

Annual Report Presented to the Annual Parish Meeting May 2025

It has been a challenging year for the village with a number of issues creating problems for the general life of the village. For much of the year, there was a traveller family being sited on the coach park by Derbyshire Dales District Council, we continue to strive for improvements to two major road junctions in the village and then from the late winter we had traffic disruption cause by traffic management on the A6 by the Activity Area

We are pleased that the Parish Council continues to take a high-profile role in the village. Though our statutory responsibilities are few, we work with many non-statutory roles and have added to these during the year. With the higher profile comes increased workload. Many from outside the village and some residents and businesses see the Parish Council as all powerful and responsible for everything which, of course, is certainly not the case. We are happy to pass the many issues raised with us to the responsible authorities or individuals though. However, sometimes it is proving more difficult to get responses to issues raised with many of the authorities especially the county and district councils.

As you will see from the list below, we have been involved in a variety of activities that hopefully will have brought an improvement to both the environment of the village and quality of life for all in Matlock Bath.

Awarding Grants	Website management	Planning issues
Activity Area	Social media	Implementing Grants
Advice / support for residents	Nature Reserve Management	Winter service scheme
Quarterly newsletters	Smedley Close	Tower Florals
Photography Competition	Bus shelter maintenance	Flower Barrels
Art Competition	Signage maintenance	Rose Garden
Village Christmas Lunch	Benches & Maintenance	Cattle trough florals
Remembrance	War Memorial	Liaising & Lobbying
Singing Round the Tree	Joyce Pawley Arbour	Station adoption
Advent Window	Winter Lighting	Footpath maintenance

In 2024/2025, one Councillor sadly resigned due to pressure of work but we managed to appoint two new Councillors. We encourage volunteers to help with the work of the Parish Council on a casual basis as well as serving on our Committees. Copies of all Committee Notes and Parish Council Minutes can be found on our website. The Parish Council's thanks go to all our volunteers for the hard work they put into the work of the Parish Council for the benefit of the village.

Parish Council Budget – A budget for 2024/2025 of £40,185 (and ringfenced funding of £18,923) was set by Full Council in January 2024 based on recommendations on spending needs from each of the Committees. The precept requested was £31,500, a small increase on 2023/2024. The difference between the precept and budget was met from the carry forward from 2023/2024. The budget set for 2025/2026 is £42,505 with a ringfence of £23,779. Councillors felt it was necessary to raise the precept for 2025/2026 to £34,000 in view of rising costs. This is an increase 0.3% for the band D taxpayer as a cost of 37p for the year This increase will cover a rise in costs and the extra financial liabilities that we have taken on over the last 12 months. We still think that is excellent value for money for the work that the Parish Council does to help, support and promote the village.

Finance and General Purposes Committee - This Committee oversees the **finances** of the Parish Council and deals also with **employee and personnel issues**. As well as managing its own budget, the Finance Committee oversees the budgets of all the other Committees and the financial planning of the Council. The Finance Committee this year has recommended to Full Council to grant an award to DASAC (for the Raft Event) and the Childrens Christmas Party.

Details of the Income and Expenditure for each financial year can be found on our website.

Communications Committee - The **website** continues to be a popular way of communicating. The website contains a vast amount of information enabling us to keep residents up to date with village life. The website is updated on a regular basis and is an extremely reactive tools.

Our main vehicle of regular communication with residents continues to be the quarterly **Newsletter**, a hard copy of which has been delivered by hand by again some willing volunteers to **every residence** and business in the village as well as being published on the website. It continues to be well received. The way we publish the newsletter was reviewed in 2024 and as a result, Councillors decided to revert back to hand delivering the newsletter rather than providing an electronic copy.

The uptake of advertisements in the Newsletter offsets some of the printing costs.

Facilities Committee - This Committee oversees the **Activity Area, Bus Shelters, Benches, Winter Lighting** and the **War Memorial**.

The Parish Council once again arranged for the bus shelters, village signs and noticeboards to be cleaned regularly. Due to damage, we also arranged for a pane of glass to be fitted to the shelter by the Station.

The **activity area** is now regularly used by residents and some groups and individuals from outside the village. All hire charges will be used to maintain the area. The area is regularly swept and maintained so it is safe for users. We have purchased a bin which will go inside the court for waste and a secure box which will store the tennis nets and posts.

The flower bed outside the court which was cleared and planted up, paid for from the Welcome Back Fund following the pandemic, continues to be regularly maintained.

Due to some of the **cross river lighting** not working, Councillors agreed to obtain quotations for their removal. This was successfully done in March. Councillors have agreed that all remaining lights will be checked to ensure they are working correctly and any which are not, will be removed.

The **Joyce Pawley Arbour** – in memory of Cllr Joyce Pawley, is still maintained using donations made by residents.

The **war memorial** was cleaned in November in time for the Act of Remembrance.

Environment & Conservation Committee – This Committee deals with anything to do with the **environment and conservation** in the village including the **Nature Reserve, florals** around the village, **footpaths** and any other issues. The decision to hire a flail mower during the late winter proved very success in clearing from the meadow area large areas of brambles and other intrusive growth. This allowed the spring flowers to flourish and we had a wonderful show of bluebells, cowslips, wood anemones and cowslips this year.

The Parish Council has continued to provide **four three tier planters** along the Parades. After purchasing the planters in 2020, we rely on volunteers to plant up. Each of the planters is sponsored by four businesses in the village who plant and keep them watered throughout the year. In addition, four **flowering barrels** – one opposite Masson Mills, one at the bottom of Waterloo Road and two at the bottom of Clifton Road as well as the cattle trough are planted up and maintained by local residents. The Rose Garden in Memorial Gardens is maintained when possible.

As part of the DCC Rights of Way Minor Maintenance Scheme, the Parish Council has arranged for a number of **footpaths** to be cleared by a local resident. This work was paid for through the Maintenance Scheme at no cost to the Parish Council.

In 2024, once again, the Parish Council again joined the **Winter Service Scheme** operated by Derbyshire County Council. This scheme provides free 'salt' to the Parish Council to distribute to residents/businesses who sign up to be a volunteer to clear snow and ice from pavements during the winter months.

Much of the work the committee does relies on volunteers and we are always looking for more to help in any way they can.

Activities Committee - The Parish Council has for many years promoted 'village' activities, some of which have been open to the wider community. We have continued this promotion both as a community service and to promote Matlock Bath to the wider world. The **Pro Loco Art Competition** has attracted many entries over the years and in 2024, its 44th year, the standard was very high.

The fifteenth **Photography Competition** again proved very successful. With over 250 entries made, we had to shortlist to 90, a task which proved near impossible for the Shortlisting Committee. With the high standard of photographs received, we are able to use many of the entries in our publicity material, website etc. Sponsorship for both competitions was again received from Heights of Abraham with other prizes sponsored in the "Best Picture of" Categories. We are extremely grateful to all of our sponsors who support our competitions each year.

The Parish Council is very proud to work with representatives of the British Legion to facilitate the **Remembrance** at the War Memorial. Once again, the service in 2024 was held in the morning with the two-minute silence at 11.00 am. Richard Maltby attended on behalf of Holy Trinity Church. Two wreaths were laid on behalf of the children of the village and the residents.

Our Christmas event – **Singing Round the Tree** – has seen numbers dwindling although attendance in 2024 was higher than in 2023. The Parish Council's advent window was unveiled.

Those attending Singing Round the Tree were treated to mulled wine, soup and mince pies. Music was provided by John Phillips with Leisha Martin leading the singing.

The Committee are looking at alternative ways to encourage more residents to attend in 2025.

December saw the twelfth **Christmas Lunch** which was held again at The Fishpond and was attended by 57 residents. The food was outstanding and it was good to see so many residents attending. With an increase in attendance meant that those attending were asked to donate £5 if they chose to have 3 courses. Although Councillors were reluctant to ask this, residents seemed more than happy with this arrangement.

Planning Committee – In the past year the Parish Council has considered many planning and tree work applications. The Planning Committee consider each application in detail and the merits or detriments of each one assessed. Although the Parish Council has only an *advisory role* on planning issues, we feel that this area is important for the village. We have local knowledge pertinent to the needs of the village all of which is in a conservation area and covered by other planning regulations some specific to Matlock Bath. The Committee aims to meet regularly and sometimes has on site meetings to look at planning applications. Over the past year we have lobbied against some applications but unfortunately our objections have not been successful.

Smedley's Close/Cumberland Mine – We were approached by the family of the owner of Smedley's Close and Cumberland Mine who wanted to gift it to the Parish Council with the stipulation that it could only be used for community use. During 2023, negotiations took place to secure the land. Although it can take up to 2 years for land registry to log its new owners, the Parish Council are proud and grateful to have been gifted this land. The first job will be to erect an information board giving the history of the land and its previous owner. Further meetings will take place to discuss what other improvements can be made to make the land more accessible for residents.

Matlock Bath Development Association - Though a body independent from the Parish Council, this was borne out of the Parish Council initiative with Derby University – the Into the Future project. In addition, what MBDA do is closely aligned with the work of the Parish Council so we work collaboratively and supportively.

MBDA was approached by an Energy Group to ascertain whether MBDA could be used as a vehicle for the group to apply for grants. Directors agreed to this. As a result, two new Directors have been appointed although we did lose two original Directors. A meeting was held in March 2025 where the Energy Group outlined their plans.

Due to lack of resources, no projects will be taken on through MBDA apart from the Energy Group. The bank account from MBDA has been closed and all remaining funds transferred to the Parish Council with the stipulation that the money can only be spent on things which benefit residents.

Dangerous junction onto the A6 – Residents have been coming to us for many years concerned about the safety of the junctions from the residential areas on Holme Road, Waterloo Road and Temple Road onto the A6. Firstly we battled with the highways authority Derbyshire County Council to get improvements made but all suggestions were rejected. In the last year we have also contacted the police commissioner and even though she agreed to send a senior traffic officer out to look at our concerns, he inspected the sites – without our presence – and determined that none of the junctions were dangerous. Part of the evidence for this decision was that no accidents at these junctions had ever been recorded by the police. We will not be deterred and we shall be approaching our newly elected County Councillor for assistance on this issue.

Travellers In the Coach Park – We met with our local MP in September and although he sympathised with residents and offered to make some investigations, nothing came to fruition. We initiated an on line petition for the council to reinstate the coach park to its proper purpose and it gained around 600 signatories and is still open. Various e-mails were sent to DDDC outlining our concerns and we also sent representatives to meetings when this issue was been discussed. The traveller family who were housed at Station Car Park left of their own free will in November 2024 and at a DDDC Council meeting in December it was resolved that Station Car Park would become a temporary tolerated site for a period of 2 years; the two years does not begin until the works have been completed and the family are sited. However, the Station Car Park will only be used as a temporary tolerated traveller site between November and end of March. The new proposed site is at the opposite end of the car park area nearest the village and the river and will use over 50 car parking spaces and cost around £100,000 to facilitate.

Retaining Wall Repairs on A6 – Contractors arrived on site on 24th February but left after one day reporting that the design prepared would not be sufficient for the state of the wall. The Parish Council agreed to allowing the contractors to use the Activity Area for storage and access providing that any damage would be rectified at the end of the contract. The timescale was 6 weeks; the works paused for Easter but have now resumed. DCC insisted that the work required the closing of half the A6 for safety reasons. We submitted a complaint to DCC regarding agreements and lack of information. We have continued to liaise with the contractors. To date, however, no finish date has been identified.

And we alsoAs well as the work of the Committees, we have representatives on various bodies including The Derwent Valley Rail Partnership, Pavilion and the DDDC Illuminations Liaison Committee. We lobby the higher tiers of local government (County and District Councils) on a regular basis on behalf of residents and on general issues of concern in Matlock Bath from water leaking onto the highway to dangerous trees, from the provision of grit bins to litter and refuse.

Once again, **our adopters of Matlock Bath station** planted and maintained planters and barrels with bedding plants and bulbs.

We continue to have regular **Closer Working** meetings with DDDC which are held every three months. These meetings allow us to raise issues/concerns formally with Officers and receive feedback.

The Future - Although the topography of the village does not lend itself easily to help us bond into one community, the activities and social media links that have formed have enabled us to act together. We desperately need more volunteers to help the village on a variety of tasks so if you have the occasional hour to spare please consider giving the village your time. Tasks are various most requiring no major skill other than enthusiasm for the village. Thanks go to all those who have worked so hard in everything we do for the village and, of course, to those who selflessly give their time to act as Councillors or volunteers with the only reward being that we do it to make Matlock Bath a better place to live, to work and to visit.