

FOCUS

on Bathavon South

Edited by Gitte Dawson and the Bathavon South Liberal Democrats - Call us on 01225 722 511

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Freshford's shop and post office is under threat

Save our village shops!

Many village shops and post offices - lifelines for those without transport and focal points for community life - are closing. Now Freshford Shop and Post office is on the market as its owners wish to retire. The risk is that it will be bought for residential use and the shop ultimately closed. This has just happened in Limpley Stoke nearby, and in Norton St Philip not long ago.

Obviously, it's use it or lose it! Gitte Dawson, who lives in Freshford, has taken the lead in forming an action group to explore what the people of Freshford can do to secure the future of their shop - and hopefully to take "ownership" and realise that only real commitment from villagers can ultimately make a difference. Many hopeful schemes and ideas are being proposed.

Public meeting to discuss the
Freshford Shop Project
on Tuesday 4th April, 7 pm
in the School Hall

(Yes - the newly refurbished School Hall is now available for community use!)

Government gives up on villages

The Government appears to have abdicated its responsibility towards post offices and convenience shops altogether.

It's allowing the Post Office to "rationalise" its network without any regard for local needs.

It makes life continually tougher for those small post offices that remain - by taking away sorting, formerly a source of income; then another - cash pension and benefit payments.

It is now threatening to phase out even the specially created **Post Office Card Accounts**, designed so people could still collect pension, benefit and tax credit payments from local post offices in cash, instead of having to travel miles to their nearest bank.

Some 300 MPs have already expressed their dismay by signing a motion calling for a debate on the subject. **Lib Dem MP for Bath Don Foster is amongst them; Labour MP for Wansdyke Dan Norris is not.** You can write to him at the House of Commons, London SW1 0AA. You can also write to the Secretary of State for Works and Pensions, the Rt Hon Alistair Darling MP, at the above address.

A further blow is still in the pipeline - the likely phasing out of the £150m annual rural post offices subsidy by 2008.

A post office and a shop together often form a viable business. Chipping away at the post office functions undermines both the post office and the rural shop. Gitte Dawson says, "Just what are the Government thinking? How can they be so callous? Have they given up completely on people in rural areas just because not so many of them vote Labour?"

Do please write to make your views known."

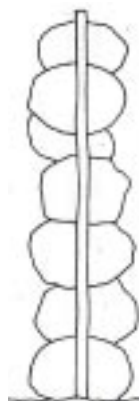
Cycle route over the Midford Viaduct all the way to Wellow open



picture courtesy of the Bath Chronicle

Sustrans ranger Erica Smith and Cllr Gitte Dawson on the Midford Viaduct

You can now cycle from Midford all the way to Wellow - avoiding in particular the steep hills of Twinhoe Lane by travelling along the spectacular Midford viaduct and old railway line.



The Wellow end of the route is to receive a monument to the "Father of Geology" William Smith, who lived and worked in the Midford area in 1799. It is a stack of different types of rock. The planners want to refuse it - it is perhaps rather tall at 6m. The decision will be with the planning committee.

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There is now **another exciting cycling and walking project** on the horizon: a route through two railway tunnels between Midford and the centre of Bath, running deep under Combe down and with beautiful above-ground stretches in between.

www.twotunnels.org.uk tells you all about it!



Cycling/walking through this tunnel?

Kerbside rubbish collection to be introduced



Domestic rubbish is to be collected "from the edge of the property" in future rather than from the back door - as currently happens to recycled materials, cardboard and garden waste.

The money saved - some £124,000 per annum - is to be invested in further recycling schemes, food waste being next.

Help will be available to those who find it difficult to carry their dustbin to the front. Ultimately, wheely bins will be introduced in areas where this is practical.

Keep things out of landfill - remember Bath Freecycle!

Don't buy new what you can get free second-hand - and don't throw away what somebody else might still want. Use Bath Freecycle! Start by sending an email to bathfreecycle-subscribe@yahoo.com. If you lose this address, just Google for "bathfreecycle" and you will find the website!



Free school travel to church schools?

The Council is currently reviewing its school transport provision. The key question is whether it should continue to provide free school travel for children who travel more than three miles to get to a church school of their choice. You can make your views known via the Council website www.bathnes.gov.uk.

Cllr Gitte Dawson says, "To me, it is all or nothing. If we provide free school travel to church schools then we must provide free school travel to those who have to travel further to get to a preferred non-church school."

I do like school buses and want to see the Council provide them wherever there are enough children to justify them. I believe this fosters independence in children and



is also the single most effective measure to alleviate congestion on our roads.

Alas this would be very expensive and can happen only if all parties on the Council agree to spend the money."

Official: 757 bus to be cut but Dial-a-Ride and Fare Car to come

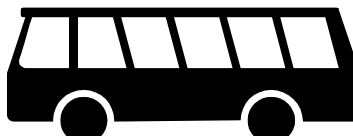
The 757 bus from Shoscombe via Peasedown and Wellow to Bath has now fallen victim to the latest review of Council-supported bus services. It is difficult to argue when each passenger journey cost the Council £7.93 in subsidies – with others costing as little as £1.10 per journey and the average being £2.67. Regular buses are worthwhile only if they are used well.

Two of the bus journeys were well used – the morning and afternoon school runs. These particular services are to be replaced by a regular Dial-a-Ride minibus. These will not go all the way into Bath for turn-around reasons but Gitte is pressing for them to go at least to the river so that city users can easily walk into the centre.

Other journeys need to be arranged specially but then you are collected from home and dropped off there again – a much better service! And

it is not just for the elderly and frail but for anyone who has no other means of transport.

The Dial-a-Ride will be supplemented by a so-called Fare-Car – a guaranteed shared taxi service into the city twice a week, with pick-up and drop-off at the passengers' homes.



People in **Monkton Combe** are unhappy about the re-routing of the **Nr 94 bus** which now no longer takes them to the shops and other facilities in Combe Down. It seems that this decision was made rather arbitrarily, without properly consulting the people affected, and misinterpreting the ticket sales. Gitte Dawson has promised to keep a close eye on future route changes so this does not happen again.

Safe future for Wellow and Shoscombe primary schools

Primary schools in the Peasedown "cluster" have undergone a review with special emphasis on eliminating surplus places, the education provided, the condition of the buildings and the links between school and community. Both Wellow and Shoscombe were given a very positive assessment (apart from Wellow's buildings!) and are safe from closure in the future.

Both schools are almost full, but attract only half their children

from their respective villages; most of the other children come from Peasedown.

Peasedown St John Primary would not in fact have enough places for all these children so it's just as well that many Peasedown parents prefer a small friendly village school. But should the Council then not provide a school bus? Gitte Dawson thinks so and made that point strongly once again at the review meeting.

Exciting time to be a Liberal Democrat

The Liberal Democrats have had a spectacular by-election win over Labour in Scotland - and now boast a new leader, Ming Campbell. A similar swing would give the Lib Dems Wansdyke!

Runner-up Chris Huhne has taken on the environment portfolio on the shadow cabinet. Watch this space for solid new policy developments in this key area. Join us!



Freshford stepping distance: Now history!

Freshford platform fixed but worries about trains

Work at Freshford Station to remove the extreme stepping distance is progressing well - a champagne opening is being planned for April.

But the worry about train timetables has resurfaced. An hourly service was promised by Derek Twigg (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport) but current First Great Western proposals still feature some 2-hour gaps and a missing rush hour train. Write to the above at the House of Commons, as well as to

First Great Western Link
FREEPOST SWB40576
Plymouth PL4 6ZZ

Please do so soon as the consultation period is almost over.

Council tax up by 5% but still lowest in our area

Council Tax is going up by almost 5% this year which is again rather higher than the rate of inflation. The reason: the Government has made significant changes to the way local government spending is financed. In 1997 the Government funded 70% of spending. In 2005 this figure is only 63% which represents a cash loss to the Council of around £12m. Local people have to pay more because Government is proportionally giving less.



Would you like 100 extra houses around Freshford?

The Government insist that we build 15,000 more houses in our area and tell us these must be near the big population centres. There are suggestions now that such houses should also be along the good communication routes - eg the railways. This would mean that Freshford with its railway station should accommodate a fair number.

Current planning guidance rules this out. But bigger villages find it easier to sustain good services such as shops, a school or frequent trains. Which means that more houses may not be all bad.

What do you think? Cllr Gitte Dawson would like to hear your views!

Make sure you have a vote!

Some 15% of houses in our area have no current voters listed on the electoral register because the annual form was not returned. Are you on the list? Your councillor can tell you.



Get involved - become a local councillor !

If you care about what happens in your neighbourhood and want to make a difference - now is the time to think about becoming a councillor, or helping your local Lib Dem team.

Please contact us!

NameTel.....

Address

.....Email

Your particular interest:

.....



Apple Tree pub: common sense prevails

Residents in Shoscombe won their court appeal against the granting of a 24-hour license - and more moderate arrangements were put in place.

This shows that unreasonable licensing decisions can be successfully challenged. But how much better if such extreme decisions could be avoided in the first place. Fighting a court battle means stress, effort, upset and money for everyone! The Licensing Act needs to be made more flexible.

Would you like a wind turbine on your horizon?

Permission was refused for a 45m wind turbine to be erected in the middle of the Folly Down industrial site on the A367.

Councillors welcomed the idea of wind energy but differed on whether a wind turbine was visually acceptable at this very prominent location, visible far and wide and at the entrance of the World Heritage City of Bath.



The main reason for refusal was that little information had been given about how this turbine would work, how noisy it would be and whether there would even be enough wind to drive it. Also, putting it next to buildings where people were working was thought too dangerous.

The final decision rests with the appeal inspector.



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