

ED VAIZEY WRITES...

I wrote my column for December in mid-November. I wasn't yet in festive mode so stupidly forgot to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Anyway, I hope you all had a good break.

Sadly the New Year is not going to start very well. By the time you read this, the Post Office, displaying peculiar sensitivity, will have announced which Post Offices are set to close in the constituency. I know of at least one, possibly two, that have been earmarked for closure. The public are being told in January. There is then a six week consultation period running from early February until mid-March, and the final decision is made in May.

The Post Office has been told to close 2,500 Post Offices across the country, and I doubt they will listen much to our protests. Nevertheless, if your local Post office is set to close, please write or e-mail me setting out how important the local Post Office is to you. I need genuine letters – everyone will be doing petitions and we need to stand out. Certainly the Post Office that I know is earmarked for closure is a prime example of a shop at the heart of its community providing a much-needed service. I will fight to keep it and the others open.

The other piece of bad news is that the new timetable from First Great Western does not seem to have made much difference – although I am pleased that much of the Appleford service has apparently survived. I have been getting letters from angry commuters unhappy with the service and the overcrowding. So no doubt 2008 will carry on much as 2007 in this regard.

Thames Water will be pushing hard to get approval for its reservoir, and as I have repeatedly stated, I remain sceptical about whether it is needed, and will continue to fight the proposal. We will also hear more about the Government's plans for yet more housing in the south east, again an issue of huge concern, especially if there is no money to up-grade our over-stretched road network.

Thanks to all of you who responded to my last column giving me your views on the new proposals on detention without trial, and on staying on in education until 18. I really do appreciate hearing from you.

ED VAIZEY, MP Wantage (Con)

Dear Editor

I would like to respond to last month's 'Bob Anderson' column.

It would indeed be a very major undertaking to establish a new charity and raise sufficient funds to fulfil its objective i.e. the purchase, maintenance and operation of

the Institute. But what would be the point? It seems to me the Institute can be valued on two grounds only, aesthetics and utility. Some argue that it has visual or architectural merit. Whilst I do not share that view, if the Vale planners do, then, as part of any development, they will require that the Institute's façade is retained and it seems very likely that that will be the case.

So if the street scene in North Street is unaffected, what about the inherent utility of the present building. It is one hundred years old, time expired, in need of much updating, expensive to heat and maintain and was not designed for the purposes which it would now be expected to fulfil. If there was no alternative, then perhaps it would be worth the effort. However, the money released from developing the site will contribute to the construction of a modern purpose built building, built to a high specification and standards. Added to that, as part of the bigger scheme, an endowment will be established, that will provide for the ongoing maintenance, and can underpin its operation.

I do agree with Bob that the survey undertaken by NAF was sound and was a very good effort and the answers to the questions that were obtained were a fair representation of parishioners' views. I stated that at the Parish Council. However the problem with the survey, as I see it, is that the issue with which the village needs to engage is much wider than that implied by the simple questions. What is really in question is the future of Marcham for the next thirty years. What sort of place will it be and what sort of community will it support? Will it be a mere dormitory or will be home to a real and thriving community? This affects not just those who live here today, but our children and grandchildren and those, who move here in the future. What is required is a careful, thorough and well informed discussion and debate.

Finally, despite my opening remark, and despite the fact that I clearly disagree with Bob Anderson, I would like to record that I have great respect for him. At least he is prepared to get off his sofa and so something; so well done Bob.

COLIN BOUGH

NB I have written this article on a personal basis and not in my capacity as a Director of the Anson Trust Company or as a member of the Parish Council; the opinions and views expressed are entirely my own.

Dear Editor

There is ample evidence that the Anson Trustees have in the past had great difficulties in discharging their obligations to the people of Marcham, and these difficulties are continuing. Can we be certain that they now have the insight and leadership skills to carry through the ambitious and speculative plans that they have yet to launch, and will in any event divide the village?

The answer that the Charity Commission has given to Bob Anderson's recent question (MAD News, December 2007) suggests a different way forward - that, with the Commission's approval, the Anson Trustees should transfer all the Trust's assets (including the Institute and the playing field) to a new charitable trust for the benefit of Marcham, able to receive a fresh capital endowment and to open a new and positive chapter in the history of this community. The Anson Trust could then be dissolved.

A W BRADLEY

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Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC) is one of 38 rural community councils (RCCs) in England. Each is an independent, county-based organisation. Phone: 01865 883488

THE DECEMBER CROSSWORD ANSWERS

ACROSS: Oxford town 6 Shoe
7 Off 8 Bomb 11 Delilah
12 Mobile library 14 Shippon
15 Hall 17 Way 18 Road
19 Agreements

DOWN: 1 Othello 2 Foe
3 Duffield Place 4 Web 5 Robbery
9 Wealthy 10 Car boot 12 Marcham
13 Reveals 16 Leg 18 Run

ALISA

Write to MADNews and let others know what you think about current events