

Annual Report from Fulbourn Forum for community action

1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

The Fulbourn Forum committee met seven times during another busy year with much to report:

We held four **Community Markets**, as usual in June, September, November and March. These continue to be our main source of income, apart from any grants received for specific projects. Our thanks, as always, to the Fulbourn WI for running the popular café.

The twice-yearly **Community Litter Picks** took place in April and October. We are hugely grateful to the volunteers who turn out, whatever the weather, to help with this essential activity. 50 to 60 filled bags are the norm each time. We try to get out right to the Parish boundaries if there are enough participants, but this is not always possible. We are also grateful to the people who pick litter around the village on an occasional or regular basis throughout the year – Fulbourn Forum can help by providing pickers and bags if required. The Fulbourn Parish Council (FPC) provides all the equipment and extends their thanks to all volunteers.

Our twice-yearly **Repair Cafes** took place in April and November. We are indebted to the many skilled repairers (usually around 12 at each event) who volunteer to participate giving a second life to many things. There are usually around 50+ items brought in for repair, with a good successful repair rate. In other instances, advice is given where replacement parts are required. Our thanks also go to the volunteers who bake the cakes and run the café.

The annual **Apple Pressing** was back as a community event in September, producing around 120 bottles of pasteurised juice from local apples. Many thanks go to those who helped on the day and those who donated apples. If you are able to provide apples for the 2024 pressing do please get in touch in August or September. After bottles were given to helpers and donators, juice was available to purchase at the community markets in November and March.

The **Fulbourn Swift Group** undertook, from early May, its weekly Wednesday evening observations of the swift colony and its nest sites, particularly around St Vigor's Church (where cameras are installed in nest boxes) and around the area of Grandridge Close, Swifts Corner, Windmill Lane, and Farmer's Row. The group's observations, led by John Willis, indicate that the colony has maintained its numbers. A Swifts Open Day was held at St Vigor's Church in June and a guided swift walk in July.

The Fulbourn colony continues to gain wider attention. It features strongly in the latest RSPB video about swifts, was filmed by ITV News on 10 July, and featured in a BBC Radio Cambridgeshire morning nature programme with on-site interviews on 28 June. John also continues to give talks to local schools.

On the **Fulbourn Fen Nature Reserve** there were six winter **Work Parties** run by the Wildlife Trust under the direction of the local volunteer wardens. The main work is the removal of scrub such as hawthorn in the meadows to improve the habitat for the wild orchids. The 2023 **Orchid Count** resulted in a new record of well over 3,000 across the four meadows.

The new wildflower meadow at the Nature Reserve, and the new grassland and woodland at Lower Valley Farm, as we reported last year, are now establishing well, and are a welcome addition to the **Nature Recovery Network** of which Fulbourn is an important part.

The fruit trees in the **Community Orchards** in the nature reserve and in St Vigor's Road are generally looking in good condition and continue to be monitored.

The five **Community Herbs Beds** continue to be maintained by volunteers with any necessary new plants being purchased by Fulbourn Forum. We were successful in obtaining a grant from the South Cambs Community Chest Fund towards the cost of replacing the bed at Poor Well, which was installed and planted up in June. Our thanks go to Richard Drage who kindly volunteered to cut, assemble and install the heavy sections of oak sleepers.

Fulbourn Forum again organised a contingent from Fulbourn to join the May Bank Holiday **Reach Ride**, which is run by Camcycle. Leaving from opposite the Hat and Rabbit, we joined the main ride coming from Cambridge at the P&R Site in Newmarket Road. Around 1000 cyclists join the ride each year.

The **Fulbourn Neighbourhood Plan** (FNP) was formally adopted by South Cambs District Council (SCDC) in April 2023 as an SPD (Supplementary Planning Document). Together with the **Fulbourn Village Design Guide** SPD (Jan 2020) (FVDG), these two documents should be acknowledged and responded to in all future planning applications. Fulbourn Forum helped to organise and attended, together with some members of the FPC and District/County Councillors, a visit by three planning officers in June to walk through the village to help explain and highlight the details of the FNP policies.

Fulbourn Forum now wishes to help pursue some of the actions that form part of the aspirations of the FNP. The first to be taken forward is initial work leading to a **Tree and Woodland Survey and Associated Planting Programme**. We have been successful in obtaining a grant from the Wright's Clock Land CIO for the necessary commissioning of a professional survey and tree strategy. This first phase concerns trees on publicly owned land (FPC, SCDC, CCC) within the village area of Fulbourn, identifying location, species, dimensions, condition, and any associated actions required. Following the survey, a planting programme for up to 50 additional trees will be prepared to deal with succession, infill and new sites.

The well-treed **land directly off Pierce Lane, adjacent to the Home Close Care Home** that was subject to a housing development planning application back in 2021 had the application withdrawn in 2023. It is hoped that the FNP and FVDG will help to ensure that this site remains undeveloped as it makes an important contribution to the character and ecology of this part of the Conservation Area.

In Cow Lane, approval has now been given for the change of use of the **old Pumping Station** (Telford House) from offices to 11 no flats. However, the approved scheme does not now include 2 no semi-detached, three-storey houses to the front of the site, and a new external escape stair originally proposed for the existing Victorian building. Fulbourn Forum had objected to the original application which was ultimately withdrawn. The conversion works are expected to begin soon.

The first phase of the **redevelopment of the Ida Darwin Hospital** for 203 dwellings, and the **development of 110 dwellings on the two meadows between Teversham Road and Cox's Drove**, have now begun on site. The latter development, bisected by a valuable chalk stream fed from the spring at Poor Well, is a huge loss to the village, both as accessible green space and as species rich, biodiverse wet grassland. We have separately reported on all these issues over many years since the first planning application in 2014. The Ida Darwin Hospital site was identified for housing by a planning inspector back in 2009. Although not ideally located for easy integration into the existing village, as a so-called 'brown field site' in the Green Belt it was always going to remain developed whether for housing or some other institutional/commercial use.

Capital Park (including Victoria House, the old mental hospital) is now owned by an American company, Longfellow, which specialises in bioscience laboratory space as long-term investment. Following on from a community engagement 'open-house' in May, the company undertook a series of five workshops between September and November which aimed to investigate how the local community might be involved in the future of the site. The issues discussed included access and communications; biodiversity, public green space and climate resilience; community benefits and partnerships; and site character and identity. Three members of the Fulbourn Forum committee and several other individuals and organisations from the village, including some councillors, participated. It is understood that a planning application for alterations to the existing buildings (including some change of use) and the landscape setting will be submitted in 2024.

The unoccupied ten flats at the end of Fulbourn Old Drift are also owned by Longfellow, but no plans for their future use have yet been decided.

As reported in last year's Annual Report, Fulbourn Forum joined with others including two members of the FPC to prepare an application for funding from a Cambridgeshire County Council project to install a **20mph speed limit in Fulbourn**. An initial consultation exercise showed there was overwhelming support, including from the three village primary schools, so an application was submitted before the deadline of 28 April. In September, it was heard that it had been successful. Following detailed design by County Highways, a public consultation was held finishing on 8 April 2024. The outcome is awaited.

A consultation on the proposed 'first-leg' (High Street to Yarrow Road) of the **Fulbourn to Cambridge Greenway** began at the end of June with a 'drop-in' consultation event held by the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) in July. The GCP sent leaflets to all village properties, and Fulbourn Forum provided further publicity, as well as attending meetings and submitting a detailed written response suggesting various improvements. The outcome is awaited. The scheme should bring a 20mph speed limit along Fulbourn Old Drift, part of Hinton Road, Cow Lane, and Aphorpe Street, plus safety improvements to some junctions.

Separate from the above two projects, but responding to the same concerns and issues, Fulbourn Forum, in December, contacted local residents to help gauge support for proposals for safety improvements to part of Dogget Lane which were being applied for by the Parish Council through a **County Council Local Highways Initiative** (LHI).

Three Fulbourn Forum committee members are part of a nine strong group of trustees now working to implement the plans for the restoration of **Fulbourn Windmill**. The initial work to establish the necessary legal framework for the Windmill Trust, supporter membership, Lease and Grant Agreements, and Charity registration, is now well advanced. The aim is for the restoration work to begin in September 2025. Fulbourn Forum has provided space at its community markets for the Windmill to publicise its activities. A website/social media volunteer is currently required.

Some initial meetings have taken place with others to discuss the preparation of an updated **Fulbourn Walks booklet**, which would include some new walks. The first edition was published in 2013 but it is now out of print. Individual walks can still be downloaded off the Fulbourn Forum website.

Fulbourn Forum's 2023 AGM included a well-attended presentation by founder and CEO Gavin Shelton on the **CoFarm project** in Cambridge. Situated on almost 3 hectares (7 acres) of agricultural land on the edge of Coldham's Common, this community horticultural farm, begun in 2020, aims to bring people together to grow and share nutritious food. Gavin also introduced the possibility of a similar venture in Fulbourn.

Fulbourn Forum continues its links with the Friends of Fleam Dyke and the Roman Road (FFDRR), the Wilbraham River Protection Society (WRPS), the Wildlife Trust, Cambridge Past Present and Future (CPPF), Cam Valley Forum (CVF), South Cambs Zero Carbon Communities, Cambridge Carbon Footprint, Transition Cambridge, the Cambs Repair Café Network, and Carbon Neutral Cambridge. We also continue to work with our Parish Council, our South Cambs Councillors and our County Councillor. Representatives of Fulbourn Forum attended the AGM and talks/visits of the FFDRR, the CVF, the WRPS, and the SCDC's Local Climate Action Conference at Cottenham.

Our involvement with the Wilbraham River Protection Society, the Cam Valley Forum and the Wildlife Trust is connected with Fulbourn Forum's **concerns for the health of the water environment in the Cam valley**, particularly in the Cam catchment area of Fulbourn and the Wilbrahams. Due to the high levels of abstraction from the chalk aquifer at the Fleam Dyke pumping station and elsewhere, the local water table is often low resulting in augmentation water being pumped into both the Little Wilbraham River at the spring head at Great Wilbraham, and into one part of the Fulbourn Fen Nature Reserve where its prime purpose is to achieve wetness in the soil in East Fen Pasture to maintain the orchid population and its designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Fulbourn Forum continues to monitor and photograph the various springs and watercourses in Fulbourn parish, liaising with the WRPS which reports back to the Environment Agency, which is responsible for the augmentation scheme. The recent 2023/24 autumn/winter period has seen exceptional rainfall, well above the average, leaving the ground saturated in places and the springs running for the first time since the 2020/21 winter.

In recent years, there has been much campaigning and heightened awareness of the need to restore the aquatic environment and its biodiversity in the Cam Valley, both in the main rivers and in its chalk streams. In February we screened the locally made documentary *Pure Clean Water*, first shown at the 2023 Cambridge Film Festival, which looks at the above issues through the lens of Hobsons Brook and Conduit which rises from the springs at the Nine Wells Nature Reserve just south of the biomedical campus. These springs are also now augmented. The film was well-attended with an audience of around 140.

Fulbourn Forum's contribution to this awareness is centred round our own local catchment area. In our 2023 Annual Report we briefly updated information on the **film documentary project, *Fugolburna***, begun in 2021 to show the state of the local springs and watercourses, backed by contributions from residents and experts, while also celebrating the beautiful Fulbourn Fen Nature Reserve and beyond, and the efforts being made to support nature recovery and to improve the health of local ecosystems. The film is currently in the last stages of editing and its premiere will be at the Fulbourn Forum 2024 AGM on 10 May. We wish to thank all those who have generously supported and given their time in the making of the film and to the Wright's Clock Land CIO and the Wadlow Wind Farm Community Fund for their financial support. And finally, many thanks to Nigel Kinnings the cinematographer for his dedication to the project, to Tim Lloyd-Kinnings for his excellent editing, and to Christine Lloyd-Fitt for her valuable production assistance.

Richard Townley, Chair; **David Cottee**, Secretary; **David Nobel**, Treasurer; **Eddie Konig**; **Peter Woor**; **Judith Townley**; **David Bunting**.

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