

BOROUGH COUNCILLOR'S REPORT TO THE MEETING OF SIMONSTONE PARISH COUNCIL ON 9TH MAY 2024

Apologies that my Borough Councillor's Report for Simonstone Parish Council held on 4th April 2024 has not yet been emailed to the Parish Clerk. I will make sure this is sent through with this one.

Our seventh drop-in session was held on 27th April in Simonstone.

I am pleased to see that the white H marks across the entrances to residential drives on School Lane have been remarked and most recurring potholes repaired following my reports to LCC Highways. Unfortunately, I am still receiving reports from residents on School Lane that some parents of children being dropped off/collected from school and/or before and after school clubs are still parking across drives, obstructing access for residents. I know that the school regularly reminds parents to avoid causing obstructions on School Lane and I will continue to liaise with the Head about sending regular reminders to parents of all children using the School before, in or after school hours. I am also requesting that the PCSO arranges to carry out some spot checks along School Lane and if necessary, speak to drivers who are found to be obstructing driveways requesting them not to do so. Although it is no excuse for poor parking, it is understandable that many parents fear letting their children walk or cycle to school because of the lack of any safe place to cross the A671 and the lack of a School Lollipop patrol.

I have previously emailed my list of suggestions for road safety improvements to the Parish Clerk and sent these to County Councillor Ged Mirfin as he had requested me to do some time ago. Some of these suggestions are my own and others are from Parish Councillors or residents. Most are intended to be the basis of further discussion for the longer term but some are highlighted as being immediate priorities including a pedestrian crossing somewhere between the bus layby on the South side of Whalley Road and Buckshaw Terrace, a new footpath to replace the grass verge on the South side of Whalley Road between the bus layby and the Stork Hotel car park and a school lollipop crossing patrol near the crossroads of Whalley Road, School Lane and Simonstone Lane subject to School and community support. As County Councillor Mirfin copied both Parishes' Clerks into his reply to me, I have done the same.

I thank County Councillor Mirfin for his detailed technical response but note his comment "I thoroughly applaud gathering residents concerns via surveys – it's the "thing' of contemporary politics."

If we put to one side for a moment over 200 signatures calling for a pedestrian crossing for Simonstone submitted to the County Council in early 2022, I will read out the most recent letter Gaye and I have received from a Simonstone resident whose anonymity we have respected, living on Whalley Road regarding the difficulty of crossing Whalley Road:

Dear Malcolm and Gaye

(Councillor Peplow read out the handwritten letter from the disabled resident who has lived in Simonstone for 46 years, in which she explained her inability to get to the butcher due to the lack of a reachable crossing (she relies on a home delivery by the butcher) and her difficulty in even reaching the Texaco Garage shop.)

Rather than being “the thing” of contemporary politics, I consider the lack of safe places for pedestrians to cross Whalley Road to be the single biggest “thing” impacting the everyday lives of Simonstone residents. The ability of people to move around their neighbourhood safely including the shops, school and bus stop without the use of a car should be a right. It is not a privilege or an unreasonable request. Padiham has five crossings in its centre, Simonstone has none. Politicians are elected to promote the interests of the areas we represent and use our positions to influence what our Councils prioritise. Council Officers (like Highways staff) implement the decisions that politicians make (within the limits of law and feasibility). I hope that Cty Cllr Mirfin will confirm that he will use his influence and knowledge to get behind our campaign for a pedestrian crossing, footpath south of Whalley Road and a school patrol for Simonstone if the School’s concerns over cost can be resolved.

At home, we are supporting No Mow May by leaving our lawns uncut this month to leave enough early flowers to help our pollinating insects. Yesterday, I was helping to mow an ancient cemetery which I do as a Church volunteer and although we need to mow most of the grounds to ensure that the bereaved can safely access the graves of their loved ones, we carefully mow around any large patches of wildflowers that grow in the graveyard. I’d like to ask whether the Parish Council mows its own grounds in May and if so, whether it can consider changing its grounds maintenance contract to help our pollinators early in the season each year.

I am aware that broadband utility infrastructure is being installed in Read and Simonstone and that notices have been posted. This is in relation to the replacement of copper analogue phone lines with digital phone lines and in some cases involves the erection of large telegraph poles where cables cannot readily be routed through existing underground ducts. This work is not connected to the Borough Council and residents are

encouraged to contact the Utility company whose details should be given on the street notices. The company involved is called Voneus and it does operate an enquiries and complaints system by phone and email.

Following a resident's request and Councillor McCrum's action, Lancashire County Council has confirmed that it has agreed to the reinstatement of a bus stop on the south side of the A671 near the entrance to Sunnyside (the M2 route coming from the direction of Burnley) which is great news for local bus users.

Readstone Environment Group has confirmed that it has the safety equipment needed to collect sharps along the river bank when found, that it is looking at doing further litter picks along the River Calder and is working with Burnley College upstream to try to identify and deal with the source(s) of the huge volume of plastic waste entering the river.

Working with Councillor Ricky Newmark who represents the Sabden Ward, we have got Ribble Valley Borough Council to agree to ensure that its street cleansing team litter picks the car park to the north of Back Lane every week. Although I would like to get a litter bin in this location, I am happy with this measure.

Fifty Giant Redwood trees are being planted throughout the Borough as part of RVBC's Golden Jubilee celebrations as the Council was formed fifty years ago. Each Parish Council is being invited to plant a tree in a suitable location if they would like to do so. This idea came from the Conservative ruling administration without any apparent consultation. The trees are not native but do grow very well in the UK's climate and absorb a lot of carbon dioxide so help to combat climate change. I'm glad whenever trees get planted but in terms of supporting wildlife, native trees such as English Oaks are far more beneficial. Please give this some consideration and let RVBC know if you have a suitable site for one of these huge trees which will become a long-lasting landmark for our community.

The Leader of the Council's report to Full Council on 30 April contained very little of note. He singled me out as opposing the conversion of Council vehicles to HVO even though the decision not to proceed was taken with cross party support in the Community Services Committee and ratified by Full Council. The benefits of HVO are exaggerated, there is a real risk that not all HVO will be sustainably sourced, that it may contain palm oil associated with deforestation, and it would have added £100,000 a year to the cost of the existing waste collection service unless the ruling administration chooses to move away from its costly weekly unrecyclable waste collection.

Councillor Malcolm Peplow

9th May 2024