

CLIFTON UPON TEME PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

03.09.20

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

1. Flooding

I trust that you will all have heard about the award of £4.895 million towards the construction of a flood barrier scheme in Tenbury Wells. This is part of the massive amount of money allocated to seek to solve flooding problems across the country, including an additional amount of up to £30 million in the Severn Valley, to overcome the periodic flooding in the river basin. The official announcement contains the following comments on our local area:

In Tenbury Wells and the Severn Valley, two flood schemes will protect nearly 3,000 homes in areas which were badly affected by last winter's floods, and protecting and creating more than 22,000 jobs along the Severn Valley. This will be supplemented by an additional scheme combining natural flood risk management, tree planting and habitat creation to reduce flood risk and capture carbon throughout the Severn Valley.

There is a requirement for some local funding, and the Worcestershire LEP has been able to allocate £0.5 million to fill the gap, this being the maximum the EA will allow, amounting to 10% of their commitment. In addition, the projects must be regarded as "shovel ready" meaning they must be able to start soon, and in consequence that the work must be completed by the end of the next financial year.

Those of you who have studied the plans will know that there may need to be some revision or improvement to make them satisfactory, but in general, this is a very welcome announcement. You may know that Harriett Baldwin, our local MP, has played a major part in persuading Defra to fund this need, and her adjournment debate clearly helped to ensure Tenbury was included in the list of approved schemes.

A fairly large group of local representatives, including Harriett, will be meeting at 09.30 tomorrow, 4th September, to discuss the detailed design of the flood barriers, and I hope there will be agreement on the nature of them and the likely cost of the project.

We need to get on with it quickly and be sure we can cover all likely costs with the grants available.

2. Local Matters

Schools return this week and next, and we have to hope that all the dire predictions of problems prove unduly pessimistic. The news media are concerned to tell us the figures for positive test results, but rarely put that in context of the numbers of tests carried out. They also more or less ignore the very small number of people needing to go to hospital and the even smaller number of people succumbing to the disease.

From the latter two figures, one would draw some hope that the whole pandemic is under control or coming to a close.

Meanwhile, on a more pedestrian level, the government is keen to support more walking and cycling in the country. This was first stimulated by the problems of using public transport in London, but it has been translated into a national drive to improve facilities for walking and cycling everywhere.

Contrary to the opinion of some people, the policy of the county, as promulgated in LTP4, is to support active travel and we are investing 11% of our transport budget in these areas. What we have not done is implement a lot of temporary measures with cones and one-way systems, not to mention closing roads altogether, to help active travel.

You may be aware that in several places, this sort of action has been severely criticised for penalising local businesses in favour of larger stores, and also making life more awkward for disabled people. It is difficult to strike the right balance, but caution is sensible in responding to changing circumstances.

I am aware of the disagreement over drainage on Pound Lane but am hopeful that a satisfactory solution can be found, even if it means enhancing the facilities that existed before the development. I hope you will all be keen to let me know of any outstanding work that needs attention, particularly if the conventional route of reporting defects is apparently not working.

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