



# FOCUS

## on Bathavon South

Edited by Neil Butters and the Bathavon South Liberal Democrats - Call us on 01225 722 511

### 100+ object to Combe Grove Manor licence



Residents fear return of the noisy marquee

Over a hundred letters of objection were received by the Council's Licensing Department when Combe Grove Manor Hotel applied for permission to serve alcohol to non-residents and to offer live entertainment into the early hours seven days per week.

Cllr Gitte Dawson, the Parish Council and representatives from Monkton Combe School are to argue the case against the licence jointly at a hearing on Friday 2nd February. What residents fear most is the return of the marquee which was operated there illegally for two years - with noise from functions held there carrying right across the valley, disturbing the peace of many. Find out the outcome by ringing Gitte on **01225 722 511**.

### Kerbside collections now a success

There was much confusion and some protest when people first heard that rubbish was no longer to be collected from their back door but from the "edge of property", ie the roadside. This has settled in well now - with all the necessary special arrangements in place and missed collections at an all-time low. **"It has made many people rethink their recycling - so that landfill rubbish has actually decreased and greenbox content gone up"**, says Gitte. **"But I ask people to put their bins by the roadside, rather than plastic bags - they can be so unsightly and get broken."**



### Bath parking charges to rise

It appears that the transport budget was managed rather carelessly this year - resulting in a **£1.5m shortfall**.

The funding gap is due partly to the new pay-on-exit arrangements at the big car parks - with drivers now paying only for the time they actually park and no longer incurring fines. No-one seems to have foreseen this!

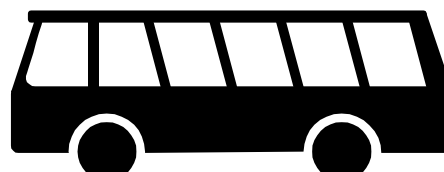
But the biggest hole was caused by fixing too high a payment to the bus companies for the journeys made by pensioners on their new free bus passes. Uptake has been tremendous.

The Government had undertaken to fund the scheme but allowed our Council only a fixed sum of £770K. At the rate pensioners were taking up free bus travel it actually cost the Council three times as much the first year. The bus companies must be making a healthy profit!

Transport Executive Councillor Sir Elgar Jenkins's response was to raise Bath parking charges across the board. Both residents and businesses were appalled - businesses already fearing that trade will suffer when construction on the Southgate development begins.

Some 19 councillors including Gitte Dawson were unhappy with this knee-jerk reaction and want the decision reconsidered, based on a more thorough analysis of parking charges and a fairer agreement with the bus companies.

But what a nerve for the Government to claim credit for this great new facility yet fund less than a third of it! As happens so often, the Government is forcing Councils to shoulder the extra burden rather than increasing income tax.



Pensioners love the free bus passes

## Southgate Scheme: Construction start soon



Building is about to start on Bath's new Southgate complex (see above). The bus station will temporarily move to Avon St car park, and the new transport interchange will be the first element to be completed. It will all take between 3½ and 4 years.

The model of the scheme has been temporarily dismantled but will be on display again soon.

## Bath Western Riverside housing scheme gets go-ahead



Western Riverside wasteland

After years of planning and consultation there's some tangible progress on Western Riverside. The large housing development received outline planning permission in January.

It is a demanding scheme which is to provide affordable housing, high energy efficiency, community facilities, a great new river front and a pleasant almost car-free environment with excellent public transport.

## Radstock Regeneration Project

Another large and long-awaited development project, on railway land in Radstock, is to come to the planning committee in March.

## Reviving the old King Edward School building

As Chair of the Bath Planning Committee Cllr Gitte Dawson is trying to exert pressure on the owners to repair and develop the attractive former King Edward School building in Broad St - now empty and badly neglected for 17 years.



Gitte is trying to get the old King Edward School building back into use

**"The owners should either develop the building or sell it on to those willing to do so", Gitte says. "It is a blight on Bath city centre. Compulsory purchase might be an option."**

## Bath Spa a success

The Bath Spa has been open for six months - and seems to be a great success with residents and visitors alike.

If you are just after a swim in the hot spring water, remember the Cross Bath is open to residents for just £6. If you do go for the luxury of the Spa itself, take a towel! Hiring one costs £3...

## Should Rugby stay on the Rec?

The newspapers have been full of the debate. What do YOU think? Please let us know!



## Save our post offices!

The recent announcement that a further 2500 post offices may close is particularly worrying for those in rural communities. Locally this could mean a threat to the post offices at Combe Down, Freshford, Hinton Charterhouse and Radstock, which might all face closure.

The loss of the many services post offices provide including the Post Office Card Account (which allows people to withdraw cash and pay bills without going to a bank) would have a serious impact on older people and those who don't drive.

Local campaigner Neil Butters said: **"People in Bathavon South have already spoken to me about their concerns about Post Offices. It is one of those essential services, like the village shop and the pub, that nobody wants to lose."**

The Liberal Democrats want to keep Post Office Ltd in the public sector and split it away from Royal Mail, so that the Post Office network can be protected, and further closures prevented.

You can add your voice by signing our on-line petition on [www.libdems.org.uk](http://www.libdems.org.uk) or give your views on the Government proposals on [www.dti.gov.uk](http://www.dti.gov.uk).

# Future safe for Ralph Allen

A review of secondary school provision in Bath & North East Somerset is drawing to a close, with recommendations going to the Council Executive for consideration in July 2007.

**The good news:** Ralph Allen School, which provides the high-quality co-educational places people most want and which is the designated school for Freshford, Hinton Charterhouse, Monkton Combe and South Stoke, is safe from closure, any merger considerations or any other changes for the foreseeable future.

The review did identify a need for better joint working between sixth forms and possibly some rationalisation, but Ralph Allen already ranks highly in that respect and is oversubscribed.

**The bad news:** Ralph Allen School narrowly missed out on becoming the one new secondary school to be built in



BathNES with Government funds in the near future - the lucky winner being Writhlington School in Radstock (priority school for children from Shoscombe and Wellow). Ralph Allen School is now 50 years old with buildings much in need of repair and overhaul. It needs to be made easily wheelchair-accessible as it already accommodates quite a number of wheelchair users. There are whole departments housed entirely in temporary buildings - as is the Sixth Form Common Room.

The School is trying its best to make improvements each year with the help of a Government grant and valiant fundraising efforts. They say their children are "wonderfully tolerant" of the physical shortcomings - they clearly love their school.

## Gap on Hinton Hill fixed



Gitte Dawson inspecting the worsening gap last winter

The £700K project to stabilise Hinton Hill has at last been finished. There is still only one lane of traffic - but the gap has gone and the hill is safe for the future.

The remaining road rebuilding is to happen later this year.

## Trains chaos

The improved platform at Freshford Station has attracted many more passengers - usage had gone up by 40% at the last count!

But passengers are unhappy because Freshford's main commuter train - the 8.34 into Bath - often travels with just one carriage which means passengers are left standing. If you do manage to get on, the crowded train means that the conductor cannot get round and you have to join a long queue to buy a ticket at the



station - because you won't be allowed out without it.

This is a general problem, as is the latest timetable which again fails to provide the promised hourly trains.

You can add your voice of protest to a petition, at <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/wessextrains/>.

## Lib Dem 5-Point Plan to save our Post Offices

- £5billion to invest in post office branches
- Open new branches where there is need
- Retain Post Office Card Accounts for benefit and bill payments
- Free the Post Office from Royal Mail restrictions to let it develop new business
- New legal requirement for the Government to maintain the local post office network.

## Remember COUNCIL CONNECT

Remember **Council Connect** on Tel 01225 39 40 41 or email [council\\_connect@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:council_connect@bathnes.gov.uk) for reporting or enquiring about anything to do with recycling & refuse, cleansing, highways, housing advice, concessionary travel and disabled parking badges.

## Subscribe to INFORM

Did you know you can subscribe to a weekly electronic newsletter which tells you all that is happening in Bath & North East Somerset Council? Email Council Connect to subscribe, or go to the bottom of the Council website home page, [www.bathnes.gov.uk](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk).

# South Stoke fears over loss of greenbelt

The Government tells us that we must build 15,000 more houses in our area, and current plans are that an "urban extension" - ie about a thousand of these houses - be built on the edge of Bath. The Council had been told that the AONB

(the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which includes South Stoke) was safe from such intrusion. However, the greenbelt land that separates South Stoke from Bath has been offered up for just such development, and it has come to light

that the AONB is now being analysed for potential building along with other areas along the city boundary!

An "Enquiry in Public" or EiP later this year is to decide - and the Parish Council have not been given leave to appear to put the village's case.

Cllr Gitte Dawson has protested at this to the Enquiry Team and enlisted the help of Executive Cllr Gerry Curran to change the Team's mind on this. You can add your voice! Write to

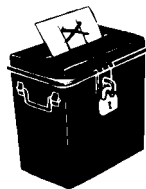


Houses to fill the gap between South Stoke and Bath? Cllr Gitte Dawson and South Stoke resident Neil Butters at the land under threat

**Cllr Gerry Curran**  
**Executive Cllr for Planning**  
**Guildhall, Bath BA1 5AW**

## Make sure you have a vote!

The electoral register has just been updated - but some 15% of houses in our area have no current voters listed. Is yours one of them?



Your councillor can check for you and send you a form to register your vote - and perhaps send a a postal vote application form at the same time.

## Astonishing ...

Liberal Democrats were astonished to read in a recent Tory communication to residents that Lib Dems support Labour proposals "to raise average council tax locally by 1% of house prices or £1325 per year". Where do the Tories get this strange idea?

Lib Dems have for years argued for a Council Tax based on ability to pay rather than the value of your house. Such a scheme would lead to a redistribution, but not an overall increase, of CT.



## Can we help you?



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Your comment / problem: .....

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Name .....Tel.....

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