

## CENTRE PIECE FOR AUGUST 2022

I hope by the time you read this you will be finding time to relax and, hopefully, enjoy lovely warm sunny weather. I don't like to complain but it really has been too hot this week! The Parish Council met on Wednesday, 13 July which proved to be a long meeting. This was primarily because a number of highways associated problems had arisen.

**School Bus Services:** A number of local parents had great concerns over the withdrawal of the school bus service in the Autumn Term, particularly 200S and 235, leaving a problem for parents of getting their children to schools in Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells. The problem is for children living along the various lanes around the village where there are no pavements for them to safely walk to the main roads, particularly during the dark mornings and evenings in Winter.. The Council is looking into various options which were suggested to address the problem.

**Speeding vehicles** It is very concerning the speed vehicles travel along the rural roads and its not surprising that a number of very near misses have been reported to us recently. The Parish Council did consider various ways to persuade drivers to reduce speed but it is very difficult because of rules and regulations. For instance 30mph and 20mph speed restrictions can only be put in place in street lit areas. One idea the Council did consider is the signage appearing in some areas now '20 is plenty'. They are looking into how effective this is.

**Cycle Ways:** Also associated with highways a lot of thought was given to cycle ways. Everyone agreed that the current cycle way into Tonbridge is not at all practicable let alone safe for young children to use with its multiple crossing of the main road, not to mention its disappearance altogether in places. We were told that when it was constructed in 1999 it was the best solution that could be achieved with the available funding. The problem with this, with the increase in traffic and HGVs in particular, it is no longer practicable and barely safe to use. What is really required is a cycleway along one side of the road segregated from the traffic then I think many more people would use it, rather than block the now narrowed main road used by vehicles.

**West Wood:** The Open Spaces Group met this month in West Wood where they considered how to improve the footpaths within the wooded area. There are, as many users are fully aware, several areas where the footpath get very boggy, slippery and wet. The group considered various options but in the end decided they would like the area to remain as natural as possible and will be seeking solutions from an expert to achieve this. In addition they are going to look at providing a short loop suitable for wheelchair users as well as pushchairs. This will all be for next year, but planning has to begin now as the Council needs to agree on their request for their share of the Council Tax for 2023/24 in November.

**Ash dieback** continues to be a worry for the Council who expect within the next two or three weeks to receive the arboricultural consultant's report on how best to address this problem. The Council is hoping this can be done on a staged basis in order that finding the finance to cover the tree felling, which will be necessary, can be done over a number of years. They have set aside a substantial sum for this already.

**Village Green Water Fountain:** Historic England made contact with the Council to explain they had received a query on the Grade II Listed Victorian Water Fountain. It used to be sited in Tonbridge Road nearly opposite the junction with Mount Pleasant but in 2005 it was



moved to the Village Green. It does not have a water connection now and in previous times the cup to use for drinking frequently got stolen. Whilst giving Historic England the updated position we were able to clarify that it was erected to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887. It had erroneously been listed as Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.

**Litter Picking:** The litter picking group have been fortunate to be able to win a grant from Tesco of £500 for equipment for litter picking. This is great news which has enabled them to extend the range of equipment available for the first Saturday morning of every month 10am to 12noon. If you are free, community minded and able to help do come along to West Wood or the Recreation Ground where one of our members will supply you with the necessary equipment and be able to make suggestions of area for you to cover.

**Summer break:** There will be no Centre Piece for September as the Parish Council does not meet during August, but of course, day to day work will continue. Hopefully you will have been able to witness the resurfacing of the ball court in September. This is planned for after the schools return and when it is, hopefully, still dry enough to get the machinery across the field. Other projects should be underway or at the very least about to commence which includes improved road signage around the junction of Riding Lane/Tonbridge Road, enhanced belisha beacons, bollards installed to protect pedestrians' rights, new signage along Riding Lane as well as the very bad section resurfaced. Talking of which this is planned for 1st August and the road could be closed between 8.00am and 4.30pm for up to 12 days – details are on our website [www.hildenboroughpc.org.uk](http://www.hildenboroughpc.org.uk) and they will be updated if there are any changes to the details.

**Contact details:** As usual do make contact with me if you have any concerns, problems or ideas on 01732 832367 or email [clerk@hildenboroughpc.org.uk](mailto:clerk@hildenboroughpc.org.uk) Please check you are using the correct email address, the old account will not be monitored from 1 September. Members will be present at the Farmers' Market on 9 August and 13 September so you can raise or comment on matters concerning the Parish Council.