

Great Wilbraham Parish Council

Stephen Bartlett - Chair

Stephen has given us a comprehensive overview of where the GW Parish Council stands with respect to the Wilbrahams' environment, particularly the day to day responsibilities. We look forward to working with the Parish Council to help enhance our environment.

“ Great Wilbraham Parish Council is acutely aware that, like most natural things, the village is competing to survive: the parish only has a very modest amount of woodland; our “river” flow is being diminished by the high levels of water extraction (N.B. these levels are within the permit limits, but I suspect they were set without a full appreciation of the impact), and Cambridge is creeping ever closer with plans approved for several thousands of new homes between Fulbourn and the airport. We must also recognise that, post Brexit, the grant funding for farming will change and who knows what impact that might have on the village and surrounding countryside?

The Council has several responsibilities relating to managing the parish' natural environment:

- verges: we ensure they are cut. In the past, the Council had opted for a manicured appearance throughout the summer and we are gradually changing our approach to leave the verges and greens are left uncut in early summer so they are full of flowers. (However we are acutely aware that not everyone finds this wilding attractive.)*
- village trees: we look after those on public property - again our arboricultural management requires both knowledge and considerable diplomacy!*
- village Cemetery: this is managed as a community orchard. There are strict rules for maintaining the area given over to the cemetery, while the orchard is managed and tended to ensure it is a peaceful space for contemplation while providing an attractive link between the formality of the graveyard and the surrounding woods and fields.*
- Great Wilbraham Common is one of the largest areas of chalk grassland in Cambridgeshire (over 50 acres) and it recognised as a site of special*

scientific interest. Again, this is managed to ensure the grassland species thrive - it is grazed; no fertiliser has ever been applied; we spot weed to keep invasive species such as ragwort, nettles and thistles at bay, and the hawthorn, elder and bramble shrub is managed to ensure the wide-open vistas are maintained.

- *five other small areas of land owned by the council are dotted around the parish: three are farmed, for which we receive modest rents, and two are given over to managed woodland.*
- *village allotments: as well as yielding plenty of produce, these provide a haven for wildlife (deer, partridges and pheasants) in the heart of the village.*

Other areas of the parish are managed on behalf of the church and various landowners and several years ago a Parish Plan was established and adopted by the community. Unfortunately, that plan is now out of date and if either Neighbourhood Plan or Village Design Statement was to be developed, our precious parish would be better protected from developers responding to the demands of today's relentless pursuit of economic growth. Fortunately, society is recognising the need to drive change and secure a better future. In 2019, South Cambs District Council Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme was launched, and the Parish Council was awarded a small sum to begin a project to increase the areas of woodland around the village. Initially six oaks will be planted, and then we will continue planting and encourage even more planting to establish the Wilbraham Wood."

You can contact Stephen via email if you have any questions.

Stephen Bartlett - ChairGW@wilbrahams.co.uk

