

DATCHET PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING:
29 April 2021

AGENDA ITEM: 5.g. Events

Report to Council

Dated: April 2021

Subject: Events - Lead Members Report

Report prepared by: Cllr Allen Corcoran

Reason for report: Annual Report

Datchet Post Office

Background: After the Coronavirus lock-down halted the original Outreach Post Office sited in St Mary's Church Community Hall, it was re-located to the W.I Hall in September 2020.

A request was made to the DPC to pay for the hall hire for the hours of opening and, after undertaking a local survey to verify local need (for DPC auditors), Council agreed the request. Unfortunately, shortly after opening, we entered our second lock-down.

In April 2021, following problems with equipment and technical issues, the PO again began operating and is open each Tuesday morning in the W.I. Hall 8.30am to 12.30pm.

In the search for a permanent PO site, unfortunately PO Ltd requires a large payment to secure a counter into one of our local shops which adds increased difficulty to the task.

Santa's Christmas Sleigh Ride

Background: In the lead up to Christmas in 2020, Datchet Parish Council and RBWM Safety Advisory Group agreed to allow a socially-distanced Santa's Christmas Sleigh Ride on 23 December. Two horses pulling a decorated carriage were to transport two singing elves and Santa Claus on an approved route through Datchet village. It was timetabled to stop at strategic points around the village for the elves to sing Christmas carols and Santa to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas. However, as we are all aware, the rapid increase of Coronavirus restrictions from Tier 2 to Tier 3 to Tier 4 in a short space of time, resulted in the cancellation of Santa's Sleigh Ride. Anticipation of the event seemed to create a feel-good factor, with a good response on Datchet Eye, and a general air of excitement particularly among families with young children. Although it was disappointing, residents accepted the cancellation as a necessary outcome of the increased restrictions. The horse & carriage company, Santa and the singing elves were also disappointed not to be able to do the event but they are keen to be involved in future events and very interested to do a Santa's Sleigh Ride next Christmas.

Christmas Window Decoration Competition

Background: One of the few Covid-safe events that was able to take place leading up to Christmas, was the competition for the best-dressed Christmas window display. Local judges delivered their final choices on Tuesday 22 December and the winners were announced on Datchet Eye. First prize of a day's boat hire supplied by Kris Cruisers and a bottle of Champagne from WVL went to Flowerz. Two runner-up prizes of a bottle of Champagne each from WVL went to The Bridge Café and Nibbles. It is hoped this becomes an annual addition to events for Christmas

Christmas on The Green

Background: Datchet's annual event on Memorial Green to celebrate lighting of our Christmas Tree in 2020 was also cancelled. We can only look forward to Christmas 2021 in the hope restrictions have lifted enough to enable a low-key event.

The Ellis Journey, 2020 & 2021

Background: Following a successful event in 2019, 2020 was to be a fitting 125th celebration of this historic Journey to Datchet first made in 1895 by Datchet resident, Evelyn Ellis in his Panhard-Levassor motor vehicle – the first vehicle imported into Britain, and the first recorded journey. There are two sections to this event, the journey itself, organised by Lawrie Smith of The Ellis Journey, and the welcome party in Datchet, organised locally for residents, local groups and businesses to get involved and celebrate our local heritage.

Before detailed plans were completed for the 2020 event, the pandemic forced cancellation and the 125th party celebrations were put on hold, awaiting a 125+1 celebration event in 2021. Unfortunately this year's event has also run into trouble. We are not allowed to hold the event on The Green and The Cut because the Horse Show, Dog Show and M4 closure were all scheduled for the same weekend. I have asked the Highways team for assistance in investigating ways to reduce congestion and traffic through the village so that this does not prevent future events on The Green.

DPC voted to allow the event to be held on the Sabatini Land. This also met with the approval of RBWM's Safety Advisory Group. Lead for Grounds, Cllr Ian Thompson, then had this decision overturned and the event is currently without a reception venue. A number of councillors are also insisting that this is not a Datchet event, despite the Ellis Journey being one of Datchet's few claims to fame.

Due to this and other interventions, I have stepped back. Organisation of the event has been handed to Cllr Thompson.

At this moment, it seems unlikely that there will be a welcome for the veteran vehicles, as in 2019, for residents to enjoy, or any type of celebration to help promote local businesses and local groups. This is extremely sad and disappointing. It would have been a fantastic opportunity to help build community morale and spirits as we emerge from the lockdown. I fear the lack of a welcome for the veteran cars will result in the loss of this event for Datchet.

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

In addition to events over the period between 2020 to early 2021, a council Environmental Awareness Working Group (EA Group), was formed to enable environmental issues to be explored. It is intended to work in conjunction with the Borough's own Environment and Climate Strategy Plan, and Cycling Action Plan 2018 – 2028.

Following is a summary of the EA Group's work over the last year.

Environmental Awareness Working Group (EA Group)

Background: This group was set up by Cllrs Corcoran, Bacon and Hough to inform local residents about our environment, encourage ideas for projects, events and ways to reduce our carbon footprint. It was quickly realised many projects would need to be done in collaboration with Grounds, Properties and Highways so a short list has been produced dividing potential projects between the three areas of joint-responsibility.

Activities suggested include investigating solar panel and battery storage systems for the village hall, planting of trees to aid sustainability and celebrate 125 years of the council, improved cycling and cycle parking, 20 mph speed limits through the village centre, electric vehicle

charging points, train platform extension to reduce traffic delays, motorway signage to avoid Datchet being used as a cut-through to Windsor, traffic width and weight restrictions, no idling signs, even a one-way system to reduce congestion and improve air quality.

As with all events over the past year, our plans have been severely affected by the Coronavirus pandemic and much of the work started by the EA Group is yet to see completion. We will however, work towards collaborating with other areas of responsibility in our council to begin to fulfil these important issues.

EA Group Survey:

As a final addition to the year, council agreed for the distribution and promotion of an Environmental Awareness Survey which was placed on Datchet Eye, Datchet Matters and Wild about Datchet Facebook pages as well as being printed in The Link magazine.

The idea was to find out what residents would like to see improved in our local environment.

The responses, encouragingly, were in line with the EA Group's listed projects mentioned above, and included ideas and improvements covering many aspects of the village. The results of the survey will be circulated to all DPC councillors and also made public. The intention is to propose actions and projects for inclusion onto the Strategic Plan (wish-list).

Finally...

The EA Group and Events team are always keen to hear residents' ideas, suggestions or accept volunteers to help carry out these important aspects of village life so please feel free to contact me at: cllr.acorcoran@datchetparishcouncil.gov.uk and I will be pleased to hear from you.

Cllr Allen Corcoran