

Our July meeting opened with an “*enlightening*” presentation from Forestry England, who attended to outline their proposal to install holiday cabins at Bouldnor Forest. The Parish Council had asked them to come so that our community could hear directly from Forestry England and put questions to them in an open forum.

The turnout was truly amazing. The hall filled quickly, extra chairs were brought out, and it was immediately clear how deeply residents care about Bouldnor. Mr Ben Childs gave a brief overview of the proposed cabin locations and explained that the Wildlife Trust lease would not be renewed, with the scheme being advanced under a Section 5 exemption of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960.

What followed was a thoughtful and highly informed discussion. Many parishioners have long-standing knowledge of Bouldnor Forest, and their questions reflected a clear understanding of its ecological sensitivity, from protected species and proximity to the SSSI, to fire risk, emergency access, planning regulations and the statutory definitions relevant to the Caravan Sites Acts. The strength of feeling in the room was unmistakable. A show of hands was requested, and the result was unanimous, every attendee present opposed the proposal. I thanked Forestry England for attending and for engaging with residents’ questions.

During public question time, a few more local matters were raised. The waste bin at Withyfields has not been emptied recently, and the Clerk will be contacting Island Roads. A request was made to review road signage near Bouldnor Viewpoint following a speeding-related accident, and PC Matt Rowlands will be contacted regarding speed surveillance. Highway safety outside Shalfleet School remains a concern and will continue to be monitored and if necessary, we will press Cllr Conlin to escalate the matter.

Councillors supported several planning applications, including backing IW Councillor Conlin’s “Call In” request relating to solar panel installation at Barnfield Solar Farm. I also met with Cllr Conlin to discuss Bouldnor Viewpoint and school safety. Concerns remain about agricultural vehicles transporting grass to the biodigester facility, particularly where mud and debris are left on narrow village roads. Island Roads responded promptly to recent reports, and the Parish Council will explore ways to encourage agricultural traffic to use the main road network wherever possible.

The Clerk reported that Green Gym volunteers are willing to undertake limited maintenance at Bouldnor View Car Park, and Cllr Conlin is liaising with senior IW Council officers regarding wider improvements. Scientific calculators will again be presented to Shalfleet School leavers on 24th July. A temporary repair to the Withyfields gate has been made, with a

contractor completing the work shortly, and the quarterly budget monitor was noted.

A working party will take place on Wednesday 22nd July at 8.30pm to carry out maintenance within the Queen's Canopy at Bouldnor Field. Volunteers are warmly invited, we could really do with as much help as possible.

Elsewhere, councillors agreed to submit a response to the Island Planning Strategy consultation. The SPC car park lease remains unresolved, and councillors agreed it will be locked at the end of term until a new lease is agreed. Options for replacing or repairing the Fleetway waste bin are being explored, and the Newbridge planters will be refreshed and repaired. A contribution of £97 will be made towards Toad Trail signage at Cranmore.

Most importantly, councillors agreed to obtain quotations for an independent ecological report on the Bouldnor proposal and to write to the Isle of Wight Council and Forestry England seeking clarification on several outstanding planning and environmental questions. This work will continue over the coming weeks.

Our September meeting will take place at Wellow Institute on Wednesday 2nd September. We look forward to seeing many of you there.

Warm regards,

Jane

Chair, Shalfleet Parish Council