

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT APRIL 2025

When I sit down to put this report together each April, I find myself trawling back through meeting minutes, emails, and text messages to try and summarise the last 12 months activities. At times it feels as if little has happened, but re-reading those documents certainly paints a different picture.

On the 8th May we held the 80th anniversary of VE Day celebration at Bullock Park, with a civil ceremony led by Rev Laura Purnell and the traditional lighting of the beacon. As always this saw a great turn out of villagers to recognise this momentous anniversary.

All Saint Church held the annual Drynkings on the Green on 5th May. Almost traditionally, the weather wasn't particularly warm, but it didn't dampen the proceedings. It was well attended and good to see it growing.

We held our now annual party in the park event at Bullock Park on the 24th August, which was well attended by villagers and visitors alike.

The Remembrance service on the 9th of November was well attended with many groups and organisations presenting wreaths in memory of the village's fallen. It is truly heart-warming to see the community coming together for these events.

In December, All Saint Church hosted several days of Christmas tree festival activities, with events and displays of decorated trees.

All of these events were well attended by both villagers and visitors, in great recognition of the hard work by the teams of volunteers involved in organising and running these events.

We have seen the continued success of the football teams, judo club, and Beavers/Wolfcubs and Scouts groups at Bullock Park and steady use of the pavilion for private functions as well as the Messy Moment stay and play group for newborn to 5 years olds. Being able to provide sporting and recreational opportunities like this for the children in the village helps to foster an environment of respect, teamwork, and community mindedness. Once again, we took part in the annual tree and hedge row planting initiative, with hundreds of young trees and hedgerow plants being planted in the tree line and hedgerow around the park.

The planned expansion of the facilities at Bullock Park moved slowly forward and we look forward to when planning is finally submitted and the project can move on. 2027 is the centenary anniversary of the establishment of Bullock Park and we are already planning a week long celebration of the village and park to mark it.

Reverend Laura Purnell and her team at All Saints Church, along with the members of the Parochial Parish Council, have continued their support for the village, providing pastoral care and a warm space for a cupper and a chat at the church every Wednesday.

We have taken an active interest in the High Grove Solar Farm project as well as the smaller, more local one at Park Farm, involving a group of councillors visiting various solar farm and battery storage facilities throughout East Anglia. We continue to have an active voice at meetings with both developers to ensure that the concerns of the villagers and parish council are heard and addressed.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the efforts of our Parish Councillors for their support and engagement with the parishioners throughout the year. We achieved Mindful Village status in 2023, as a result of volunteers being trained in recognising signs that people may be

struggling and ways in which to approach and offer support and signposting to sources of help and we strive to continually improve our service to the community through maintaining our training and skills and look forward to serving the community for the next twelve months.

None of our meetings or events would run as smoothly as they do without the support and hard work of our Clerk, June Smith. She is instrumental in ensuring that all Parish Council communications and finances are managed most effectively.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of our two Breckland District Councillors, Paul Hewett, and Lynda Turner, and not forgetting our Norfolk County Councillor, Ed Connelly, who recently resigned. Our engagement as a Parish Council, with both Breckland District Council and Norfolk County Council is made so much more effective through their support and advice.

I have said it each year for the previous three, and it remains as true as ever. "Time stands still for no man" and this is equally true of village life. Work has finally commenced on the old Coalyard site in the building of 108 properties that will be either affordable rent or shared ownership providing much needed homes for our expanding families within the village as well as those wishing to move here. It is great to see families moving in already.

As our village population continues to expand, through the growth and expansion of families who have lived here for generations, as well as newcomers to our community, we will see new challenges and opportunities to grow as a village to support them, and I have every confidence in our ability, as your Parish Council, to do so for the benefit of the whole community.

Finally, I would like to thank our parishioners for supporting and attending our Parish Council meetings, engaging with our Councillors, and providing input and suggestions as to how we may improve village life.