing and access gates installed.

The Council are working with a local firm of architects to develop some concept ideas for a community hub.

## **Speeding**

Speeding through the villages continues to be a problem and due to the A47 construction and closure of access from Lingwood at two points onto the A47, this has resulted in problems occurring on Lingwood Road from that area. Speeding on Woodbastwick Road too !!!

Thanks to the support of our local District Councillor, Paul Newstead, formal speed monitoring has taken place on Woodbastwick Road by Norfolk Highways with a view to understanding whether there are any actions that could be taken to reduce this.

Our historic local Speedwatch team was disbanded due to a lack of numbers, but if there are enough people interested (at least 6 plus a nominated administrator are required) then this could always be reinstated.

## **Planning**

The number of applications continues at a manageable level. The Council attempts to represent existing residents' concerns by commenting strongly on applications and at Planning Committee, where appropriate, with Broadland District Council Planning who is the deciding authority. However with Government pressure and resultant targets set to local authorities it is expected that more planning applications, that would previously have been rejected, will be granted in order to meet these targets.

## **Finance**

The Council has again raised the precept this year in line with inflationary pressures given that the Council is not protected from increases from suppliers and contractors (as also' ?) experienced by the wider population and businesses.

The Council continues to financially support, amongst other smaller initiatives:

- The community land at Marty's Marsh.
- Blofield Allotments
- Maintenance of the churchyard at St. Andrew & St. Peter
- Continuing maintenance of the various green spaces throughout the Parish, adopting more spaces as land is transferred to the PC as a result of the land transfer from Broadland District Council within the Wyngates residential area.
- The Courthouse, a listed building, owned by the Parish Council and invaluable supported by a dedicated management committee. Further works are required to this listed building this year in order to eliminate a damp issue affecting the fabric of the building.

The Council has recently introduced a large grants policy for application by interested parties, the first grant being awarded to Heathlands Community Centre for further car park expansion.

## **A47 Dualling**

This National Highways project is now underway with some expected impact on the Community. There was recently an issue of large dumper trucks driving through the villages, but in liaison with the project team this has now reduced and is being actively monitored by the primary contractor for this project.

## **Village Gateways**

Minor adjustments to the village gateways are sadly still outstanding, along with other highways issues reported with limited progress and the Council is striving to work with Norfolk Highways on this and other matters that still require attention. However, on a positive note, the corner by McDonald's has recently been resurfaced eliminating several significant potholes and Norfolk Highways have helped to ensure that Anglia Water repaired the sunken manholes on Yarmouth Road.

## **Marty's Marsh**

Volunteer work parties continue to maintain and enhance the land; a warm 'thank you' from the Council for all their valuable work through challenging weather conditions.

The footbridge between Marty's Marsh and Cremer's Meadow was installed autumn 2024 in the main thanks to a grant from Broadland District Councils Green Infrastructure Fund and County

Councillor Andrew Proctor. In addition, the footpaths within Marty's Marsh have been improved. This is being enjoyed by many walkers between the two sites.

Friends of Marty's Marsh and Cremer's Meadow will be having a joint open day in June 2025.

The Council has also taken advantage of the Parish Partnership Scheme to upgrade the Public Right of Way between the Church and Marty's Marsh where the funds required are matched from Norfolk Highways.

As always, new volunteers would be very welcome to support the Friends of Marty's Marsh.

### **Other activities**

- Replacement and upgraded defibrillator installation (with help from Blofield United Youth Football Club at Heathlands), and at the Margaret Harker Hall site. The Council has also taken over responsibility for the monitoring and maintenance of the defibrillators at MHH and Heathlands.
- Further churchyard wall repairs have taken place.

### **Newsletter**

We continue to create and distribute, through various channels broadly 4 times a year, and we hope that the Parishioners find this a useful medium for being kept up to date on Council initiatives.

### **Acknowledgements**

Our thanks to our Dist. Cllr. Paul Newstead, who has recently joined Blofield Parish Council as a Councillor and our County Cllr. Andrew Proctor, both of whom continue to be extremely supportive.

I would also like to say **thank you** to **our** dedicated Parish Councillors who have worked on many different projects and issues over the year. Without their efforts things couldn't happen. (or 'progress'?)

Blofield Parish Council currently has four vacancies which we would like to fill with individuals from all voting generations.

Full training is offered and time commitments vary based on your own interests; there is one monthly meeting (except in August), but you can get involved in several or just one area of interest. For example, environmental issues, community engagement, speeding, allotments, planning or Blofield Park.

If we can fill these vacancies, we can together achieve even more for our community. Please come and join us at a parish council meeting or call to talk to one of the clerks or councillors. Please contact the clerk (Eleanor) by email at [clerk@blofield-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@blofield-pc.gov.uk) or by mobile on 07703 124544.

And finally, a big thank you also to our two Clerks who do an awful lot, often going over and above, do it to a high standard and keep us Councillors in check and on track. We are really fortunate to have such a good team.

## **4. BLOFIELD COURTHOUSE REPORT (prepared by Mike Coley and added to the minutes after the meeting)**

Over the last twelve months the Management Committee has continued to deliver and provide a facility to the Parish. Robin Bunce has served as Treasurer for the last 15 years and asked to relinquish the role. A search ensued to find a replacement. As expected this was not an easy task and took longer than I would have liked. Robin continued and was very patient during this time, however success ensued when a new resident to the village stepped forward and agreed to take on the role. In January the Committee welcomed Mike Bowyer, who would take over as treasurer in April. My thanks go to Robin for all his work as Treasurer. He will continue to work with the committee with particular responsibility for the Village Screen events. We are still looking

for volunteer to join the committee as Secretary. If anyone is interested in joining us and taking on this role I would welcome any approach.

The Courthouse remains to be a relatively well used venue. It regularly has users visit six out of seven days each week. That is not to say we cannot accommodate more users especially at weekends for parties etc.

In association with the Parish Council several workstreams have begun. A full drain survey has been conducted to understand rainwater and foul water system for the building. Further work may be required to address any issues highlighted by this survey. Work is due to start this summer on removing 'blown' plaster and decayed wood paneling in the entrance hall and Solicitors room. This is as a direct result of water damage generated by broken rainwater goods by the main entrance door.

Following work last year to complete a full flush of the heating system and installation of an in-line filter the heating in all rooms appears to be functioning well. A recent inspection by Gasway for our 'landlords' certification showed a positive outcome with no issues identified.

Our finances remain in good state to the degree we have been able to maintain a reserve fund invested in a high interest account. Village Screen has continued and is well attended. In fact our last showing of Conclave showed our best attendance since 2019 with 124 people enjoying the show. Our regular Jazz evenings have faced challenges in obtaining the service of groups to play. However we held an evening in March which was well attended and enjoyed by all.

Our regular users has been consistent with some new ones, including several Yoga and Pilates sessions each week. Plus two or three 'Ghosthunter' groups have visited the hall, some on multiple occasions, declaring success in their hunt and supplying photographic evidence of their findings.

In short, a year of challenges that members of the committee have risen to and managed to maintain a facility fit for all our users. To that I offer my thanks to all members and look forward to the coming year.

## **5. HEATHLANDS COMMUNITY CENTRE REPORT (prepared and read by Claire Norton)**

- 5.1. To start my report this year I am really pleased to say that we have new members joining our Committee. Firstly we have a new Treasurer in Karen Rose, Karen has been co-opted and taken over from Michael Davison. Also, Clare Hill, Clare Kempstead and Robert Taylor agreed to join our Committee and finally, at our recent AGM, Yvonne Burton volunteered to join us, all of which now brings us up to full strength.
- 5.2. Fundraising continues to be at the top of our list, as it has always been, but it becomes harder and harder each year to keep up with costs, which obviously keep rising. We are grateful to everyone who helps to put on events throughout the year and to name just a few, like Bingo, Tea & Chat, Open Garden, Christmas Fayre, Garage sales and of course the Jumble sales. That averages out at a function every 4 weeks, plus of course all the bookings Jill has in the diary, which hopefully gives you some idea of the huge effort that everyone puts in to make this happen.
- 5.3. The Social Club still remains as our "fund raising arm" and we could not survive without them. Fortunately they manage to pass over monies every quarter and we are extremely grateful to them for that.
- 5.4. Nippy Chippy continues to be on site most Fridays and this has been especially good in the summer months, when families come and have their tea outside and also enjoy a pint or two. The Pizza man and a Berger van both tried to start off in the winter months, which for outside caterers did not start off well, they have both decided to come back in the summer.
- 5.5. We now have a resident Brass band in our village, David Osborne, our caretaker, surprised us all last year by bringing his whole "orchestra" of about 25 people, singers and musicians to play for us which was absolutely splendid. David also arranged the first Tea Dance at Heathlands recently and he has also agreed to play at our VE & VJ Day celebrations, but of course that is going to cost us £300. We are still working with Hemblington Church to try and make this celebration a bit more of a memorable occasion.

- 5.6. Graham still runs the Lottery and Fiona Trimble has retired from running Pre- School, after a very long innings, but fortunately Pre School now has a new team, so it will still continue to function very much as before.
- 5.7. The Monday Luncheon Club has really taken off again this year. Jill and Sarah both do one each, every month and I understand it is a very enjoyable day.
- 5.8. Unfortunately, 2024 was a really difficult year with our relationship with the Parish Council. You may recall that they simply refused to give us the £5,000 we asked for, back in January last year, to help with extending our much-needed car park. The result of that action being that we missed out on receiving the match funding from Broadland District Council of £5,000, which meant we actually missed out on a total of £10,000. Hence, we had no option but to scale back our plans and reduce the overall size of the car park we had planned for. Now, a year on, and whilst the Parish Council have at last agreed to give us the £5,000 we are still battling to raise the other £5,000, as Broadland have no more money to give and it is proving really hard to try to overcome this disappointment.
- 5.9. However we did manage to build three quarters of the car park, which gives us another 30 spaces and we are still trying to raise the extra money to finish the scheme off. It was a very nice surprise that even Councillor Andrew Proctor has promised to give us some of his annual budget.
- 5.10. We really have no problem with the Parish Council wanting to build their new Hub, but we feel that Blofield Heath has been pushed aside, bearing in mind all Section 106 and CIL the money that the Parish Council has received from all the new developments, in both Blofield and Blofield Heath. To find out that they have even ring fenced all the money of over £160,000, from the Bennett Homes site in Blofield Heath, was really hard to take.
- 5.11. Personally, I have been really upset by the actions of the Parish Council and feel that they have become so entrenched with building their new Hub that they have, in my opinion, overlooked their duties towards the village of Blofield as a whole. I always understood that the objectives of "all" Parish Councils, is to look after the interests of the whole community that they represent and not blunder on completely disregarding the needs of others.
- 5.12. Moving on, Focal Point, or the future of Focal Point still remains a mystery, even with the "Final Issue" coming out only a few weeks ago with the Editor stating that he is retiring and no suggestion as to what the future will be, which was pretty disappointing.
- 5.13. Just for the records, Focal Point was started in the '70's by Heathlands, basically to promote events at Heathlands and Blofield Heath. It has been like that until very recently when it appears that the editor of Focal Point and the Parish Council may have got together and Focal Point became almost a Parish Council magazine.
- 5.14. To close my report I have to record our thanks to the Parish Council for continuing to fund some of our external works and my thanks also goes to all the members of our Committee. I cannot thank them enough for all their hard work throughout, what has been a particularly tough year, but as before, we carry on regardless.

**6. MARGARET HARKER HALL REPORT** *(prepared by the Chair, Sandra Baxter and read by Stuart Smith)*

I have completed almost a year in the role of chair at the hall. The challenges and demands on my time have by far exceeded my expectations and I have decided I cannot continue past the AGM on Thursday 15th May 2025. I will step down as chair and also as a trustee. Stephen Hall, who is in charge of maintenance has also advised me he is resigning. There has been far too much work for one person, and he is unable to continue. That will leave the hall with just two trustees.

So that you are more fully aware of our situation following our recent meeting, I have set out below a number of issues we are facing regarding the hall and the grounds.

The past year has been extremely challenging for the trustees. Numerous unsuccessful requests for help from the public mean we are currently running at an absolute minimum, without a Treasurer, Vice-Chair or Secretary. The Trustees consist of myself, a football club representative, a badminton club representative and a parishioner who joined last year to fulfil the maintenance role. We are supported by our bookings secretary and a member of BroadBeat Choir and Sarah Dhesi from the Parish Council.

Since February, our bookings secretary, despite not being a trustee, has kept the hall running by standing in as temporary Treasurer. As she is not a trustee, and has no desire to become one,

she cannot access all parts of the banking and invoicing systems. Therefore, in my role as Chair I am also fulfilling the parts of the role that she cannot. We have one other person who can authorise payments raised. Someone had recently come forward to potentially take on the role, however, we have just discovered she is due to have a baby next week and she has withdrawn her interest.

I recently held a meeting which I had asked hirers and leaseholders to attend, hoping to gain their support. Unfortunately, whilst they were sympathetic to our situation, no-one was willing to become a trustee. It was suggested by a couple of attendees that we employ a management company.

The EDP picked up one of our posts on Facebook and around 8 people contacted me. I have emailed them all, inviting them to a meeting at the hall on Thursday 27th May to discuss what help is needed and how they can provide it. I have advised them they will need to become trustees. One person has advised me they are coming along, although they will have to bring their 8-year-old child. Another cannot make Thursday evenings, so maybe a change of time is needed for future meetings. I have contacted CIM in Rackheath and requested a quote for a banner to hang on the railings at the hall. There has been much discussion around how to inform the villagers of our situation, especially those who do not have access to the internet, my plan is for the banner to gain their attention and reach as many as possible through word of mouth. I'm hoping it will become a talking point.

In December last year the preschool reported mice in the hall and they had to close temporarily. We immediately engaged the services of a pest control company who were able to attend the same day. Unfortunately, the situation got worse before it improved as rats were also getting in under the stage, in the kitchen and the room behind the stage. The preschool experienced loss of earnings as well as damage to a lot of equipment which had to be thrown away. We now have an ongoing pest control programme with AAA Pest Control, a local company. The preschool hasn't reported any vermin for a number of weeks. Barry Murphy also attached a fine mesh over the air bricks to stop them from entering.

We were shocked to learn the new trampoline had been vandalised last year. We took several steps to stop anyone from using it whilst we waited for a new mat, but people removed signs asking them to keep off. It has now been replaced and we made a claim on our insurance. The cost of the new mat was over £2,600 and it has since broken. As it is under warranty Eibe are repairing it. We have identified this could be a very costly piece of equipment going forward. One of our leaseholders, the tennis club, continues to give us concerns regarding the problems they cause the neighbours. It has been reported that when one of the courts was changed to a hard court, it was moved closer to the hedge. It has also been reported that the base of the hedge was cut away during the works. The trustees are meeting with some of the neighbours in the next couple of weeks to discuss their concerns and see the situation for themselves. The tennis club has been asked if they could move a bench which they situated at the side of the court next to neighbours' gardens. They said there was no other place for it and it was only used by players to put their bags etc on it. A neighbour has complained that tennis players regularly sit on the bench to chat for large amounts of time. On many occasions this has prevented them from sitting in their own garden due to a lack of privacy and the noise of the conversation from people sitting on the bench.

The tennis club is planning to re-cover court 5 in the summer, this is already a hard court. The committee is concerned because of the amount of damage caused to the playing field last time by the heavy machinery accessing the court. I have written to the tennis club advising them contractors will need to use crawling boards to protect the ground. I believe they were asked to do this last time but didn't. They need the committee's agreement to gain access across the field, I do not believe there should be any damage in the process.

There is an ongoing 'feud' between the tennis club and the immediate neighbours. Both have suggested a willingness to join the committee, although not to become trustees. I have advised the neighbour that due to their conflict of interest it would most probably not be possible for them to act impartially.

The hedge that runs down the side of the tennis courts continues to be a bone of contention with the neighbours and also the tennis club. We had it cut last year in the autumn but unfortunately Garden Guardian cut it far too short. There are also areas where there are large holes, causing loss of privacy to the neighbours. We have purchased trees for one of the neighbours to fill the

gaps and we are engaging the help of someone to plant them. However, he has advised this has been made difficult as the earth at the base of the hedge was cut away when the court was laid. The tennis club complains that the hedge isn't cut regularly enough, and they cannot retrieve the balls that fall between the fence and the hedge. One of the neighbours has reported to me that each year over 100 tennis balls land in her garden, often hitting her house.

The tennis club have requested that the old metal football posts close to the courts be removed, as children use them as goal posts and the footballs land in the tennis courts. The children lift the bottom of the fencing to retrieve their ball, damaging the fence in the process. The football club would like the posts to stay, they feel it would be dangerous for them to be moved closer to the road, and be a nuisance if they were closer to the neighbours.

The fabric of the hall is deteriorating. We are hoping to put together a programme of work needed, but again that task will fall to a couple of people. It is incredibly time consuming to identify what is needed, contact trades, arrange to meet them, consider their quotes, relay information to the committee, advise trades to go ahead and then oversee the work.

The roof is leaking in a number of areas, the walls of the disabled toilet area are peeling and covered in mould due to damp. However, we do have a decorator going in just after Easter. It was felt the damp was caused by rainwater running into the air bricks and collecting against the wall underneath the toilet. We had sixteen gulleys built around the air bricks, Barry Murphy recently tested the toilet wall with a damp meter and it seems to have solved the problem. The double doors in the hall are ill-fitting with single glazing, which contribute to our large heating bills. The tiles on the roof contain asbestos and the cost of a new roof is thought to be around £100,000. Some curtains in the hall are torn and unsightly and are unappealing when showing around prospective hirers. The stage is very high and this is where the chairs are stored. I know from my own experience it is very difficult to get the chairs down and up again. I had expressed to my choir I would need to change locations as I cannot continue because of it. I now have a group who come early to help me with them, but I also know the gardening club struggle with them too. The preschool has reported a number of problems with the hall; they also feel the floor needs sanding. This is potentially a huge and costly job. The preschool advised me of their wish to find another location. This would create a huge hole in our finances, and unless there was a significant increase of hirers, the hall would not be financially viable. Despite all of the above the hall is used by many community groups; because of its tall ceiling the hall is especially popular with badminton groups.

I am currently working with Maria to produce a document for future trustees, detailing each role, its responsibilities and jobs that need to be undertaken. For example, our maintenance plan was out of date, and no-one was particularly aware of its contents or sure whose responsibility it was. Maria has updated it, not only are we looking at dates and costs, but we are listing trades-people we have previously used, with contact details. Our aim is for the trustees to have a manual to help them run the hall and to know and understand what is needed.

We have spent the past year 'fire-fighting', and as a committee we felt there were too few of us to arrange any events. The hall cannot continue with so few people, even with the minimum quorum there's too much for them to do. As an example, every day I receive emails that need my attention, I regularly receive over 20 emails in a day and I'm often responding to them in the early hours of the morning. There's no-one else to ask for help, we are spread far too thin. The vital roles of Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary will currently be unfilled if no-one comes forward at the AGM. In my opinion all these roles need filling to enable the hall and its trustees to function.

It's a gloomy picture but I do hope the hall is able to continue.

## **7. BLOFIELD ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION REPORT** *(provided by Max Stephenson, read out by Richard Codling)*

As at 20 March 2025, there is just one quarter allotment plot vacant on the site, and there is currently one person on the waiting list for a larger plot. The plots occupied by National Highways are still needed, until the A47 improvement scheme has been completed.

- During the year April 2024 – March 2025, seven changes of tenancy took place.
- When vacancies do arise and there is nobody on the waiting list, an advertisement is usually placed in Focal Point by the Plot Manager or Parish Council. However, as publication of this now seems to have ended, we will need to find a new advertising medium.

- Informal working parties were arranged, when necessary, to carry out general maintenance on the allotment site, including hedge cutting, grass cutting and strimming. This helps to keep the site in a tidy and safe condition.
- The pest control contract set up by the Parish Council in 2024 has now entered its second year, and problems with rats and mice have considerably reduced. Plot holders are also encouraged to keep their plots tidy, to minimise possible nesting areas.
- Meetings and follow up communications have taken place between the Parish Council, National Highways, Galliford Try, the Landowners and the BAA Plot Manager, to try and minimise any adverse effects of the ongoing A47 scheme. The diversion of the gas main by Cadent (which crossed land that used to be allotments) was achieved with minimal disruption. The Plot Manager has kept allotment holders updated via e-mails on any A47 construction scheme related topics.
- Our summerhouse (called The Hive) is proving to be very popular and useful. We hold liaison meetings there with the Parish Council during the warmer months, as well as Allotment Committee meetings. It is also well used by plot holders, either for lunch or simply as somewhere to meet and chat. We are looking to expand its use, to perhaps include short “knowledge exchange” sessions on topics such as pruning fruit trees, and alternative growing methods. We may also have a summer barbecue for plot holders on The Hive plot, if there is enough interest.
- The BAA Secretary has prepared copies of our newsletter “The Grapevine” and circulated these to plot holders throughout the year.
- BAA Treasurers Report: This last year has seen an increase in costs of water, insurance and membership of the national allotment association. However, due to forward planning and raising of funds through the King's discounted seed scheme there will be no increase in costs for members this coming year. Members will pay £14 per full size plot for water and £8 for association membership. Full accounts will be available at the next allotment AGM.

## 8. **FOOTPATH WARDEN REPORT** *(prepared and read by Yvonne Burton)*

The annual footpath walks took place in Blofield and Blofield Heath in June last year at which time no problems were reported.

FP1 from Bonds Road across the field to Ranworth Rd; the field had been recently ploughed and was wet and muddy, but apart from that there were no issues to report.

FP2 from Blofield Corner Road to Hall Rd. No issues to report.

FP3 from Shack Lane to Holly Lane was cleared by the Footpath Wardens in the autumn and is now in good condition around the property known as Woodlands Manor (formerly The Red House). When leaving the property to cross the open field (recently ploughed), the footpath sign across the field on Holly Lane is not visible, also there is no indication where to turn from the field when approaching from Holly Lane towards Shack Lane. This was again reported to NCC Highways, but no action was considered necessary. Consequently, you have to be shown where the footpath goes to be able to use it.

FP4 parallel to A47 is clear having been cut by NCC highways and the growth is low at this time of year but can become overgrown in summer.

FP4a from Bullacebush Lane to the A47, goes across a field, but is closed where it meets the A47, so goes to nowhere. There is just a footpath sign pointing across the field.

FP 5 & 7, which cross the Hopkins Homes development are now tarmacked. The stile giving access to cross the A47 bypass had been cleared of undergrowth by persons unknown, however it is some distance from the children's playground and masked by double fencing. Crossing the A47 is not recommended, due to the speed of traffic there and we have previously raised the issue of children getting access to the dual carriageway.

FP7a from Shack Lane is passable with difficulty due to undergrowth. This is where FP7 meets the stile at the A47 on the south side and you could cross the A47, but it would not be advisable as already mentioned.

FP8, which runs Parallel to Garden Road, from The Street to Globe Lane in Blofield, is easily walked and is cut twice a year as needed, is little used, but should be walked to keep it open. The footpath opening is opposite the Post Office, recessed beside a drive.

FP10 Church Alley path between The Street and Yarmouth Road and then continues across the road, beside the Recreation Ground to Blofield Church, is clear.



FP12 opposite FP10 on Church Road goes through the Churchyard and on to Braydeston Church, with the entrance to Marty's Marsh on the right. The part between the entrance to Marty's Marsh and the bridge is much improved, due to work by Norfolk Highways as part of Parish Partnership bid. This footpath is much used and very pleasant.

BOAT1 (Byway Open to All Traffic) at the end of Pound Lane is easily walked but narrow, only suitable for walkers, again can become overgrown in summer.

Annual Footpath Walks will be arranged for June 2025, all are welcome, dates to be confirmed. Please come along.

#### **9. KEEP BLOFIELD SPECIAL REPORT** *(update from David Pilch)*

David Pilch reported that around 8 volunteers meet regularly to litter pick within the parish, the worse culprit is McDonald's litter. The group worked hard to plant hundreds of daffodil bulbs across the parish in the autumn and these are now beginning to flower.

#### **10. TREE WARDENS REPORT** *(prepared and read by Richard Codling)*

This past year the tree wardens have been involved in a number of activities in the parish. Working under the Umbrella of the Broadland tree warden network and liaising with Mark Symonds tree officer at Broadland district council.

During the growing season, they carried out a number of monitoring visits to the Wyngates trees and mini orchard that were planted in 2023. Stakes and guards were checked and any remedial work carried out.

In front of Blofield surgery tree wardens replaced two dead trees with two new Whitebeam trees which will need regular checks on their growth.

In February pruning work was carried out on some overhanging branches at the southern edge of Blofield churchyard. This will help prevent any damage to the old headstones. Brushwood was placed in small heaps to encourage habitat for small mammals.

The tree wardens attended the Broadland tree warden network AGM where they shared experiences with other tree wardens in the network.

Some great news to finish on. An owl box that was installed in a dead ash tree on Marty's Marsh now has new occupants in the form of Mr and Mrs Barn Owl.

In addition, Wyngates Area 3 trees require some replacement trees as some have been lost over the winter. David Pilch also requested that more conservation is considered for parts of the Wyngates Area 3 site making it a more attractive site.

#### **11. BLOFIELD ORCHARD CONSERVATION GROUP REPORT** *(prepared and read by Richard Codling)*

The orchard celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary and already some trees are maturing into their desired shape and vigour. We have squeezed in another 4 trees this year. There are now about 80 trees in the orchard and all are doing well.

Every Tuesday throughout the year we've met for a working party, volunteers have been pruning, scything the grass, painting sheds, hedge cutting, weeding around the trees, fencing repairs, maintaining the resident bee hives and of course harvesting the fruit.

The harvest this year was plentiful and there was enough to supply the egg shed farm shop at South Burlingham.

We had our annual apple day at the Shoulder of Mutton pub in late October which was well attended. Money raised from the sale of apples goes towards paying our annual rent to the council.

The apple group have received a BCS scythe machine donated by Acle lands trust who we are planning to make a cash donation once repairs are undertaken. This machine will be a godsend when we need to cut the orchard ley in the autumn.

There are currently 8 active honeybee hives and 2 mason bee nests in the orchard, these will help with pollinating the blossom. We continue to sow wildflower seeds and plant plug plants into the ley.

If anyone wishes to visit the orchard or join our volunteer group, please ring Richard Codling via the parish clerks.

## **12. BLOFIELD FUEL CHARITY REPORT** *(prepared and read by Sarah Russen)*

Good Evening Everyone, here is the Annual Report for the Blofield Fuel Charity.

This Charity was set up originally for the people of Blofield and Blofield Heath, who were poor and in need, according to the original documentation, which was set up in 1800`s. They were allowed a bag of coal for their heating, but now this has all changed. The applicants are allowed to put their money towards any form of heating they now have.

We own approximately 37 acres of agricultural land in Blofield Heath, which is split between two farmers, who pay rent for this land twice yearly. We also have an income from Eastern Power Network plc. for the pylons that cross our land. This is our main income.

The Charity is made up of 5 Trustees, who are local parishioners, appointed by the Parish Council, and a Clerk, who helps administer the income.

The Charity stipulates that the applicants must only receive the State pension and Pension Credits and have lived in the parish for 7 years or more. They can apply to the Charity by October of each year, by getting an application form from the local shops and returning it to myself for correlation. The trustees meet twice / three times a year to discuss the applications and agree an amount of money we give to each applicant. This depends on whether or not they are a single person and a married couple.

This year our finances remain good, and therefore we were able to give a single person £75.00 and £60.00 for a married couple. We had 40 applicants this year but with increase of household costs, we are expecting more parishioners applying next year.

The Charity is aware how grateful the parishioners are in receiving this money.

The Trustees would like to say `Thank You` to the Parish Council for their continued support.

This brings me to the end of my report for 2024-2025.

## **13. BLOFIELD RELIEF IN NEED CHARITY / REVE EDUCATION FOUNDATION REPORT** *(prepared by Debbie Smith and read by Stuart Smith)*

The Trustees of The Reve Educational Foundation and Blofield Relief-In-Need Charity were pleased to be able to make two grants over the past year.

These included one for educational purposes of £500 to Blofield Primary School for the purchase of play equipment for the new school and one to the Acle Food Bank of £100 towards Christmas food/presents etc. for Blofield families who are assisted by the Food Bank.

## **14. BLOFIELD CHURCH REPORT** *(prepared by Yvonne Mack, read by Stuart Smith)*

Blofield church continues to have two regular weekly services. These services are a combination of eucharistic and non-eucharistic services. These have continued after the retirement of Revd. Kevin Billson at the end of September. The services and all of the funerals have been led by our retired clergy and Revd. Sue Shillam.

The annual service of remembrance on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November was held in the graveyard by the war memorial and continued in the Church with the uniformed groups in attendance.

‘Open doors’ has continued throughout the year, providing a two-course meal for those who are alone. It takes place on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month. This is run by church volunteers and is much appreciated by those who attend. The Wednesday café meets every week after the service (10.15 - Midday) and is visited regularly by members of the community, walkers and those seeking friendship. We have links with Social Prescribers from Blofield Surgery who direct people to us.

The regular weekly Play Church, takes place every Wednesday during term time and continues to be very popular with parents, grandparents and carers.

Regular services are taken to Manor House and Brewster Court and a team of befrienders, visit individual people in the care home on a regular basis.

We support many charities, Hand in Hand in Zimbabwe, Vidiyal Trust in Southern India, DEC, Trussell Foodbank in Norwich and Great Yarmouth and various other local charities during the year.

The church was able to meet its financial contribution to the diocese for mission and ministry in full last year, thanks to the generous giving by the congregation and local community support of fund-raising events.

We look forward to welcoming a new full time and a part time priest in the near future for our enlarged Benefice of Blofield and Broadside.

#### **15. MARTY'S MARSH REPORT** *(prepared and read by Yvonne Burton)*

2024 was a big year for Marty's Marsh and Cremer's Meadow because the bridge between the two sites was constructed. This was the culmination of many years' work, complying with Planning Regulations, Environment Agency requirements, water vole surveys and numerous other matters.

The result is a wonderful bridge which looks at home in the location and is used daily by many walkers, especially with dogs, please note that they must be kept on leads. People remark on how much like being able to walk from one site to the next, every time I am there.

Many thanks therefore go to Paul George of the Norfolk Drainage Board, Helen Sibley - Broadland DC's Green Infrastructure Officer, Andrew Proctor and many other people who helped to make this possible.

Garden Guardian mow the paths and grassy areas monthly during the spring and summer, which helps keep the site under control.

The 'Friends of Marty's Marsh' continue to have work parties on the second Saturday of the month. All are welcome to join us. Work carried out:

- Spread chippings on the path between the main gate and the Church path PROW, several times as the winter was very wet, to try and keep it in a reasonable state. In the future we hope to get funding from a Parish Partnership bid to get a better surface put down.
- Kept the paths free of brambles and nettles.
- A weir was built to maintain the level of water in the Conservation Area Meadow and keep the flow to the Run clear, to allow drainage.
- Made a new path down a view point, where you can see Braydeston Church.
- Surveys of Flora and Fauna have been carried out and 1000 species have been identified.
- Planted trees.
- And many other tasks.

The conservation area was cut in March and September 2024, thanks to BVCG and BADCOG, which should encourage the growth of wildflowers, as it reduces nutrients.

We plan a joint event with Cremer's Meadow on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2025, when the Orchids will be in flower on their water meadow. Please put the date in your diary.

#### **16. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT - Broadland District Council** *(prepared by Paul Newstead and read by Sarah Osbaldeston)*

As well as the ongoing delivery of services to our parishes within Broadland, the District Council has focused on the following areas over the last two months:

- Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation
- Ecology within the District
- Planning Revisions
- Clarification of Council policies

##### Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

The Government has announced a short-term plan to reorganise Local Government, and at the same time instigate a process of devolution to simplify delivery of local services and control of budgets within our area.

The intention is to reduce the number of local authorities across Norfolk and Suffolk and replace them with a small number of Unitary Authorities headed by an elected leader.

Councils (District, County and Norwich City) have been asked to submit initial proposals to Government by the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 2025, selecting from a choice of 1, 2 or 3 unitary bodies.

Broadland District Council has opted to propose 3 unitary bodies (based on a vote of 22 for and 19 against), while Norfolk County Council have opted for 1 unitary body and South Norfolk have opted for 2. Clearly much further research is needed to arrive at a consensus.

A program of public consultation will follow in the near future, and a final submission to Government by the Councils is due on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 2025.

### Ecology

Broadland District Council is the lowest carbon emitter in Norfolk, and since 2020 has planted 120,000 trees.

The Climate Change, Environment and Biodiversity delivery plan has six core objectives for the period 2025 to 2028:

1. Net Zero 2030 Council by 2030
2. Net Zero Broadland District by 2050 focusing on sustainable transport and community engagement.
3. Protect and Enhance the Environment by improving air quality, tackling fly-tipping and enhancing water management to protect public health and preserve ecological systems.
4. Waste and Recycling initiatives to reduce waste, increase recycling rates and promote reuse in alignment with the targets set by the Environment Act 2021.
5. Biodiversity, Nature Recovery and Green Infrastructure by tree planting, improving green spaces to restore biodiversity and support natural habitats.
6. Empowering Communities: Educating and engaging residents, businesses and organisations to lead climate action through training programmes, community events and practical resources.

### Planning Revisions

Detailed policies have been adopted for Custom and Self-build Housing, allowing small developments to progress in line with Greater Norwich Local Plan policies 5 and 7.5 with more flexible planning conditions.

### Clarification of Council Policies

Broadland District Council policies covering Rechargeable Repairs to Council-provided accommodation, and the provision of Council Tax assistance have been revised and clarified to provide improved support to residents.

Finally, much work has gone into setting the budgets and Council Tax levels for the next year. Broadland District Council has seen a marked increase in costs. This is particularly true for the provision of homelessness support, which has risen from £198,750 in 2024 to £810,644 in 2025. Despite this, the District Council has not increased Band D Council Tax for the year 2025/26.

**17. COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT** (*prepared by Andrew Proctor and available for the public*). See Appendix A.

**18. TO HEAR AND DISCUSS ANY MATTERS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

- 18.1. Damage to the Lingwood Road bank/verges was raised due the ongoing speeding/cut through along this road.
- 18.2. Please can the Flying Scotsman vans be raised as a safety issue to pedestrians crossing the Yarmouth Road along the footpaths.
- 18.3. The bench on Blofield Corner Road was raised and the council confirmed that they are continuing to try and find a suitable location along this road.

**19. CLOSING COMMENTS**

Stuart Smith thanked everyone for coming and for their hard work within the parish this year.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9:00pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....