



ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE HIGHWAYS & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE FOR 2007/2008

Highways Once again, despite pressure from the Denmead Parish Council (DPC), the Hampshire County Council (HCC) Highways Department has done little or nothing of significance to improve the state of the roads within the Parish other than filling and patching the more serious potholes and collapsed road haunches. We have again forwarded to the HCC our prioritised 'wish list' for roads and pavements in need of major repair for the coming financial year in the hope that one or more will be included in the new roads programme. Top of our list are Anmore Road, east of Mill Road and Forest Road between Denmead and The Chairmakers as well as the pavements between the village centre and Ashling Park Road and the pavement in Mead End Road. However, since the County Highways budget for 2008/09 remains the same as last year (effectively a reduction in real terms) we are not very optimistic about the outcome.

We have also continued, so far without success, to press for action to be taken to improve the maintenance state of the road drains in the parish many of which regularly flood whenever there is any heavy rain. Our prioritised list of drains to be cleared/repared which we have passed to the HCC includes Southwick Road, junction of Bere Road and Ashling Park Road, Kidmore Lane and Green Lane.

Village 30 Initiative The 200 or more residents who recently signed the petition in support of the DPC application to the HCC to reduce to 30 mph the speed limits on Forest Road, Bunkers Hill, Furzeley Road and Inhams Lane will be pleased to learn that the Denmead bid has been accepted for the second tranche of the Village 30 initiative. DPC representatives will be holding talks with Hampshire's consultants in due course to discuss the matter in detail and to review where the various limits start and finish. It is hoped that it will be possible to introduce these new limits by March 2009.

Policing The DPC continues to enjoy a close working relationship with the police and a representative regularly attends our H&GP Committee meetings together with the Chairman of our local Neighbourhood Watch Committee. These meetings provide an excellent opportunity for Denmead residents to hear the latest information on crime statistics in the parish and to represent any concerns they may have about police matters directly to a member of our local police force. It was encouraging to hear at our latest meeting that a bogus trader who had committed offences in Denmead had been caught, convicted and sentenced to 4 ½ years imprisonment. We were also encouraged to learn that there had been a recent increase in staffing levels for the area. The following officers are now responsible on a day to day basis for policing Denmead, Soberton, Hambledon and Boarhunt, Sgt Stanton, PC Barham, PC Weald and PCSO Day with support as necessary from adjacent police areas.

Burial Grounds Many of you will recently have read in the 'Evening News' about the complaints made by a non Denmead resident about the charges levied for the internment of persons from outside the Parish in the Denmead Burial Grounds. The burial grounds are owned by the DPC, maintained by the parish groundstaff, paid for out of the Parish Rate, as a service to residents of the Parish. Charges for internment in these burial grounds are set at a relatively low level for residents whose names have appeared on the Denmead Register of Electors at any time during the previous five years. At the discretion of the DPC non residents may be buried in our burial grounds but because they do not contribute through the rates towards the upkeep of the grounds, the DPC have set their charges at a level five times that of the residents' rate. Our burial grounds are of limited size therefore we intend to continue to bias the charges in favour of Denmead residents.

The Parish Council's aim is to maintain the burial grounds as a peaceful country cemetery and a haven of rest. To assist our efforts we ask all those who have loved ones interred there to help us with our aim. In particular, we ask you to respect the burial ground regulations and to comply with limitation of one vase or flower container per grave and not to place any lamp or mechanical toy on the graves.

Street Lighting We had hoped to have the three new lights on the greenway installed during the past year but production problems have caused the work to be delayed to the summer. The costs of their installation have also risen by an additional £1,500 due to electrical supply difficulties unforeseen by the HCC.

We have postponed the programme to upgrade the 80 or so parish owned street lights to low light pollution types, mentioned in last years report, because we have registered for the county wide Private Finance Initiative to take over the upkeep and maintenance of all our street lighting. We expect to make a final decision on whether to commit the parish to this 25 year programme when we know the precise costs involved, but preliminary indications suggest that these will be similar the costs we currently budget for their upkeep.

Village Centre Improvements (Phase 2). When I reported on this topic last year, I stated that the DPC had been informed that work would start at the end of March 2007. Clearly, that was not to be and the saga which has dragged on for many years is, at the time of writing, still not finally resolved! After many delays and setbacks signatures authorising work to proceed were finally obtained from the last proprietor and shop owner on 2 April, two days after the deadline set by the WCC. As a result, not only will the contractor's quotation have to be re-validated but the budget for the work will need to be re-approved by the WCC Cabinet. Subject to a satisfactory outcome to both of these matters it is hoped that work will be carried out sometime during the summer.

John Knight
Chairman, Highways & General Purposes Committee