

Report to

Nether Stowey Parish Council

From

Friends of Nether Stowey School

Grant Funding Update

On behalf of Friends of Nether Stowey School we would like to thank Nether Stowey Parish Council for their funding grant towards purchasing new play equipment for the school playing field.

We are currently in discussions with various suppliers about what equipment options are available to us.

We currently have £10,000 to date to spend on the activity trail but are looking at maybe delaying at present to see how much funds we raise at the combined Party in Park with the Summer fete to boost our funds so that we can purchase extra items.

We have been given a new supplier contact from a member of the parish council, so we have a meeting scheduled next Thursday.

We hope to have everything finalised before we break for Summer and so we commence the work over the summer holidays ready for September 2024.

We will aim to share photos with you once the installation is complete.

Thank you

Gemma Atherton

On behalf of Friends of Nether Stowey School.

Nether Stowey Art Group Annual Report April 2024

Nether Stowey Art Group (NSAG) has been active in its present format for over two years following a start-up grant from the Parish Council and continues to thrive. The NSAG meets on the first and third Thursday of the month between 2.00-4.00pm in St Mary's church hall. We currently have 14 active members drawn mainly from Nether Stowey but also some surrounding villages including Spaxton and Cannington. NSAG offers people the opportunity to 'do their own thing' in a diverse range of media such as oil, pastel, wax and watercolour. The sessions are run on an informal basis so that members of whatever experience-level and background can share their love of art in a relaxed atmosphere. New members are always welcome and should contact Rob Potter (contact details: robertopotter@gmail.com and mobile 07855546883). RJP





Nether Stowey CE VC Primary School

Dear Nether Stowey Parish Council,

I am writing with an update of our recent grant for computing equipment.

First of all, I would like to thank you for agreeing to support this project as without this it really wouldn't be possible.

What's happened since the meeting?

I have followed up the lead at county council and received 6 laptops that can be enrolled on our system. These were picked up over Easter and have been checked over by our technician. The next step is to enrol them.

I have also received the class set of 30 micro-bits from the BBC, which will be a fantastic resource of not only our coding club but also the curriculum.

I have also been in contact with Hinkley Point. They have responded saying there is potential grant money available however I need to investigate this in more detail as there were certain requirements that had to be met. I haven't had time to go through this application in detail yet.

We are planning on asking the Church to help us with another area of the school so I haven't asked them for any funding towards this.

What have we managed to do with the grant so far?

We have not purchased anything yet but our aim is to have the coding club up and running for the new school year in September. We could possibly have a taster session in Summer 2 but this is only if we have everything in place.

Using your grant, we will be able to purchase 6 new Chromebooks which will help us create a coding club for 6-12 children with new reliable equipment. This will help them develop their computing skills and support parents who need afterschool childcare.

Please feel free to contact the school if you would like to discuss this further.

Mike Bryant

Report from Nether Stowey and Fiddington WI

We had a very busy year last year, with four big events starting with the coronation celebration in May where we had a party enjoyed by all our members celebrating the Kings Coronation.

In September there was the group meeting with other WIs around the area, for this we had a very good speaker talking on the subject of penguins (entitled mission penguin). This was about an adventure trying to go to all the places in the world where there are penguins. There are about 17 different types of penguin.

In November it was our hundredth birthday party, where we had a very nice buffet from outside catering, and a sea chanty group called the barnacle boys who entertained us.

At Christmas we did a Christmas celebration with the other WIs from the area, singing carols and reading Christmas poems, this was enjoyed by all.

We had a very successful Soup and Pud fundraising event, and a trip to Sidmouth, which we hope to do again this year.

There were many interesting speakers, throughout the year, from wildlife along the Somerset coastline, the RSPCA, street pastors, and we have some interesting talks coming up, 1st Bridgwater surgeon, a talk about the Quantocks, and life as a court usher.

We meet on the second Thursday of the month at the church centre, at 2-4 pm and welcome anyone, who would like to come along as a visitor or to join us.

Thankyou

Anne Conway (president)

Nether Stowey Village Hall and Recreation Ground CIO Annual Report 2024

The charity manages and maintains the recreation ground and its clubhouse, park, MUGA and football pitches with support from the playing field committee, Nether Stowey Football Club, and Stowey Green Spaces.

The charity would like to thank the Parish Council for their ongoing support and for a grant to provide safety matting for the top and bottom of the slide in the children's play park.

The Nether Stowey FC continue to be our largest user group and have been working in partnership with the charity and the Football Association to improve the football pitch condition.

The new Stowey Centre project has a full planning application (number 36/21/00030) with Somerset Council and are awaiting approval from ecologists after submission of a report to mitigate the loss of bat habitation.

The old village hall on Lime Street has an outline planning permission application (number 36/23/0008) for 4 affordable dwellings which requires a bat survey to be completed during May 2024. The sale of the old village hall site will be used as match funding for the new Stowey Centre on the recreation ground which will provide parking, kitchen, bar, function room with stage, serving hatch, small multipurpose room, and Football Association standard changing rooms.

Important Dates;

AGM - Thursday 6th June 2024 - 7.30pm Venue TBC

School Summer Fair Meets Party in the Park Saturday 6th July 2024

Wednesday Club Annual Report 2023 – 2024 for NS PC Meeting

As usual this past year for the Wednesday Club has been a busy and interesting year. I am pleased to report that our numbers are back to pre-pandemic levels and therefore it will be necessary to start a waiting list for any prospective new members.

Meetings are held weekly during term time, from 10am until 2pm and NS school kitchen provide a wonderful, cooked lunch, the menu is varied and of very high quality and members really appreciate the scrumptious food they enjoy, week by week.

We have a total of 18 volunteers, who each cover either a weekly session, or providing transport for members, this includes 2 members in a leadership role who each cover 2 sessions a month. We have a total of 14 members, although often one or other members are missing due to medical appointments, illness, or waiting at home to receive deliveries or trades people,

During our lively weekly meetings, we invite guest speakers, or workshop leaders, we also play tabletop games, do chair exercises, or take part in quizzes or wordsearches. Most terms we hold an Auction of Gifts, as a fund raiser and to enable members to recycle unwanted gifts or Bric a Brac, plus holding a monthly raffle.

In March we received a grant from Homes in Somerset for £500.00, which will help cover costs of speakers and sessions like our forth coming music session, which members enjoy from time to time.

From time to time, we take members on an outing for shopping to Monkton Elm, or Sanders Garden World, with a hot lunch together and usually have a cream tea outing, once the weather warms up, although there is no guarantee that it will be warm or dry enough to sit outside.

All our members live alone and have varying degrees of disability, isolation, or loneliness, so Wednesday Club provides a focus to their week and somewhere to make new friends and catch up with old acquaintances.

We find members are hugely supportive of each other and miss friends when they are no longer able to attend, however many continue keep in contact by phone, which provides an ongoing support network for those who have become more isolated.

At the present time we are looking for a new Secretary, as none of the current volunteers feel able to take up this role. We could also do with 2 more lunch time volunteers who are on duty from 11.45 – 2pm and help with serving lunches and clearing away afterwards. If you are interested in finding out more about either post please contact Maggie Harrison on 01278 732532, or by emailing, nmharrison230@btinternet.com or Barbara Beer 01278 732412.

May 2024:



Stowey Gardeners is a vibrant club based in Nether Stowey drawing members from all around the Quantock area.

We meet on the 3rd Thursday each month at 7.30 in St Mary's Church Centre to enjoy a guest speaker, raffle, garden table, tea, coffee and homemade cake and exchange knowledge and information on a huge range of topics.

The aim of the club is to offer all gardeners, whatever their particular enthusiasm, a chance to get together with other gardeners in the locality, to their joint advantage and mutual interest.

We have a full programme of meetings and have enjoyed a range of speakers on subjects from 'Roses' to 'Care and Management of Trees and Shrubs' to 'Garden Design' in the last few months. We have included many garden visits in our programme, and have enjoyed exploring gardens preferably within easy travelling distance, such as Hillcrest at Stoke St Gregory, Regency House at Hemyock, Avalon at Higher Chillington, Hartwood House at Crowcombe Heathfield, and have held successful bring and buy Plant Sales in the village.

Topics of talks later this year include 'Fragrance in the Garden', 'Climbing and Wall Shrubs', 'Women in Horticulture, Past and Present', and 'The Rococo Gardens at Painswick', and we will be having a practical demonstration 'Christmas Flowers'. We've arranged 4 more garden visits, and two Members' parties. With the aid of a grant from Hinkley Point C, we have organised a coach trip to Rosemoor RHS garden, and plan a further coach trip in 2025.

Come and join us!

SGSG REPORT FOR NETHER STOWEY ANNUAL MEETING 2024

Stowey Green Spaces Group noted at the end of our 2023 report that, having had busy years in 2021 and 2022, we looked forward to continuing and consolidating our work in 2023. Our activities focus on Nether Stowey Castle Mount; on and around the recreation ground; on the A39 Bypass Wood and in Stowey Millennium and Platinum Jubilee Wood, as well as in Stowey Wood itself. We hold work sessions every first and third Tuesday afternoon of the month throughout the year, interspersed with relaxed meetings, once a month, when we reflect on what we have achieved and plan forthcoming activities. We continue to litter pick roads in and around Nether Stowey and Over Stowey every third Saturday of the month.

On 26 November 2022 we planted 120 saplings in Platinum Jubilee Wood and on 17 January 2023 almost 300 saplings in the old quarry, which first had to be cleared of twisted metal, plastic, building rubble and general rubbish. (We have only scratched the surface. What lies beneath is anyone's guess)! The QLPS kindly provided the trees and the AONB, now the Quantock Hills National Landscape, the tree guards and supports, while the Young Somerset apprentices helped with the planting.

We have Licensing agreements with Somerset Council to manage Stowey Millennium and Diamond Jubilee Wood and Stowey Wood, but not for the Platinum Jubilee Wood. We were told in April 2023 that this still needed to be formalized and that we would be contacted about this in due course.

Although we remain a relatively small group of community volunteers, we are slowly growing, with five new volunteers having joined us in recent months. We are fortunate to be able to draw on support from several organizations. These include the QLPS, the Quantock Hills National Landscape, Taunton Mid-Week Conservation Volunteers, the Field Studies Council at Nettlecombe Court, Somerset Council's Clean Surroundings team and our Rights of Way warden, as well as the Parish Councils. We also liaise with Somerset Wildlife Trust and Somerset Council, where I am a member of SEEN, the Somerset Environmental and Ecological Network. We really appreciate all the help we get, whether it be support from other voluntary groups, grants from the QLPS or Parish Councils or the donation of trees from the Woodlad Trust or from Friends of the Meads in Bridgwater.

In terms of events, Judith Greig and I attended a Wild Worship in a marquee at Spaxton on 30 July last year (after initially misreading Wild Worship for Wild Workshop)! I mentioned in my report last year that a new Council Tree Strategy for Somerset was being prepared. Stowey Green Spaces were invited to give a presentation on our work at the launch of the Strategy at Monks Yard, Ilminster on 8 September. Other

presentations were made by the Woodland Trust, "Re-imagining the Levels" and "Green Ilminster:" - a bit like being League 2 players on the same pitch as players from the Premier League! I gave a talk on our work at the Thomas Poole Library on 13 September. We gave a presentation also at Somerset Wildlife Trust's "Wilder Somerset" conference at the Canalside conference Center in Bridgwater on 14 October and attended SWT's AGM on 18 November.

One aim of the Council Tree Strategy is to plant 240 hectares of new woodland in Somerset over each of the next ten years. The strategy team visited the Millennium and Stowey Woods, as did Bridgwater's Deputy Mayor, Councillor and guests.

In May 2023 a new management plan for New Stowey farm was about to be submitted to the new Unitary Authority. It looked as though there would be scope for SGSG to help with implementation of the Plan on the ground. Negotiations took longer than expected, but last month (12 March 2024) a Partnership Agreement was signed whereby National Landscapes will manage the land at New Stowey farm. This is an exciting development, which fits well with the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency, and SGSG look forward to supporting the Quantock Hills National Landscape team in any way we can.

So far in 2024 our efforts have focused on managing the newly planted woodland at the entrance to New Stowey farm, clearing bramble from the A39 Bypass Wood and preparing some areas to seed with wildflowers. A new pedestrian footbridge has been installed in Stowey Wood and the footpath partially re-profiled (with help from the Taunton Mid-Week Conservation Volunteers) to enable walkers to avoid a particularly muddy section. Efforts are being made to control the spread of Himalayan balsam. A tawny owl nest box has been purchased and installed in Stowey Wood. A new pedestrian gate has been installed at the lower entrance to the Platinum Jubilee wood and signage in Millennium Wood has been made more secure following unwelcome acts of vandalism.

Roy Osborne

Chairperson, Stowey Green Spaces Group (SGSG)

May 2024

Stowey Shuttle
Annual Report to the Nether Stowey
Parish Council AGM
On 13th May 2024

Introduction

The Stowey Shuttle is a community car scheme affiliated to the West Somerset Community Car Scheme Partnership.

There are a number of similar schemes in operation locally; our Scheme serves registered passengers within the parishes of Nether and Over Stowey only.

How the Scheme is financed.

Due to the dearth of bus services, the bus pass which many senior citizens possess would be of little use if it was restricted to travel on local buses, so the bus pass scheme also facilitates travel using our scheme in the form of a discount to the regular fare which applies in the same way as a bus pass, i.e. for travel after 9.30 on weekday [the scheme only operates Monday to Friday]

Anyone may apply to be registered as a passenger; currently we have 60 registered passengers and 4 more applications are pending; that said, a lot of registered passengers have not yet used the Shuttle and may have registered “just in case”. Possession of a bus pass is not necessary to be registered as a passenger.

The fares collected by our drivers are paid to our Treasurer, who then reimburses each driver for the mileage travelled at the rate of 45 pence per mile from those receipts and collects from Somerset Council the portion of the cost of each journey where a bus pass has been used. A modest booking fee is charged which we retain to cover administration expenses.

Fares are calculated on the basis of the mileage travelled

We also gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance we receive from NSPC which enables us to afford the mobile phone we use to communicate with our passengers and drivers.

How the Scheme is managed

Needless to say, it would not work at all without our volunteers!

Our coordinators manage the bookings, taking the calls from passengers, and then phoning round the drivers until they find one willing and able to do the trip. They allocate a job number, provide the details of the trip, calculate the fare and then confirm the trip details to the passenger and the appointed driver.

The trips are limited to medical, optometry and related services, and, less often for shopping. Very rarely are our drivers asked to travel beyond West Somerset and the Sedgemoor areas. Drivers are free to decline a job and with only a maximum of 11 drivers available occasionally requests cannot be met. Many a time the search for a driver involves very many phone calls!

Some Statistics

During the 12 months 2023/24 we completed 187 return trips with 38 passengers, 34 of those used their bus pass to claim a concessionary fare.

11 trips were to covid vaccination centres and these were free to the passenger, Somerset Council reimbursing the full fare and the Shuttle waiving the booking fee.

There are 66 Passengers registered with bus pass, 16 without bus pass, totalling 82.

From zero journeys when the Scheme started in 2016 we have now completed over 1000 and are currently booking in job number 1047.

The Future

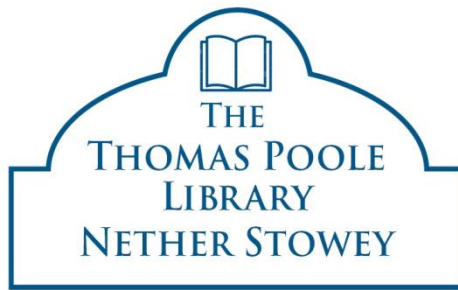
The problem we face is that, while we are seeing an increase in the number of registered passengers we are not experiencing a commensurate increase in drivers. By and large, today's drivers are the original volunteers from the start of the scheme! The issue is not yet critical but in order to make the role attractive and to retain our existing volunteers we need more people to come forward, so that there is less burden on the present team. After all, today's driver could well be tomorrow's passenger, but only if the Scheme stays in being. Admittedly there is not only the driving to do but often some waiting once the passenger is at their appointment, but if more drivers are available, the frequency of trips will be less.

Finances

The current booking fee is £1.50. It was increased from £1 to £2 in 2021 due to the reduced number of trips made following Covid. It was decreased to the current rate in August 23. We end 2023/24 with a working balance of approximately £800 and, if the current rate of bookings is maintained, we should soon be able to reduce the booking fee again.

We received a one-off grant of £60 toward mobile phone costs in 2021/22. It has not been repeated.

Paul N Brierley,
Chairman
The Stowey Shuttle
22nd April, 2024



Castle Street, Nether Stowey, Bridgwater, Somerset TA5 1LN
Telephone: 01278 732741
thomaspoolibrary.org.uk
Reg. Charity no 1181213

Opening hours: Monday 10am-1pm, Wednesday 10am-1pm, Thursday 3.30pm- 6.30pm,
Friday 10am-1pm and 2pm-5pm, Saturday 10am-1pm

REPORT TO NETHER STOWEY PARISH COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR APRIL 2032-MARCH 2024

The Thomas Poole Library, Nether Stowey offers a public library service to this village and surrounding villages free of charge. As one of the Community Library Partnership libraries in Somerset, we are part of the Somerset Library Service, so if you join the library here, your library card gives you free access to all the libraries in Somerset. We are also part of the LibrariesWest consortium, seven library services in the west of England – check out the LibrariesWest website for the services on offer.

Of course, we offer a wide choice of fiction and non-fiction books for adults, children and young adults to borrow and enjoy. But we are far more than that – we are a central community hub where everyone can meet and participate in a wide variety of activities for children and adults.

These include: story-times for pre-school and schoolchildren, the Summer Reading Challenge for children, and activities for children during half term and school holidays; evening talks covering a wide range of topics; and regular second-hand book sales. The library hosts the Coleridge Collection, a significant collection of books by and about Coleridge and his circle, many old and rare, which members of the public can examine and consult. Local groups who use the library for their meetings include the chess club and the Dungeons and Dragons group. There are changing displays on the walls about local history and the environment and exhibitions of work by local craftspeople and artists in the Community Cabinet.

We support local organisations and activities, including Knit and Natter, the Women's Walk, the Walking Festival, the Quantock Surgery PPG, Thrive Tribe, Stowey Gardeners, and Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership walks. The library is a Warm Safe Space during the high cost of fuel crisis, offering free tea and coffee.

Are you interested in forming a book group? Do you like playing whist, bridge, mah jong or Scrabble? Would you like to belong to a discussion group or a play reading group? Whatever your interest or hobby, come to the library and talk to Sian Stafford, our invaluable Events and PR Manager, and she will do her best to make it happen. We would like to offer a special welcome to those who have recently come to live in the village: Come to the library, chat to our friendly volunteers, have a cup of coffee, and bring your neighbours. How about creating a Cricketer Club? Talk to Sian about it!

The historic library building, built as a free school by our local benefactor Thomas Poole in 1813, has attained 'recommended' status for the Local Heritage List, and is now included in the Somerset Historical Environment Record.

We are very proud that we are one of the only two public libraries in Somerset to be run entirely by volunteers. We are a Registered Charity, and our finances remain extremely healthy, thanks to a number of income streams. This year we have maintained our level of membership and increased the number of books borrowed. We are always on the look-out for volunteers; if you would like to join our friendly and welcoming team, speak to Sian Stafford.

We are profoundly grateful to our wonderful team of volunteers who staff the library and do so much behind the scenes. Thanks to them, the Thomas Poole Library is an asset to the village.

Eliza Sackett, Secretary, The Thomas Poole Library, Nether Stowey