

Backwell Residents' Association Report to BPC Annual Meeting of Electors – 26 April 2018

BRA currently represents some 400 households. The Association's objectives are to work to safeguard and promote the collective interests of residents in matters concerning social, economic and community life and the character of the village. Furthermore, we will continue to support or oppose development affecting Backwell having regard to residents' interests and the local environment.

This has been another very busy year for the Association. The full Committee met monthly throughout the year and the Executive Committee held many additional meetings. We have fifteen Committee members who live in various parts of the village and we have good links with other groups and organisations.

A representative of the BRA Committee has attended every Parish Council Meeting and Planning Committee Meeting, and BRA has registered comments on numerous planning applications made to North Somerset Council.

BRA has a comprehensive website and a Facebook page. The more members we have, the more we can do for the village.

Among the issues with which BRA has concerned itself in the past year are the following: -

Farleigh Fields Planning Appeal:

We are delighted that the Secretary of State has at last rejected the Appeal by Charles Church against North Somerset's refusal of their Planning Application. We congratulate the Parish Council on this success and thank them for taking the initiative in co-ordinating support from the village in opposing this Appeal. BRA was very happy to contribute its time and financial resources to this campaign, and we thank our volunteers who delivered so many leaflets and the more than 900 residents who took the trouble to submit their comments. The efforts of all those who worked so hard to produce the Backwell Neighbourhood Plan were not in vain and we particularly thank Chris Perry, Bob Taylor, and our own Mike Rose for their contribution to the Plan. Since rejection of the appeal, North Somerset Council has designated two of the Farleigh Fields as Local Green Space; this affords a little more protection in the future. We must continue to use and appreciate this very special village landscape.

West of England Joint Spatial Plan:

We are now facing a further and greater threat to our village arising from JSP proposals for a large new road across our common and past the lake; and the designation of Grove Farm as a Strategic Development Location, with the expectation that Taylor Wimpey will soon submit a Planning Application for the first phase of a 700-house development on this site.

We have been warning our membership of this threat for more than a year and we are pleased that awareness has now also been significantly raised by the emergence in recent months of Backwell Resistance.

We applaud the Parish Council in again taking the lead in resisting this aspect of the JSP by setting up a Working Party, which includes representatives of BRA and BR, to identify and employ professional help in this campaign. BRA has already given a firm commitment to contribute £5,000 towards these costs whenever required and we will be prepared to provide a further £2,500 if necessary on a fund-matched basis by BPC. We understand that Backwell Resistance is also prepared to run a separate fund-raising initiative towards this cause.

Moor Lane Planning Application:

We have been following this long running matter and we appreciate that the developer has now taken account of representations made via the Parish Council, that the mix of properties be adjusted to conform more closely to local demand but we await sight of the details of the Reserved Matters. We remain concerned that there will continue to be congestion in Moor Lane between The Briars and Station Road unless parking is restricted in that section and would appreciate hearing further details of what has been agreed. We feel strongly that anti-congestion measures, if there are to be any, should be implemented before building starts.

Many of our members have sought clarification of the Section 106 Agreement relating to this site as much inaccurate information was circulating a few weeks ago. It was unfortunate that the public meeting on this topic had to be cancelled because of the snow as this might well have dispelled some of the concerns but we are pleased to note that this matter has been included later in the Agenda of this meeting.

Stancombe Quarry Liaison and Community Fund:

We have continued to be represented at Liaison Meetings with the owners and we thank the Parish Council for sharing Backwell's voting powers on the distribution of monies from the Community Fund with BRA. We feel that the administration of this Fund has now settled down satisfactorily and it is pleasing that, to date, several deserving projects in Backwell have received over 50% of the allocated funds.

Station Road and Other Matters:

Modest improvements to Station Road are to be funded this year by the airport; this is welcome but we think the dangers to pedestrians will continue to get worse because there is just too much traffic in this narrow road with inadequate pavements. North Somerset Council seems to have ever increasing budget problems, and is apparently unable to allocate sufficient money to these road safety issues, let alone fixing highly dangerous potholes, clearing up deplorable amounts of roadside litter throughout the county, having the recycling centre open every day, or even the continuing provision of many public rubbish bins. Individuals and the parish council complain endlessly about all these matters. Lots of individuals and groups try to keep

the place looking a little tidier, but BRA really does think a programme of road and pavement repairs, to be planned, budgeted and implemented, is long overdue. A volunteer group of residents with a bucket of tarmac and a couple of rakes does seem a step too far in the principle of self-help.

Finally, BRA thanks the Chairman and Councillors of Backwell Parish Council and our District Councillor Karen Barclay for all their hard work on behalf of the village.

Keith Riches, Chairman, Backwell Residents' Association